

Vernacular Prayer in the Jewish and Roman Catholic Traditions: Historical Background, Sociological Impact, and Prospects for Interfaith Relations

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Abstract

In all liturgical religious traditions, the language and content of prayer reflects the ideology of the religious body. Of particular interest with regard to interfaith relations are what this ideology says about other religious groups and how it affects the perception of a religious group by the surrounding society. This thesis provides a case study of these issues by examining how the advent of vernacular prayer in Jewish and Catholic traditions has affected the respective liturgical texts. When Jews and Catholics prayed in languages that were not generally understood by their neighbors (Hebrew and Latin, respectively), these ideological issues could more easily be obscured. Hence, the changes to certain of the problematic passages in the respective liturgies that accompanied use of the vernacular for prayer provide a window as to how the accompanying attitudes towards other religious groups have also changed. In light of the great advances that have been made in Jewish-Catholic relations over the past half-century, a deep understanding of these liturgical changes and the changing attitudes they reflect is important for continuing to address the issues related to ongoing work in interfaith relations.

The first chapter provides an overview of the topic. Chapter Two discusses the halakhic and historical issues surrounding the language in which Jews pray, both classically and in modern times. Chapter Three examines the evolution of several passages in the

traditional Jewish liturgy, with regard to the internal and external influences that shaped these prayers in medieval and modern times. Chapter Four examines the process of introducing vernacular prayer to the Roman Catholic Church, and the changes that were introduced to several passages in the liturgy in response to the Second Vatican Council. Chapter Five compares the Jewish and Roman Catholic traditions with regard to the processes by which the prayers have evolved and the tension between group identity and interfaith relations as expressed by the liturgical changes discussed in the earlier chapters.

For my great-granduncle Chaim Yeletsky—

who broke a chain of seven generations of rabbis when he died just before receiving

s'mikhah.

He could not have conceived that a rabbinical student would examine the friendly relations between Jews and Catholics as part of his rabbinical training; his name is reflected in my own, and has brought me to this point in my own life.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

One of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church is that “the Church prays as it believes.” While explicit in the Catholic tradition, this idea holds true for prayer in all religious traditions; the words the worshipper speaks express the ideology of the religious body. As Kathleen Hughes describes this relationship, “In its liturgical prayer, the community expresses its own deepest identity. It describes itself, what it hopes for, what it longs for from its gracious God, what it understands as its task in the world, what obstacles prevent it from fulfilling its covenant.”¹ The latter part of this quote indicates that in addition to expressing the relationship between people and God, prayer expresses the relationships that exist among people.² To that end, prayer has an important function besides the power of performed ritual, which is to educate or even indoctrinate the worshipper into a particular system of belief. In part, and of particular interest to our present discussion, this education will serve to shape how the worshipper perceives both the society in which he³ exists and the other religious groups coexisting in that society.

There is an inherent tension in this view of prayer. On the one hand, religious rituals such as prayer are essentially particular; they say something important about what the religious group stands for as a distinct entity.⁴ But there is the risk of what Samuel Karff calls “theological ethnocentrism” if our claims to universal truth prevent us from ac-

¹ Kathleen Hughes, *The Language of the Liturgy: Some Theoretical and Practical Implications* (Washington, DC: ICEL Secretariat, 1985), p. 11.

² Hughes, *Language*, p. 11.

³ For reasons of readability, I will sometimes use masculine pronouns to refer to individuals of indeterminate gender or to God. This should not be interpreted as in any way excluding women from the experience of the religious phenomena discussed in this thesis.

⁴ Samuel E. Karff, “The Perception of Christians in Jewish Liturgy: Then and Now,” *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship* (Eds. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), pp. 39-40.

knowledging as valid the claims of those who come from different religious backgrounds.⁵ When we examine the history of the Jewish people, and especially their experiences in medieval Europe, we find exactly the sort of persecution that arises from this kind of disregard for their traditions and beliefs. As long as this situation persisted, the enmity expressed by certain passages in the Jewish liturgy remained present (unless forcibly changed from outside) because they accurately reflected the circumstances in which Jews lived. It was only as Jews were allowed to enter the mainstream culture after Emancipation that these passages became awkward for those Jews who sought to avail themselves of these new opportunities. Hence the move by the early German Jewish reformers to characterize Judaism as solely a religion (and not a nation) and to work to avoid alienating the non-Jews with whom they sought closer relations and who would sometimes be present in the synagogue.⁶

In the Christian world, on the other hand, the historical view of Jews has been rooted in supersessionist theology (the idea that Israel's covenant has been negated by the New Testament) and in the idea of collective and perpetual Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus, which is based on "Christian misinterpretation, sometimes willful, of the events narrated in the four Gospels concerning the death of Jesus."⁷ This situation has formally changed only in the second half of the twentieth century, in response not only to the tragedy of the Holocaust but also because of new understandings of the Bible by Christians. This has resulted in "a genuinely new theology of 'the other'...that affirms

⁵ Karff, pp. 40-43.

⁶ Karff, p. 36.

⁷ John Gurrieri, "The Perception of Jews in Christian Liturgy: Then and Now," *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship*, pp. 46-47.

Christians and Jews as mutually covenanted peoples, with each group enjoying individual validity.”⁸

In analyzing these changing attitudes, this thesis provides a case study of the role of liturgy in interfaith relations. To this end, I will examine how the advent of vernacular prayer in Jewish and Catholic traditions has affected the respective liturgical texts and the ideologies they express. When Jews and Catholics prayed in languages that were not generally understood by their neighbors (Hebrew and Latin, respectively), the negative attitudes toward others found in the text of the prayers could more easily be obscured. Hence, the changes to certain of the problematic passages in the respective liturgies that accompanied use of the vernacular for prayer provide a window into how the accompanying attitudes towards other religious groups have also changed.

I will survey the legal and historical development of the use of vernacular prayer in both Jewish and Catholic traditions. This includes, in the Jewish tradition, restrictions that have historically been imposed on Jewish worship (such as external censorship of certain prayers).⁹ I will then examine certain of the problematic passages in the traditional liturgies, and how they were changed (in both the original and in the vernacular text) with the advent of praying in the vernacular in the modern social context. I am also interested in exploring in particular the impact that vernacular prayer has had on the self-censorship¹⁰ of prayer. My essential thesis is that the problematic passages did not have a significant impact on interfaith relations when prayers were conducted almost entirely in

⁸ Gurrieri, pp. 47-48.

⁹ The Catholic liturgy does not have the same history of externally-imposed censorship as does the Jewish liturgy because of the position of Catholicism as the dominant religion throughout most of medieval Europe, as compared to Jews who were viewed as a barely-tolerated foreign people.

¹⁰ I do not use the term “censorship” here in a necessarily negative sense. For example, to the extent that religious bodies consider how their liturgies reflect their view of other religious communities, and seek to improve those relationships, self-censorship can be quite healthy.

languages that were not widely understood (especially outside of the particular religious group).¹¹ Once prayer in the vernacular started to become common in modern times (with the advent of Reform Judaism in the nineteenth century and after the Second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church), these religious groups began to censor themselves in the interest of improving relations with other faith communities. This phenomenon is related to the rise of the modern multiconfessional nation-state that accepted as citizens people of different faiths, and also to the ascendance of national languages within those nation-states.

In my analysis, I will examine the theological and ideological changes made to the prayers, but avoid the separate issue of translation theory. My analysis will consider how the religions' different sociological positions and hierarchical structures¹² have affected the process of self-censorship. Finally, I will examine the common sociological impact of the shift to vernacular prayer in terms of the tension between group identity (as expressed through Hebrew/Latin prayer) and interfaith relations (as expressed through changes to the words of the liturgy going beyond the change in language). The essential questions to be considered in this thesis include the following:

1. How has the use of vernacular prayer affected the words we pray?
2. What has been the impact of the use of vernacular prayer on the sociology of our two religious communities?
3. What are the issues we must confront for interfaith communal relations vis à vis these issues?

¹¹ While Jewish prayers were often censored in medieval Christian Europe, this was mostly based on information provided by converts to Christianity who informed on the Jewish community. In the absence of such information, the Church would have been ignorant of the content of Jewish prayer, and I suspect would not have been motivated to censor the prayers, as we shall discuss below.

¹² That is, a strong central authority in the Catholic Church as opposed to much more dispersed sources of authority in Judaism.

Chapter Two discusses the halakhic and historical issues surrounding the language in which Jews pray, both classically and in modern times. Chapter Three examines the evolution of several passages in the traditional Jewish liturgy, with regard to the internal and external influences that shaped these prayers in medieval and modern times. Chapter Four examines the process of introducing vernacular prayer to the Roman Catholic Church, and the changes that were introduced to several passages in the liturgy in response to the Second Vatican Council. Chapter Five compares the Jewish and Roman Catholic traditions with regard to the processes by which the prayers have evolved and the tension between group identity and interfaith relations as expressed by the liturgical changes discussed in the earlier chapters.

Chapter 2. Influences on the Language of Jewish Prayer

In order to understand the impact that the usage of the vernacular has had on the text of the Jewish prayer service, we must first understand those historical factors that have influenced the language in which Jewish prayers are recited. First, I will examine the view of prayer in languages other than Hebrew¹³ from the perspective of the classical Jewish sources. Then, I shall consider the debate that arose in nineteenth-century Europe regarding the use of vernacular prayer, both among the different major groups of reformers and between those reformers and their more traditional counterparts.

2.1. Halakhic sources regarding the language of Jewish prayer

At one level, the answer to the question “What is the language of Jewish prayer?” seems to be quite straightforward. Walk in to any traditional synagogue, or pick up any traditional prayer book, and it seems clear that Hebrew is the normative language of Jewish prayer. To a certain extent, and from the historical perspective, Hebrew is indeed the normative language Jews have used in their prayers since the beginning of rabbinic prayer.¹⁴ However, as is so often the case in discussing the balance between Jewish tradition and the reforms to Jewish practice that originated in nineteenth-century Europe, there is often a considerable difference between what is normative and what is permissible ac-

¹³ There are, of course, certain passages in the classical Jewish liturgy that are recited in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. The most common of these is the *Qaddish* in its various incarnations. As we shall discuss below, this practice arose because Aramaic was the vernacular language of the day (as well as the language of rabbinic study), as distinguished from the holy language of Hebrew. However, from the modern perspective, this distinction is not significant because both Hebrew and Aramaic were equally incomprehensible to those nineteenth-century Jews who argued for prayer in the modern European vernacular (particularly German, French, and English).

¹⁴ In pre-rabbinic times, Jews in the Hellenistic Diaspora prayed in Greek, to the extent that communal prayer existed there.

cording to the Jewish legal codes. This is especially true with regard to the language in which Jews pray.

2.1.1. Tannaitic and amoraic sources

The relevant *mishnah* to our discussion, *m.Sotah* 7:1, seems to be fairly straightforward with regard to the language of prayer:

אלו נאמרין בכל לשון פרשת סוטה וידוי מעשר
קריאת שמע ותפלה וברכת המזון ושבועת
העדות ושבועת הפקדון;

These are recited in any language: the portion of the adulterous wife,¹⁵ the confession over the tithe,¹⁶ the recitation of the *Sh'ma*,¹⁷ the Prayer,¹⁸ the blessing after a meal, the oath for testimony, and the oath for a pledge.¹⁹

The first two of the specified passages are biblical portions that are prescribed to be recited in certain circumstances (the first in conjunction with the ritual performed for a suspected adulteress and the second when bringing a tithe to the Temple). The last two are legal oaths that are taken in specific circumstances; the former is the formula by which a witness swears that he is competent to testify in a matter, while the latter is the oath by which one who has been entrusted with property defends a claim that the property has been lost or stolen through no fault of his own. It should be noted that the *mishnah* following this one identifies certain passages, all prescribed biblical recitations, that must be recited in the Holy Tongue; that is, Hebrew. A relevant distinction among the three remaining passages (the *Sh'ma*, the *Amidah*, and *Birkat Hamazon*) is that the former two are part of the statutory prayer that is normally recited publicly, whereas the latter is usu-

¹⁵ Numbers 5:19-22

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 26:13-15

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41

¹⁸ That is, the *Amidah*.

¹⁹ This translation is adapted from Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 457.

ally recited privately (at home). For our purposes, we will examine the discussions of the issues concerning the language of statutory public prayer as it is the most relevant for our purposes.

The commentators on the Mishnah are unanimous in their understanding of this passage. With regard to the phrase “any language,” Maimonides, Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura, and Israel b. Gedaliah Lipschitz (known as the *Tiferet Yisra³eil*) all state the qualification that it must be a language that the person reciting the prayer understands.²⁰ This understanding draws on the dual meaning of the Hebrew root שמע as either “to hear” or “to understand.” With regard to the ^c*Amidah*, all three of these commentators agree that the *mishnah* applies in public, but in private one must pray only in Hebrew. At first glance, this appears counterintuitive; we might expect that the public prayers must be conducted in Hebrew, while one praying privately may pray in any language that he chooses. This latter opinion also leaves us with an ambiguity—does the interpretation distinguish between public congregational prayer and one praying alone, or between the silent ^c*Amidah* and the reader’s repetition, both in the context of the public worship service?

A passage in the Tosefta introduces a disagreement with regard to the language for *q’ri²at Sh’ma^c*. In *t.Sotah* 7:4, we find the following passage putting Rabbi Yehudah haNasi at odds with the consensus of rabbinic opinion:

²⁰ See *b.Sotah* 32b, discussed below.

ברכות הלל ושמע ותפלה נאמרים בכל לשון ר'
אומ' אומ' אני שאין שמע נאמ' אלא בלשון
הקדש שנ' והיו הדברים האלה

The Hallel blessings and *Sh'ma^C* and the Prayer are said in any language. Rabbi says, "I say that *Sh'ma^C* is only said in the Holy Tongue,²¹ as it is said, '*These words* [which I command you this day] shall be [on your hearts].'"²²

We must first note that the dispute in this case is only with regard to *q'ri²*at *Sh'ma^C*, and there is presumably agreement between Rabbi Yehudah haNasi and the Sages that the *Amidah^C* may be said in any language. This view is supported by Rabbi Yehudah haNasi's justification for his position, in that the biblical text of the *Sh'ma^C* includes the phrase הדברים האלה, *these words*, indicating (with the demonstrative pronoun) that the very words as written in the Torah (i.e., the Hebrew text) are what must be recited.²³

The Jerusalem Talmud begins its treatment of this question with the disagreement from this Tosefta passage. To support the position that the *Sh'ma^C* is recited in any language that one understands, *y.Sotah* 7:1 cites Deuteronomy 6:7, "You shall speak of them [when you sit in your homes and when you go on your way]." The reference to going about one's everyday life in this verse thus suggests that the *Sh'ma^C* may be recited in one's everyday language rather than exclusively in Hebrew. The text then cites Rabbi Yehudah haNasi's position as discussed above. The *Yerushalmi* passage goes on to refute this view, however, by citing the example of Rabbi Levi bar Chitah who heard the *Sh'ma^C* recited in Greek in Caesarea and wanted to stop this from taking place. Rabbi Yosei angrily responded:

²¹ That is, Hebrew.

²² Deuteronomy 6:6

²³ Hence, this argument does not apply to the *Amidah^C* because it is not a biblical text.

כך אומר אני מי שאינו יודע לקרות אשורית לא יקרינה כל עיקר אלא יוצא בכל לשון שהוא יודע	Should I say that one who does not know how to read (Hebrew written in) Assyri- an ²⁴ (letters) does not read it [the <i>Sh'ma</i> ^C] at all? The essence is that one fulfills [his obligation] in any language that he knows.
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The back-and-forth concludes with a parallel example, in which Rabbi Berakhiah states that, with regard to reading the *Megilah*, if one knows how to read it in both Hebrew and in the vernacular (לעז), one only fulfills the obligation to read the *Megilah* by reading it in Hebrew. Rabbi Mana³ agrees that if one can read both Hebrew and the vernacular, he must read the Scroll in Hebrew. However, if one can only read in the vernacular, then he fulfills the obligation to read the Scroll by reading in the vernacular; hence the statement that he fulfills his obligation יודע שהוא בכל לשון שהוא ("in any language that he knows"). By extension, we may establish the view that one may recite the *Sh'ma*^C in the vernacular, but only if he does not know how to read Hebrew.

With regard to the ^C*Amidah*, the *Yerushalmi* presents no contradiction to the view that it may be said in any language. In light of the discussion with regard to *q'ri*³at *Sh'ma*^C, and especially with regard to the last principle described above, we can thus conclude that the ^C*Amidah* may be said in any language than one understands, regardless of whether or not one can read Hebrew. This is supported by the justification in the *Yerushalmi* for the view that the ^C*Amidah* may be said in any language, יהא יודע לתבוע, צרכיו ("so that he will know how to express his needs"). There is an implicit distinction in this passage between the ability to read a language and the ability to understand the language. We can conclude that even in the days of the Second Temple, when Aramaic and

²⁴ In this context, Assyrian refers to the standard Aramaic square script in which Hebrew is printed, as distinguished from the more ancient paleo-Hebrew script in which Hebrew was originally written.

not Hebrew was the everyday language, there were many who could read Hebrew (because it used the same alphabet as Aramaic) but fewer who could understand what they were reading. In this context, one may pray in any language he understands so that he will be able to pray from the heart and thus express his needs through his prayer. This contrasts with *q'ri'at Sh'ma^C*, which, as mentioned above, is a formulaic reading of biblical passages rather than a personal petition to God.

As does the *Yerushalmi* passage discussed above, the Babylonian Talmud (*b.Sotah* 32b and 33a) begins with the disagreement between Rabbi Yehudah haNasi and the Sages. In this case, the Sages derive their support for reciting the *Sh'ma^C* in any language from Deuteronomy 6:4, שִׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל—בְּכָל לָשׁוֹן שֶׁאֲתָה שׁוֹמֵעַ (“Hear, O Israel—in any language that you understand”).²⁵ Rabbi Yehudah haNasi’s view that the *Sh'ma^C* must be recited כְּכַתְּבָהּ (“as it is written”²⁶) is supported by the same citation from Deuteronomy 6:6 as above. The next section of the talmudic development addresses the question of how each side in this dispute interprets the proof text of the other.²⁷ The Sages interpret וְהָיוּ²⁸ as teaching us that we must not read the paragraphs of the *Sh'ma^C* out of order. The text asks from where Rabbi Yehudah haNasi derives this principle (indicating that it is a universally accepted view); he does so from the fact that Deuteronomy 6:6 says הַדְּבָרִים [הָאֵלֶּה] (“[these] words,” using the definite article הַ, “the”) instead of the indicative דְּבָרִים [אֵלֶּה] (without the definite article), which would mean essentially the same thing in Hebrew. The Sages do not expound on this distinction. On the other hand, Rabbi Yehudah

²⁵ As mentioned above, this is the same as the interpretation given by the commentators to the *mishnah* we discussed at the beginning of our analysis.

²⁶ Rashi explains that this means in the Holy Tongue (i.e., Hebrew).

²⁷ This is a typical talmudic method in constructing a *sugya*.

²⁸ Deuteronomy 6:6

haNasi interprets שמע²⁹ to mean that one must recite the *Sh'ma*^C audibly.³⁰ On this point, there is also a disagreement, as the Sages agree with the view that one who does not recite the *Sh'ma*^C audibly still fulfills the obligation.³¹ The final section of the discussion of *q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C reiterates the conflicting positions stated above, with reference to the question of whether the whole Torah must be read in Hebrew in the synagogue. The details of this argument are somewhat technical and not of particular relevance to our purpose here.³²

With regard to the *Amidah*^C, the Talmud defines prayer as supplication, and holds that the one who prays may express his needs to God in whatever language he wishes.³³ However, the question remains as to whether the *Amidah*^C may be said in any language. The dissenting view comes from Rav Yehudah (the *amora*), who states that one must never ask for his needs in Aramaic because according to Rabbi Yochanan the ministering angels do not understand Aramaic and so will disregard one who prays in Aramaic.³⁴ The apparent contradiction is resolved in that the latter opinion applies when one is praying alone and the former when one is praying as part of a congregation. Rashi clarifies this statement in that one praying alone needs the help of the ministering angels to deliver his

²⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4

³⁰ Lit. to cause your ears to hear what you cause to come out of your mouth. Cf. Sifre Deuteronomy 31.

³¹ Rashi points out that this is different from what is found in *b.Ber.* 15a (based on *m.Ber.* 2:3), where Rabbi Yosei's opinion that one must indeed recite the *Sh'ma*^C audibly is taken as definitive. In that case, Rabbi Yosei derives both this principle and the one that *Sh'ma*^C may be recited in any language from the usage of שמע in Deuteronomy 6:4.

³² This discussion also appears in *b.Ber.* 13a, as we shall discuss with regard to the medieval halakhic codes. However, it is important to note that while the *Berakhot* material includes the discussion of whether one may recite the *Sh'ma*^C in a language other than Hebrew, *Berakhot* contains no such discussion with regard to the *Amidah*^C.

³³ Rashi reinforces this understanding, in that one prays in the language that he knows in order to focus his heart on his prayers.

³⁴ Because of the specification of Aramaic in this passage, and the justification regarding the languages that the angels do or do not understand, we are left with some uncertainty whether this opinion can be extended to languages other than Aramaic. This issue will be discussed further below.

pleas to God, but this is not necessary when one prays with the congregation. The latter point is based on Job 36:5, where we read *הִנֵּאֵל כְּבִיד וְלֹא יִמָּאֵס* (“Behold, God is mighty, and does not reject”); God does not reject the prayers of the many.³⁵ The passage concludes with a discussion as to whether or not the angels do in fact understand Aramaic, which is not relevant for our purposes.

In summary, according to the mishnaic and talmudic sources we find that there is a disagreement between Rabbi Yehudah haNasi and the Sages with regard to *q’ri^{at} Sh’ma^C*; the former holds that it must be recited in Hebrew while the latter maintain that it may be recited in any language that one understands. Based on the later commentaries to these sources, we can infer that over time the accepted view became that of the Sages. However, as we saw in the *Yerushalmi*, Hebrew is the preferred language for *q’ri^{at} Sh’ma^C*, and if one is able to do so, one must recite it in Hebrew.³⁶ With regard to the *Amidah^C*, there is more consensus that it may be recited in any language that one understands, although one must pray in Hebrew when praying alone.

2.1.2. Medieval halakhic sources

As noted above, the talmudic discussion with regard to the language for *q’ri^{at} Sh’ma^C* appears also in *b.Ber.* 13a; it is from here that most of the codes base their discussions (although certain of the codifiers, such as Alfasi and the Rosh, incorporate material regarding the language for saying the *Amidah^C* that only appears in the *Sotah* passage discussed above). We will consider these sources chronologically so as to understand how each codifier built on the earlier sources that would have been available to him.

³⁵ Rashi here cites Alfasi’s comment on *b.Ber.* 4a.

³⁶ There are certain sources that suggest that one must recite the passage in Hebrew even if one does not understand what one is reading. Cf. Rosh 7:6 on *b.Ber.* 45b with regard to *Birkat Hamazon*.

The first of the medieval codes we will consider is *Sefer Halakhot G'dolot*, the ninth-century Babylonian halakhic compilation. The development here is quite terse, and only addresses the question of the language for *q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C. *Halakhot G'dolot* (*Hilkhot B'rakhot* 7, p. 36) first identifies the disagreement between Rabbi Yehudah haNasi and the Sages on this subject. To resolve the matter, the code simply cites the *mishnah* (Sotah 7:1), which clearly states that the *Sh'ma*^C may be recited in any language, not just in Hebrew. Alfasi (eleventh century, North Africa) comes to the same conclusion, although he is more explanatory in his reasoning. Alfasi rules according to the Sages because of the general principle that the *halakhah* is decided according to the majority and not the minority/individual. A second reason is that he decides according to the anonymous *mishnah* (as does *Halakhot G'dolot*), applying this principle to the *baraita*³⁷ as well. Alfasi also summarizes the talmudic material with regard to the *Amidah*^C (i.e., the distinction between praying alone and with the congregation), and Rabbi Yochanan's justification regarding the angels not understanding Aramaic. However, Alfasi does not add any new material or opinion here.

The next source we will examine is Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C 2:10. The full text of this passage is as follows:

קורא אדם את שמע בכל לשון שיהיה מבינה.
והקורא בכל לשון צריך להזהר מדברי שבוש
שבאותו הלשון ומדקדק באותו הלשון כמו
שמדקדק בלשון הקודש.

One recites the *Sh'ma*^C in any language that he understands. But the one who recites in another language³⁸ must be careful with his words to avoid mistakes in that language, and must be precise in that language as one is precise in the Holy Tongue.

³⁷ *t.Sotah* 7:4

³⁸ That is, besides Hebrew.

At one level, the statement is very straightforward: Maimonides is agreeing with the same position we have seen in the previous codes that *Sh'ma*^C may be recited in any language and not just in Hebrew. Indeed, this is not surprising insofar as we saw this same opinion in Maimonides' commentary on *m.Sotah* 7:1. However, the warning in the second part of Maimonides' statement is interesting, in part because it is not found in the other codes. There are two important elements of this warning. The first is that it suggests that it is the text of the *Sh'ma*^C that possesses the sanctity, and the language is merely the vehicle for expressing that sanctity. Hence, regardless of the language in which one recites the *Sh'ma*^C, that language must be treated with the same reverence we would apply to Hebrew, the Holy Tongue (that is, we must be especially careful with our enunciation to avoid mistakes of articulation). The second point is that while the warning that one reciting the *Sh'ma*^C must be precise in the other language as he would be with Hebrew might lead to the implication that one may recite the *Sh'ma*^C in another language even if one knows how to read Hebrew, my translation indicates that this is not the case. I believe that Maimonides' point here is simply that one who reads in Hebrew is very precise as to enunciation, melody, etc. (e.g., as when chanting Torah for the congregation), and that the same ought to be true of one who recites the *Sh'ma*^C in another language. Maimonides does not address at all the question of whether one must recite the *Sh'ma*^C in Hebrew if one is able.

The first Ashkenazi source we will examine is *Sefer Chasidim*, from Germany around the twelfth or thirteenth century. Although strictly speaking *Sefer Chasidim* is not a legal code, the material it presents is valuable for our understanding of the issue of the suitability of praying in languages other than Hebrew. There are two relevant passages in the

text. The first is *siman* 588, which indicates that if men or women who do not understand Hebrew come to learn, they should learn the prayers in a language that they understand.

The justification for this view is:

...כי התפלה אינה אלא בהבנת הלב ואם הלב
אינו יודע מה שיוציא מפיו מה מועיל לו לכך
טוב שיתפלל באותו לשון שהוא מבין.

...for the Prayer serves no purpose except
when the heart understands, and if the
heart does not know what comes out from
his mouth what is its usefulness? Hence, it
is better that he should pray in the lan-
guage that he understands.

The second passage, *siman* 785, is equally forceful in its advocacy for prayer in the vernacular:

טוב לו לאדם שיתפלל ויקרא את שמע וברכות
בלשון שמבין בו.

It is good for a man to pray and recite the
Sh'ma^C and blessings in a language that
he understands.

The passage continues by labeling one who prays in Hebrew without understanding as one who honors God with his lips but keeps his heart far from God,³⁹ and goes on to say that such a person's wisdom will fail.⁴⁰ The conclusion of the relevant portion of the *siman*⁴¹ states that both the *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi* were written in Aramaic (the vernacular at the time) so that even the common people (עמי הארץ) would know and understand the commandments.

While we have seen other sources address the permissibility of prayer in the vernacular, this view has been restricted to cases when one is unable to read (קרא) Hebrew. This is the first source that has gone beyond this to state that it is permissible to pray in the vernacular when one does not understand (הבין) Hebrew, and even that it is actually

³⁹ Isaiah 29:13

⁴⁰ Isaiah 29:14

⁴¹ The second part of the paragraph emphasizes the importance of proper *kavanah* for prayer, and of having suitably knowledgeable and pious leaders for the community.

preferable to do so. The issue here is that of bringing the appropriate intention (כוונה) and piety to one's prayers, and the factors that impede or facilitate this piety.

We now turn to another Ashkenazi perspective, that of the Rosh (Asher b. Yechiel). In general, the Rosh is of great interest because he lived and worked in both Ashkenaz and in Spain, and thus incorporates both traditions into his work. The opening section of his commentary on our passage from *b.Ber.* 13a,⁴² as is often the case with the Rosh, is a restatement of Alfasi's commentary on this passage (both with regard to *q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C and with regard to the *Amidah*^C). However, the Rosh then introduces an interesting question based on an observation of actual behavior in Jewish communities:

מצאתי בנימוקי תלמידי ה"ר יונה ז"ל שהיה
תמיה כיון שתפלה ביחיד אינה נאמרת אלא
בלשון הקודש היאך נהגו כל העולם שהנשים
מתפללות בשאר לשונות דכיון שחייבות
בתפלה לא היה להן להתפלל אלא בלשון
הקדש.

I found in the explanations of the students of Rabbi Yonah [Gerondi] that he was astonished [by this ruling], since if private prayer is only to be said in the Holy Tongue, why is it the universal custom that women may pray in a variety of languages, for if they are obligated to pray they should only be praying in the Holy Tongue.

There are two significant pieces of information that we can derive from this passage. The first is that women generally prayed alone rather than with the congregation (a situation that accords with the traditional female role of caring for the house). The second is that women were generally not taught Hebrew, although we can presume that they were literate in the vernacular in the various Ashkenazi communities. From this situation, the רבני צרפת (that is, the Tosafists) drew the distinction between praying for one's needs⁴³ (such as praying on behalf of a sick relative) and reciting the prayer that is fixed (קבוע) for the

⁴² Pisqei haRosh 2:2

⁴³ Cf. Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yochanan's exposition in *b.Sotah* 33a.

congregation. In the former case, as per Rabbi Yehudah haNasi's statement in the *Bavli*, one must pray in Hebrew if one is praying alone. In the latter case, one may pray in any language, except Aramaic, even when praying alone. The Rosh's position vis à vis the particular restriction on prayer in Aramaic is based on the Tosafot on *b. Shabb. 12b*, in that the ministering angels certainly know the thoughts that lie in man's heart (regardless of language), and the issue with Aramaic is that it is an offensive language to the angels. Hence, they do not heed one who prays in Aramaic, but this does not apply to other languages. As we see from the Rosh's son, Jacob b. Asher, in his *ṢArba^Cah Turim*, the implication here is that one may in fact make personal petitions in any language (except Aramaic) when praying privately.⁴⁴

Aside from the fact that this commentary provides a sterling example of how *halakhah* often evolves based on the actual behavior of Jewish communities, there are several significant implications of this explanation. The first implication is that there is a sense here that each congregation would have an established prayer ritual, even though each person might not have a printed *siddur* as is usual today. This would not necessarily have been the case in the time of the Mishnah or the Talmud. We see here that this fixed ritual provides a connection to the congregation even when one is praying alone. The second implication is that the Rosh reads the restriction against praying in Aramaic (which was the vernacular at the time of the Sages) narrowly, as a prohibition against praying in that language specifically rather than as a general restriction against praying in the vernacular.

⁴⁴ *Tur, Oreich Chayim* 101. In fact, the Tur conforms to the Rosh's position on the subject of the language of prayer, and does not address this issue with regard to *q'ri²at Sh'ma^C* at all. Indeed, the Tur often agrees with his father's positions.

Finally, we come to the most widely-regarded of the halakhic codes, Joseph Caro's sixteenth-century *Shulchan 'Arukh*. With regard to *q'ri'at Sh'ma*, Caro essentially restates Maimonides' position from the *Mishneh Torah*, that one may recite it in any language but must be careful to avoid mistakes in the recitation.⁴⁵ There is relatively little commentary on this ruling, other than to state that the reason for this position is so that one will understand what one is saying, and that it is the same for prayer and for *Birkat Hamazon*.⁴⁶ With regard to prayer, the *Shulchan 'Arukh* essentially recapitulates the material we found in the Rosh's commentary.⁴⁷ However, it is interesting to see how the primary commentaries (which are primarily explanatory) on the *Shulchan 'Arukh* interact with Caro's text.

This section of the *Shulchan 'Arukh* breaks down into three issues, following the Rosh:

1. The talmudic view that one may pray in any language when with the congregation, but alone one must pray in Hebrew. Both the *Magein Avraham* (Rabbi Abraham Gombiner) and the *Turei Zahav* (Rabbi David b. Samuel Halevi) explain that the angels only respond to Hebrew (compare this with the above discussion), but that, when praying with the congregation, God receives the prayers Himself without need of the angels as intercessors. However, the *Magein Avraham* also cites the material we examined from *Sefer Chasidim*, in that it is better to pray in another language if one does not understand Hebrew.

For this reason, we can interpret the previous comments about the angels as

⁴⁵ *Oreich Chayim* 62:2

⁴⁶ So *Magein Avraham*, who also indicates that the requirement to understand what one is saying does not apply to *Qiddush*, the blessing over fruit, the blessings for *mitsvot*, and *Hallel*.

⁴⁷ *Oreich Chayim* 101:4

explanatory and not as diverging from the conclusion reached at the end of the section.

2. The view of the Tosafists, cited by the Rosh, that when one is reciting the fixed prayer, even alone, one may do so in any language. It is only when petitioning God for one's personal needs that one must pray in Hebrew when alone. Here, the *Magein Avraham* cites the Tosafistic position that Aramaic is an offensive language to the angels, but that they understand all languages.
3. The Rosh's view that even when petitioning for one's needs while alone, one may do so in any language except Aramaic, and here the *Turei Zahav* cites the Tosafistic material.

Hence, the Ashkenazi commentators on Caro's Sephardi text reinforce what he has written, giving us the sense that there is consensus on this issue. The only caveat is that Caro introduces the second and third points with the phrase *יש אומרים* ("some say"), indicating that not everybody agrees with the more lenient position, even though it appears to be widely accepted as a suitable halakhic position.

To summarize, the consensus view seems to be that one may recite the *Sh'ma*^C in any language one understands, but must still approach the recitation with suitable reverence and *kavanah*. Similarly, one may pray in any language one understands, with the exception that when praying alone, one may not do so in Aramaic.⁴⁸ With regard to this last position, Alfasi is the only one of the sources who maintains the talmudic position that one must pray in Hebrew when praying alone, and *Sefer Chasidim* goes so far as to sug-

⁴⁸ Incidentally, the *Qaddish*, the primary Aramaic passage in the liturgy, is not recited when one prays alone, but only when one prays as part of a *minyan* (although the fact that the *Qaddish* is in Aramaic is not the reason for this practice; it is not recited when one prays alone because it is one of the *דברים שבקדושה*, passages of such sanctity that they require a *minyan* to be recited).

gest that it is preferable to pray in a language that one understands, even if one is able to read Hebrew. And while the evolution in the *halakhah* from what is in the Talmud to what is in the *Shulchan ʿArukh* seems to have come about because of a lack of Hebrew literacy in medieval times, we know that, in actuality, it was still normative to pray in Hebrew with the congregation. In practice, it seems that the primary locus of vernacular prayer was with women praying alone.

2.1.3. Liturgical sources

To conclude our discussion of the traditional Jewish view regarding prayer in the vernacular, we will briefly examine several of the early liturgical codes. In some cases (e.g., *Seder Rav ʿAmram Gaʿon*, *Siddur Rav Saʿdiah Gaʿon*, and *Machzor Vitry*), these codes include the full texts of the prayers as well as a discussion of the halakhic issues associated with prayer. In other cases (e.g., *Sefer Hamanhig* and *Perushei Siddur Hatʾfilah Laroqeich*), these are works that discuss the issues and customs associated with prayer without presenting the full texts of the prayers themselves. Because these books have a more practical or descriptive orientation, the texts tend to present conclusions without significant attention to the halakhic reasoning that leads to those conclusions. Furthermore, the question of the appropriate language of prayer is often presented as an aside in the discussion of another issue rather than being treated on its own.⁴⁹ In large part, this is likely because regardless of what the halakhic sources permit, the normative mode of Jewish prayer (and certainly of public prayer) was to conduct the prayers in Hebrew.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Indeed, two of the significant liturgical codes do not even treat the subject at all, indicating an implicit assumption that (public) prayer was conducted in Hebrew exclusively. Solomon Buber and Jacob Freimann, eds., סדור רש"י *Siddur Raschi* (Berlin, 1911), p. 47 (*siman* 91), only addresses the question with regard to *Birkat Hamazon*, and *Sefer Abudraham* does not even address the question at all.

⁵⁰ As we observed above with regard to the Rosh's commentary, the significant exception to this view was women, who often did not learn Hebrew and often did pray alone rather than with the

Seder Rav ^C*Amram Ga'on*, in the section addressing *q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C,⁵¹ simply cites the opinion of the Sages that it may be recited in any language one understands (בכל לשון).⁵² *Machzor Vitry* addresses the question of language tangentially, in a section⁵³ that discusses the translation of Torah readings for the benefit of women and children, citing the women's obligation to hear the Torah reading. This leads to mention of the parallel obligation to recite *Sh'ma*^C and the ^C*Amidah* and the following statement:

<p>ואם אינם יודעין לשון הקודש מלמדין אותם בכל לשון שיכולות לשמוע וללמוד</p>	<p>...and if they don't know Hebrew⁵⁴ one teaches them in any language that they can understand and learn.</p>
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Although not a direct statement about the issue of praying in a language other than Hebrew, the context does suggest the view that one may pray in any language that one understands.

Perushei Siddur Hat'filah Laroqeich holds the same view as *Machzor Vitry* with regard to *q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C,⁵⁵ but not with regard to the ^C*Amidah*. The position with regard to the ^C*Amidah* is found in the discussion of the *Qaddish*.⁵⁶ The text tells us that *Qaddish* is in Aramaic (the vernacular in Babylonia) so that men, women, and children will be able to praise God wholeheartedly. The ^C*Amidah*, though, is not in Aramaic because the

congregation.

⁵¹ Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., סדר רב עמרם גאון *Seder Rav* ^C*Amram Ga'on* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1971), pp. 17-18; *Seder Q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C *Uvirkhoteha* 23.

⁵² *b.Sotah* 32b

⁵³ Simeon Hurwitz, ed., מחזור ויטרי *Machzor Vitry* (Compiled by Simcha b. Samuel of Vitry, Jerusalem: ALEF, 1963), p. 713; *siman* 527:18.

⁵⁴ Lit. the Holy Tongue

⁵⁵ Moshe Hershler, פירוש סידור התפילה לרוקח *Perushei Siddur Hat'filah Laroqeich* (Compiled by Eleazar b. Judah of Worms, Jerusalem: Makhon Harav Hershler, 1992), p. 283; *siman* 42.

⁵⁶ Hershler, *Perushei*, p. 242; *siman* 39.

ministering angels only understand Hebrew.⁵⁷ The implication is that our petitions to God must be recited in Hebrew only.

The final source we will examine is the *Sefer Hamanhig*, which aimed to document a wide variety of Jewish practices from the twelfth century, based on the extensive travels of its author, Abraham b. Nathan of Lunel. While the *Sefer Hamanhig* is not specifically a liturgical code, as it documents Jewish practices in all aspects of life, it does give attention to the laws and practices associated with prayer. On the subject of the language for *q'ri'at Sh'ma*^C,⁵⁸ the text begins by citing Rav ^CAmram (both with regard to saying the *Sh'ma*^C audibly and that it may be said in any language) and then by highlighting the halakhic debate on these issues. However, this synopsis begins with the phrase וְאֵעָ"ג דְּקִימָא לִן כְּרַבְנָן ("Even though we hold according to the Sages [and not according to Rabbi Yehudah]"); that is, foreshadowing the fact that although the halakhic decision is according to the majority and not the individual, actual practice in this regard varies. Indeed, Abraham b. Nathan then documents that it is usual practice in the Sephardi world to recite the first line of the *Sh'ma*^C בְּקוֹל רַם ("aloud in full voice"), and thus presumably to recite the rest silently.⁵⁹ This accords neither with the view that *Sh'ma*^C must be recited audibly, nor with the view that it may be recited silently, because the entire passage is recited in more than one way. This section ends with the following rebuff of Rav ^CAmram's position:

⁵⁷ See *b. Shabb.* 12b and *b. Sotah* 33a. However, note that there is a subtle but significant difference in phrasing here. In the Talmud, we read that the angels do not understand Aramaic. Here, the phrasing is that they only understand Hebrew.

⁵⁸ Yitschak Raphael, ed., סֵפֶר הַמְנְהִיג, *Sefer Hamanhig* (Compiled by Abraham b. Nathan of Lunel, Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1978), pp. 73-74. *Sefer Hamanhig* does not address the issue of language with regard to the ^C*Amidah* specifically.

⁵⁹ Indeed, this is usual traditional practice among Sephardim even today.

זהו סברת רב עמרם ז"ל אך הוא סותר דבריו
להביא ראיה כדכתי' שמע ודורשו לשני ענייני'
ואין מי שסובר שני דרשו' אלו.

This is the opinion of Rav ^CAmram, but he contradicts his words in bringing proof from the word *Sh'ma*^C and deriving from it two interpretations, and there is nobody who follows these two interpretations.

That is, Rav ^CAmram has presented a view that does not correspond to the usual practice, both in that the first line only is recited aloud, and that evidently it was unheard of to recite *Sh'ma*^C in a language other than Hebrew.

2.2. The debate over the language of prayer in early Reform

As we saw in the previous section, there has always been a tension between what is permitted by *halakhah* and the actual behavior of praying Jews. The sources we have examined provide ample evidence for the permissibility of prayer in languages other than Hebrew, but the nearly universal custom has been to pray in the Holy Tongue.⁶⁰ Because of the emphasis in Jewish tradition on supporting and maintaining the norms of the community, we can understand that when the first reformers began to change the language and content of the prayer service, there was considerable resistance from more traditionally-oriented Jews. Indeed, there were heated debates on the subject of language both between reformers and traditionalists as well as among the reformers themselves. Besides the debate surrounding the *permissibility* of vernacular prayer in the synagogue, there were divergent views as to whether it was *desirable* to pray in the vernacular, and if so, whether this was to be a temporary response to the lack of Hebrew literacy among nineteenth-century Jews or a more long-lasting response to a changed social landscape.

⁶⁰ As discussed above, the key exception has been for women's private prayers. However, it is absolutely clear that in nearly every Jewish community throughout the centuries, the norm with regard to public synagogue prayer has been to pray in Hebrew.

While Jews in late-eighteenth-century Germany, as exemplified by Moses Mendelssohn, were first confronted with the challenge of the Enlightenment and its universalistic worldview, it was Jews in the nineteenth century who faced the practical consequences in the form of Emancipation. While the Enlightenment represented the theoretical and philosophical challenge to Jewish exclusivity, it was Emancipation with its promise of actual equality between Jews and Gentiles that forced Jews to confront the challenge that modernity presented to their survival as a people in the Diaspora. The tension lay not just in setting aside the many centuries of Jewish suspicion of the surrounding culture, but also in defining the balance between assimilation and preserving a particularistic Jewish identity.⁶¹

One of the early Jewish leaders wrestling with this balance was David Friedländer, a follower of Mendelssohn. While Friedländer ardently wished Jews to be fully incorporated into German society, he recognized the pull that conversion to Christianity could exert. Indeed, many of his friends did convert, leading Friedländer to draw the distinction that “giving up...the ceremonial laws [of Judaism], is entirely different from accepting Christianity.”⁶² On the other hand, Friedländer viewed the Enlightenment world as one in which “[t]he Jew...was no longer *regarded* as a stranger [and furthermore had] ceased *being* a stranger.”⁶³ Their entry into the mainstream of society thus required an adaptation of Judaism to these modern circumstances. Israel Jacobson, in his address at the dedication of the new Jewish school and synagogue in Seesen in 1810,⁶⁴ echoed these

⁶¹ Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (2nd ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 155.

⁶² W. Gunther Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of its European Origins* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1963), p. 10.

⁶³ Jakob Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), p. 132.

⁶⁴ The school in Seesen is widely regarded as having held the first reformed service in Germany (the

sentiments. While remaining faithful to the traditional principles of Judaism, Jacobson encouraged the congregation to seek “rapprochement [with their] Christian neighbors...[for o]n it depends the education of [their] spirit for true religiosity and, at the same time also, [their] future greater political welfare.”⁶⁵ Because the new political reality demanded that Jews become a part of the general society as citizens, there would necessarily be changes to those “religious customs which must be rightfully offensive to reason as well as to [their] Christian friends.”⁶⁶

The liturgical reforms resulting from these sentiments took several forms. In addition to the use of the vernacular, the reformers generally sought to remove or rephrase those portions of the service that did not seem suitable for a newly-emancipated people trying to establish their loyalty to the modern state and not to the messianic hope of a restored Zion. With regard to language, the first justifications for reform were based on practical considerations. For example, David Friedländer decried the outmoded aesthetics of the traditional Hebrew prayers in expressing the need for revisions to bring the conveyed sentiments in line with Enlightenment thinking.⁶⁷ Edward Kley and C. S. Günsburg captured the new political realities vis à vis the language of liturgy in their 1817 work *Die Deutsche Synagoge*, a prayer book prepared for the Berlin community after Israel Jacobson had brought his modified service there. Kley and Günsburg write of the Hebrew language as holy to Jews, and to be revered as the “wise teacher” of tradition.⁶⁸ However,

Adath Jeschurun congregation in Amsterdam had held its first services thirteen years before, but had ceased to function in 1808 when Louis Napoleon forced the “new community” to join in a single consistory with the “old community”), although it was still quite traditional by contrast with the types of changes that were to come in the following decades. The dedication was attended by both Jews and non-Jews, as reflected by the tenor of Jacobson’s remarks.

⁶⁵ Plaut, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Plaut, p. 30.

⁶⁷ Plaut, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 133-35.

they go on to state that “seven times more holy unto us is the language which belongs to the present and to the soil whence we have sprung forth...the language which unites us with our fellow-men in happy fellowship or in serious business, the language, finally, in which our philanthropic and just king speaks to us, in which he proclaims his law to us.”⁶⁹ Not only is German elevated to the status of a *holy* language, the important king is not God but rather Frederick William III!

The founders of the Hamburg Temple were somewhat more moderate and prosaic in putting forth in their constitution their desire to emulate in a more established manner the earlier attempts at a liberal service, justifying the need for reform “[s]ince public worship has for some time been neglected by so many, because of the ever decreasing knowledge of the language in which alone it has until now been conducted.”⁷⁰ This more moderate approach is borne out in examining the 1819 Hamburg liturgy, which is quite traditional in many ways and utilizes a lot of Hebrew. Seckel Isaac Fränkel, one of the editors of the book, justifies the significant use of Hebrew instead of German because Jews would generally be familiar with the biblical passages in the liturgy, so that Hebrew would not be neglected, and so that there would be no sense that discarding the Hebrew language was in fact a rejection of Judaism as a whole.⁷¹ An interesting variant on these practical justifications for vernacular prayer is provided by Rabbi Aaron Chorin, the chief rabbi of Arad, Hungary, and an early supporter of liturgical reforms,⁷² who justified the

⁶⁹ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 135.

⁷⁰ Plaut, p. 31.

⁷¹ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 53.

⁷² Chorin wrote in Eliezer Libermann’s *Nogah Hatsedek* in support of using the vernacular for certain parts of the service, although not for the ^ע*Amidah* and *q’ri’at Sh’ma*^ע. (Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 89-90) However, in the later collection *Eileh Divrei Habrit*, Chorin retracted his support for the reformers when he found that the content of the prayers and not just the language had been changed. (Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 93-94) As Petuchowski explains, though, it seems likely that this retraction was made under duress, as Chorin reversed himself again not long afterward.

use of vernacular prayer so that women (who would not understand any Hebrew even if the men did) would not be left out of the worship experience.⁷³

The initial debate regarding the early reforms in Seesen, Berlin, and Hamburg was conducted largely in halakhic terms. The opening shot was fired in response to Jacobson's services in Berlin by an unattributed booklet, and attacked the reformers on halakhic grounds for eliminating the silent ^c*Amidah*, playing an organ during services, and reading the Torah rather than chanting it. With regard to the use of vernacular, the writer of this booklet took issue with both the abandonment of the Hebrew language, "the source of life," as well as for more generally deviating from the traditional text of the prayers.⁷⁴ The Reform response, contained in Eliezer Libermann's publications *Or Nogah* and *Nogah Hatsedek*, cited many of the halakhic sources that we discussed above, including the *Bavli*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Shulchan* ^c*Arukh*, and *Sefer Chasidim*.⁷⁵ It should be noted that Libermann's argument was intended to apply only in Germany, where he felt that Jews generally spoke German but were ignorant of Hebrew, and not in other countries such as Poland where Jews were generally knowledgeable of Hebrew.⁷⁶

In response to Libermann's publications, the *beit din* in Hamburg issued a compilation of traditional rabbinic responsa called *Eileh Divrei Habrit*. Among other positions, this collection stated unequivocally that prayer in any language other than Hebrew was impermissible.⁷⁷ Moses Sofer of Pressburg (more commonly known as the *Chatam Sofer*) expanded on this view, going so far as to state that *m.Sotah* 7:1 "refers to a chance occur-

⁷³ Plaut, p. 253.

⁷⁴ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 84-85. The rhetoric also claimed that a majority of the service was conducted in German, which Petuchowski points out was an "exaggerated" contention because the Berlin services actually were conducted largely in Hebrew (cf. p. 88).

⁷⁵ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 86-87.

⁷⁶ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 88-89.

⁷⁷ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 90.

rence, to the case of an individual.”⁷⁸ Thus, Sofer is criticizing the reformers for instituting regular prayer in the vernacular, and for conducting the communal prayer in the vernacular.⁷⁹ In large part, Sofer bases his argument on the fact that even at the time the Sages compiled the prayers, the common language of the people was Aramaic and not Hebrew, yet the prayers were composed in Hebrew. Hence, the fact that the German Jews were not proficient in Hebrew was not, in his mind, sufficient justification for abandoning the traditional language of Jewish prayer.⁸⁰ A supporting view (published separately) was provided by Abraham Loewenstamm of Emden, who argued methodically that it is better to pray in Hebrew even if one does not understand the Holy Tongue (and that one who understands Hebrew is actually forbidden to pray in another language).⁸¹

However, the halakhic character of the debate quickly dissipated as it became clear that the reformers did not feel bound by the authority of traditional *halakhah*. Indeed, with Jews achieving individual citizenship after Emancipation, and hence the (at least official) loss of communal authority to enforce religious laws, the traditionalists had no recourse to enforce compliance with their rulings. This state of affairs is evident from the following passage from the introduction to *Eileh Divrei Habrit*:

...Behold, we had hoped that these men [who have introduced Reform] would have attended to our words and listened to the voice of their teachers, who alone are fit to express an opinion on matters concerning what is permitted and what is prohibited. In former times the men of our proud city have listened to the voice of their

⁷⁸ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 91. Of course, as we discussed above, the opposite is in fact the customary understanding of the *mishnah*.

⁷⁹ This point, regarding the question of an individual member of the congregation versus the prayer leader praying in the vernacular, was one of the ambiguities we identified in our discussion of the halakhic sources. Sofer seems to be drawing on the universal behavior of praying in Hebrew to come to his understanding of the *mishnah*.

⁸⁰ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 91-92.

⁸¹ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 94-97. Compare this with our discussion of the material from the *Yerushalmi*, which leads to the view that the *Sh'ma*^c may be recited in the vernacular only if one does not know Hebrew.

teachers, who told them the path they were to take. We had thought that our judgment would be honored and that they would not dare to disobey our utterance, for our strength now is as it was formerly.

But we hoped in vain, for these men disobeyed the counsel [of their teachers] and sank into sin. They quickly built for themselves a house of prayer, which they called a temple, and published a prayerbook for Sabbaths and festivals, which has caused great sorrow and brought tears to our eyes over the destruction of our people.⁸²

There is clearly an internal contradiction here, for if the traditional rabbis in fact did retain their customary authority, then a rogue group of laypeople would have been unable to establish an independent synagogue. The fact of the new political reality brought about by Emancipation is that the traditionalists could say all they wanted to, but ultimately the reformers could do as they pleased.

In this situation of newly-realized autonomy, the debate over the language of prayer turned inward. The significant questions, which have remained very much alive down to the current day, centered not around whether or not it is permitted to pray in the vernacular, but rather around the desirability of exercising the freedom to pray in the vernacular and the extent to which the vernacular should be utilized in the prayer service, and even around the necessity of retaining Hebrew at all. On the one hand, the radical reformers held that German was the mother tongue of German Jews, and that Hebrew should be eliminated as an ancient relic. Abraham Adler advocated forcefully for this point of view at the second rabbinical conference held in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1845. Adler argued that it was the message and not the language that imported sanctity, and so Hebrew had no particular claim on holiness, and that the obsession with language had in fact obscured understanding of the true meaning of the Bible.⁸³ More pointedly, Adler

⁸² Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, p. 167.

characterized Hebrew as an unaesthetic language that was “dead because it [did] not live within the people,”⁸⁴ and even as “a cancer on the body of religion.”⁸⁵ It is Adler’s position that predominated in the Berlin Reformgemeinde, which retained only a few biblical passages in Hebrew, such as the first two lines of the *Sh'ma*^c and the congregational responses to the *Q'dushah*. Immanuel Heinrich Ritter justified their position by stating, “Hebrew has become a foreign language for us, and German the language of our homeland.”⁸⁶

At the opposite end of the spectrum, more moderate reformers advocated for retaining a greater amount of Hebrew in the service. Ludwig Philippson contended that despite the sanction that the classical Jewish sources give to vernacular prayer, there are strong “*emotional* and...*historical* reasons [for] the retention of Hebrew.”⁸⁷ In part, the historical reasons included the sense of unity a common language provided for Jews in different lands. This concern led Samuel Levi Eger of Brunswick to lament, “If we now pray in German here and the Jews of France in French, those in Italy in Italian—the bundle will come apart.”⁸⁸

Zacharias Frankel was even more forceful in his defense of the necessity for retaining Hebrew in the service.⁸⁹ Frankel certainly acknowledges that “it is urgently neces-

⁸³ Plaut, pp. 163-64.

⁸⁴ Plaut, p. 164.

⁸⁵ Plaut, p. 164. Adler cites Isaiah 29:13 in defense of his position (“With their mouth and with their lips [they] do honor Me, but have removed their hearts far from Me.”)

⁸⁶ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 59. Indeed, it is for this reason that I have not included the Berlin liturgy in my discussion in chapter 3. Aside from the fact that the approach in Berlin was to simply exclude any potentially problematic elements of the service, the Berlin liturgy (especially in its later incarnations) did not always follow the traditional structure of the Jewish prayer service. In these regards, using the sources from Berlin does not add anything to the discussion that can be developed using the other sources from that era.

⁸⁷ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 99.

⁸⁸ Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), p. 39.

⁸⁹ Indeed, Frankel left the Frankfurt conference because the consensus was that Hebrew was not neces-

sary that a part of the service be held in German,”⁹⁰ but overall emphasizes the critical importance of using the Hebrew language to preserve the heritage of the Hebrew Bible and the prayers. In particular, Frankel maintains that the view that German is considered more enlightened than Hebrew is held only by those who do not have a good knowledge of Hebrew, and that the use of Hebrew as the language of prayer should not be a barrier to Jewish integration into the surrounding society, citing the examples of Holland and France in this regard.⁹¹

The middle ground between these two poles was defined by Ludwig Philippson at the Frankfurt conference. Recognizing the consensus that “nobody wants to eliminate Hebrew altogether and no one opposes the introduction of German,”⁹² Philippson advocated for the “Hebrew and German elements [being] organically integrated.”⁹³ The following passage from his remarks at the conference neatly sums up the balance he seeks between Jewish religiosity and German patriotism:

The Hebrew language is indispensable as a central point of our religion. The German Jews are German, they think and feel German and want to live and work as patriots. But Judaism is not German; it is universal. The dispersion of the Jews is not the dispersion of Judaism. And, therefore, it must have a unified character. Its content is its creed; its form is represented by each.⁹⁴

sary for Jewish worship, and thus that the balance between Hebrew and the vernacular was entirely up to the individual congregation. See Plaut, p. 162.

⁹⁰ Plaut, p. 163. Given Frankel’s overall emphasis on the instrumental importance of Hebrew, I would posit that he said this with regard either to having a German sermon in the service, or because of the fact that the level of Hebrew literacy was low and so German should be used temporarily until the level of Hebrew knowledge could be improved.

⁹¹ Plaut, pp. 162-63.

⁹² Plaut, p. 164.

⁹³ Plaut, p. 164.

⁹⁴ Plaut, p. 165.

In some sense, the break with tradition that Philipppson suggests is not in the forms of worship and ritual (as with the radical reformers), but in the redefinition of Judaism as a religion and not as an amalgam of religion and nation.

Besides the varying ideologies with regard to the use of Hebrew and the vernacular in the prayer service, another significant issue is the aesthetics of the prayer service and of the prayer book. With regard to the former, we have the opinion of Max Loewengard, who objected to the Hamburg service because “of the alternation of Hebrew and German prayers.”⁹⁵ Rather than commenting on the amount of one language or the other in the service, Loewengard argues that it would have been better to arrange the German passages around the sermon, which was also in German.⁹⁶ With regard to the aesthetics of the prayer book, and in particular with regard to the use of the vernacular, Abraham Geiger offered his views in the introduction to his 1854 prayer book. Geiger argues that for most people, a German translation of the traditional Hebrew liturgy is not adequate. For one who knows the Hebrew, such a translation is not useful because he “may find himself prevented by his loyalty to a beloved prayer from making criticisms about its religious point of view and its form.”⁹⁷ That is, for someone who has an emotional connection to the traditional Hebrew text independent of its actual meaning, knowing the content of the prayer could actually diminish the value of the prayer. On the other hand, one who is unfamiliar with the Hebrew “demands from the prayer the kind of contents and expres-

⁹⁵ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 56.

⁹⁶ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 56. It is perhaps because of these aesthetic considerations that the first edition of Isaac Mayer Wise’s *Minhag Amerika* (published in 1857) had the Hebrew and English liturgies printed in separate volumes, with the introductory instruction in the English volume, “Pray in the Language thou understandest best.” See Isaac Mayer Wise, Isidor Kalisch, and Benjamin Rothenheim, eds., תפילות בני ישורון: מנהג אמעריקא: *The Daily Prayers, Part I* (English trans. Isaac M. Wise, German trans. Isidor Kalisch and Benjamin Rothenheim, Cincinnati, 1857), p. 2.

⁹⁷ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 151.

sion with which his heart can completely identify.”⁹⁸ In this case, without the sentimental association, the individual must have a German version of the prayer that is suitable to the modern climate rather than a translation that maintains the archaisms of the Hebrew text. Based on this position, it will come as no surprise (as we shall see in chapter 3) that Geiger was the most prone to keep a modified form of the troublesome prayers rather than simply eliminating them from the service.

In North America, we can speak of a generally-accepted position of Reform congregations based on the various platforms that have been issued over the years. Of the five such platforms in existence, only two comment on the question of the language of prayer. The 1869 Philadelphia Principles state that

[t]he cultivation of the Hebrew language...must in our midst be considered as the fulfillment of a sacred obligation. However, the language has in fact become incomprehensible for the overwhelming majority of our present-day co-religionists, and therefore in the act of prayer (which is a body without a soul unless it is understood) Hebrew must take second place behind a language which the worshippers can understand insofar as this appears advisable under prevailing circumstances.⁹⁹

On the one hand, this position seems consonant with the radical position espoused by Abraham Adler and the Berlin Reformgemeinde, in that the vernacular is given priority over Hebrew. However, the position demonstrated here is more pragmatic than ideological. It maintains that Hebrew is to be both preferred and desired, but that the lack of Hebrew literacy is a practical obstacle to using it as the primary language of prayer. The other platform that comments on the issue of language is the 1937 Columbus Platform. With its renewed emphasis on ritual observance, this platform includes “the use of Hebrew, to-

⁹⁸ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 151.

⁹⁹ Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut, eds., *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents* (New York: UAH Press, 2001), p. 197.

gether with the vernacular, in our worship and instruction”¹⁰⁰ as one of the elements of Jewish life and identity. Here, we can recognize that the Reform movement is still wrestling with the balance of Hebrew and vernacular in the prayer service. Both are included here, and the platform is not prescriptive on this question.

It is clear that the question of vernacular prayer is a complex one that far transcends the simple permissibility of praying in languages other than Hebrew. We have touched on the authority of *halakhah* in post-Emancipation society as well as the delicate balance between assimilation and particularism. Furthermore, we have seen that even within the Reform community, there is a broad spectrum of views with regard to the desirability both of praying in the vernacular and of retaining Hebrew in the prayer service. With this understanding of the issues surrounding the language of prayer, we are now ready to delve more deeply into the issues related to the content of the prayers.

¹⁰⁰ Meyer and Plaut, p. 203.

Chapter 3. Evolution of Jewish Liturgical Texts

In the previous chapter, we discussed the issues regarding the language in which Jews pray. In this chapter, we will turn our focus to the content of those prayers and how it has evolved in response to external pressures as well as the shift to vernacular prayer. We will first examine the aspect of externally-imposed censorship and its effect on Jewish liturgy (as we shall discuss, there is often a fine line between external and internal censorship in this regard). We will then examine three particular passages in the Jewish liturgy that are overtly problematic from the standpoint of interfaith relations. Certainly there are a number of other passages that are problematic,¹⁰¹ but these three will serve as sufficient examples to illustrate the ideological struggles Jews have faced through the centuries with regard to their neighbors, and the sorts of liturgical approaches that were taken to euphemize or resolve those struggles.

It is important to point out that in the modern period, issues of form (i.e., the language of prayer) and content are not unrelated to each other. In all of the major Reform liturgies, both the language and the content of the prayers have been modified. While we discussed in the previous chapter the debates concerning the necessity of retaining Hebrew and the ideological differences that determined the relative amounts of Hebrew and the vernacular appearing in the service, and these are important for understanding the liturgical changes, we must also keep in mind that it is not possible to completely separate the aspects of form and content in this regard.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ For example, the numerous polemical, anti-Christian *piyyutim* that once dotted the festival services, or the line in the traditional Pesach *seder* that calls for God to “pour out [His] wrath on the nations.” See Karff, pp. 33-35.

In analyzing the liturgical changes that reformers have made over the years, I have two goals. The first is to present a representative sampling of the sorts of changes that have been made, with an eye towards understanding the approaches as much as identifying the specific variants in the prayer texts. My second goal is to trace the sorts of changes that have been made through the American Reform liturgies until today. In this manner, we will be able to understand how Jewish perceptions of non-Jews have evolved as American society has changed. To these ends, I have selected prayer books that are historically significant to the development of Reform Judaism, innovative in their liturgies, and that exerted influence on later liturgies (in particular the American prayer books). The prayer books that we will use in this chapter are as follows:¹⁰³

- Hamburg Temple prayer books of 1819 and 1841
- David Marks's *Forms of Prayer Used in the West London Synagogue of British Jews* of 1841-43
- Abraham Geiger's prayer books from 1854 and 1870
- Leo Merzbacher's 1855 *The Order of Prayer for Divine Service*
- The first edition of Isaac Mayer Wise's *Minhag Amerika* (1857 for the daily and Shabbat prayers; 1866 for the High Holy Days)
- Bernard Felsenthal's 1872 translation of David Einhorn's *Olat Tamid*
- The 1892 *Union Prayer Book* edited by Isaac Moses
- The 1895, 1918, and 1940 editions of the *Union Prayer Book* (1894, 1922, and 1945 for the High Holy Days)
- *Gates of Prayer* (1975) and *Gates of Repentance* (1978)
- The newest American Reform *siddur*, *Mishkan Tefilah* (2007)

¹⁰² Indeed, this is an integral part of my thesis! Because these elements are linked so intimately in the published liturgies, I argue that the change in language necessitated corresponding changes in the content of certain prayers, though both are derived from anterior changes in the surrounding culture and common cultural reference points.

¹⁰³ I have not included the liturgy from the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston, SC, here because while it represents the first reformed liturgy in America, it did not exert any historical influence and so qualifies as an anomaly in the development of Reform liturgy more generally.

3.1. External censorship and Jewish prayer

One very significant factor for understanding the evolution of Jewish liturgical texts in general, and the sorts of passages we are interested in for this project in particular, is the censorship that was imposed by religious and civil authorities for a variety of reasons. As we shall come to understand, while the effect of the mandated changes was often repressive, this was not generally the intent of the authorities. Nonetheless, the interaction between the outside authorities and the Jewish community with regard to censorship of Jewish prayers is an important phenomenon for understanding how the liturgy both reflects and shapes the attitudes its words represent.

3.1.1. *The cultural context of medieval censorship*

In his 1525 introduction to Joseph Albo's *Sefer Ha^cikkarim*, the publisher/printer Gershom Soncino wrote the following:

I praise the Lord who has guided me to begin and complete this book, the principles and roots of the pure Torah of God. In his mercy, He, may He be praised, strengthened my hands in its correction. I selected the sustenance from the waste, I uprooted the thorns from the vineyard and crushed them as the dust of the earth, so that this book may be as a tree planted by flowing streams.¹⁰⁴

This passage highlights the fine line that often exists between the processes of editing and censorship. What does it mean to “correct” a text? How do we characterize the “selection” of words and phrases? Even today, would we say that there is such a big difference between choosing a particular phrase to make one’s message clearer as compared to doing so because of particular sensitivities such as gender, race, religion, etc.? Consider one

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the 16th Century* (Trans. Jackie Feldman, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 97.

brief example that we will explore in more detail later in this section, the difference between the Hebrew phrases עבודה זרה (strange or foreign worship) and עבודת כוכבים ומזלות (worship of stars and celestial bodies; generally abbreviated as עכו"ם). For practical purposes, these phrases are synonymous—they refer to worship practices prohibited to Jews. However, to the medieval Church, the former expression had a resonance of idolatry (which could refer to Christian icons or statuary) that is absent in the latter (because it refers to worshipping celestial bodies¹⁰⁵ instead of idols). For this reason, the censorship guidelines compiled by Domenico Gerosolimitano at the end of the sixteenth century required occurrences of עבודה זרה to be replaced with עכו"ם.¹⁰⁶ Certainly the idea that this change was imposed from outside is quite significant, but the change itself is in fact relatively small.

The medieval censorship of Jewish texts was simply one example of a general cultural phenomenon beginning around the sixteenth century. There were two primary processes that resulted in the rise of organized censorship at this time (although manuscripts had been censored and even burned before this time¹⁰⁷). The first was the invention of the moveable-type printing press by Johannes Gutenberg around 1439, and the subsequent shift from manuscript culture to print. More than simply a change of production method, this also represented a shift from a principally oral tradition to a written one. The

¹⁰⁵ I.e., astrology.

¹⁰⁶ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 120-21. The complete list of guidelines is reproduced in Appendix A.

¹⁰⁷ Earlier periods of censorship, such as that in France in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, generally targeted the Talmud in particular, and not necessarily Jewish books in general. The stated reason for this earlier censorship was the same as in the sixteenth century, that the works were blasphemous to Christians. In particular, the word גוי (lit. Gentile, but often with derogatory overtones) was viewed with suspicion beginning at this time. See Yoel H. Kahn, *The Three Morning Blessings "...Who Did Not Make Me...": A Historical Study of a Jewish Liturgical Text* (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1999), pp. 69-70.

dialogue necessary to produce books was relocated to the print floor, where the writer and the editors/censors would define the final printed version of the book through their interactions. From this standpoint, it is unfair to categorize “the practice of early modern censorship simply as a violation of the text...because not only censorship, but the transition to print as a whole, led to the disappearance of much content...”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the inspection of printed materials was not only the focus of religious authorities who were motivated by dogmatic considerations, but also by civil governments with an interest in collecting taxes and ensuring copyright enforcement. It is not generally possible to differentiate between these types of activities because they were so closely woven together in the culture of the period.¹⁰⁹

The second factor motivating the rise of censorship was the cultural ferment that led to and resulted from the Protestant Reformation in the early decades of the sixteenth century. It is important to note that this was not simply an effort by the Catholic Church to insure correct doctrine in printed materials in response to the challenge of Protestantism, but also reflects an independent process of reform taking place in the Church during this time.¹¹⁰ So, for example, Pope Leo X justified control over printed matter in 1516 (before the official start of the Reformation in 1517) because of the fact that many books “contain errors opposed to the faith as well as pernicious views contrary to the Christian religion.”¹¹¹ Certainly, the Protestant Reformation exerted great influence on the Church in this regard, and Jews were sometimes caught in the middle of disputes between the Church and Protestants. So in response to the Protestant characterization of Catholi-

¹⁰⁸ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 18.

¹¹⁰ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 18-20.

¹¹¹ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 38-39.

cism as idolatrous,¹¹² the censors worked to insure a clear delineation between Catholic observance and idolatry and therefore were very sensitive to any perceived comparison between Catholicism and idolatry in Jewish literature. The effect was the sort of linguistic substitutions described above. However, it must be noted that the issue here was not the separation between Jews and Gentiles; there are many examples of such passages (such as those concerning prohibitions on wine produced by Gentiles) that were not censored.¹¹³ There were also circumstances where the Church found itself caught in between the Protestant and Jewish positions. For example, the customary Catholic reasoning against *halakhah* as a valid legal system was much the same as Protestant charges against the Church. Hence, the Church could not condemn Judaism without validating the Protestant argument against Catholicism.¹¹⁴

As is true in so many cases, Jews of the time were influenced by these trends in the surrounding society. Censorship was practiced by Jewish communities as well, as a result of the common cultural concerns and not just as a reaction to Catholic censorship. For example, there was concern within Jewish communities about the dissemination of kabbalistic literature because of the fear of divulging esoteric mysteries to the general public, who were not qualified to study them.¹¹⁵ And so we find that a 1554 convention of representatives of Italian Jewish communities implemented a requirement that a *beit din* and the heads of the Jewish community of the city give their approval to any book that was to be printed, and that anyone who purchased a book that had not been approved would be fined.¹¹⁶ Because censorship was prevalent in all segments of medieval Euro-

¹¹² Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 129.

¹¹³ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 161.

¹¹⁴ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 28.

¹¹⁵ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 117-18.

pean society, both Jewish and Christian, we cannot always be certain whether particular changes to a text were imposed by Christians or were made by Jews.¹¹⁷

When we consider the Christian censorship of Jewish texts specifically, we find that in addition to the rise of censorship in general there was certainly an element related to the general oppression of Jews during this era, such as “frequent expulsions, ghettoization and economic restrictions, and the efforts to bring about their conversion.”¹¹⁸ However, there is another element that is critical for properly understanding the import of medieval censorship of Jewish texts, and this is the rising interest among Christians in studying Jewish texts “not only for the purpose of polemic against Judaism, but also as an authentic body of knowledge, essential for the understanding of the Scriptures and for confirming the Christian faith.”¹¹⁹ The primary issue was thus not on *Jewish* use of this literature, but rather access to the texts by *Christians*, and especially by converts who might corrupt Christianity.¹²⁰ Because of this concern for controlling what Christians would read, the focus of the censors was on books studied by Christian Hebraists (such as the medieval commentators like Rashi) rather than on books that were more widely read by Jews (such as works of liturgy and *halakhah*).¹²¹ So even though the Talmud was often banned and burned, the halakhic codes were affected very little by censorship, a distinction that granted Jews permission to keep their particular customs while denying “[the tradition’s] claim to divine authority.”¹²² In the same vein, when Pope Gregory XIII

¹¹⁶ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 117.

¹¹⁷ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 195. See below for further examples of this ambiguity.

¹¹⁸ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 22-23.

¹¹⁹ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 23.

¹²⁰ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 42. Raz-Krakotzkin notes that “[t]he conversos [who were burned in Spain] were burned as *Christian* heretics, just as the copies of the Talmud were burned because they threatened Christian society.”

¹²¹ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 82.

¹²² Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 54. See also p. 159.

banned the Talmud in 1584, he also asserted the Jewish right to self-determination as long as they did not oppose the Church's sovereignty.¹²³ In fact, the outright prohibition of the Talmud was the exception rather than the rule in terms of censorship; most Jewish literature was permitted with relatively minor modifications.¹²⁴ The overall extent of censorship was relatively small, despite the fact that some of the changes were of significant import.¹²⁵ While the practical effect of many of these changes was to place restrictions on Jewish self-expression, the goal of the censors was to enforce the dividing lines between Jewish and Christian as a way of defining what was Christian rather than attacking what was Jewish.¹²⁶

3.1.2. *The mechanisms of early censorship*

A reasonable question to ask regarding the medieval censorship of Jewish literature is how Church officials knew what the Jewish texts actually said. One of the important mechanisms for this was information provided by converts. In some cases, we know who these individuals were, such as Giovanni Batista, a convert who denounced the Talmud for allowing many things contrary to Christian belief and practice, including permitting Jews to "orally swear false oaths."¹²⁷ Another early example of a convert who informed on the Jewish community was Johannes Pfefferkorn, who disputed the Talmud against the Christian scholar Johannes Reuchlin. While Reuchlin disagreed with the Jewish understandings and blasphemies found in the texts, he defended the value of the Talmud against Pfefferkorn's call for its seizure. Reuchlin's method would be reflected in

¹²³ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 70-71.

¹²⁴ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 23.

¹²⁵ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 29-30.

¹²⁶ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 54.

¹²⁷ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 42-43. Also see the discussion below about *Kol Nidrei*.

the guidelines and methods of later censorship, which often worked to remove the undesirable components of the texts in order to allow them to be possessed and studied.¹²⁸

In fact, we find that many of the Church's censors were themselves converts, such as Jacobus Geraldino (also known as Rabbi Yosef Arles) and Andrea del Monte. In fact, Domenico Gerosolimitano was himself a convert; his guidelines for censorship were compiled in a volume called *Sefer Hazikkuk*.¹²⁹ While there were examples of convert censors using their work to try to convert other Jews,¹³⁰ many of these censors, as well as a number of other converts who worked in the printing houses, actually did much to preserve the Hebrew literature.¹³¹ As we mentioned before, the Church was particularly sensitive to accusations of idolatry because of Protestant pressure, but rather than deleting these passages, the usual approach was to substitute more acceptable phrasing. In addition to the substitution of עבודה זרה for עכו"ם as discussed above, we also find עכו"ם as a substitute for גוי, נוכרי, and similar words "[w]hen...it may be understood as implying slander, insult, or vilification of the Gentile."¹³² Similarly we find אפיקורוס (the usual mishnaic Hebrew word for "heretic") substituted for מין (which has the sense of "sectarians," and in particular the Jewish-Christians of the time before Christianity was established as a wholly separate religion; see the discussion of *Birkat Haminim* below), and בבל (Babylonia) substituted for אדום (Edom, the biblical descendants of Esau, but used as the common rabbinic euphemism for "Rome").¹³³

¹²⁸ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 38-39.

¹²⁹ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 120-23. The fact that this book is titled in Hebrew is significant, and demonstrates the Jewish origin of many of those involved in the process of expurgating the Jewish literature.

¹³⁰ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 111.

¹³¹ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 85-87, 107.

¹³² Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 121. גוי is a synonym for נוכרי.

¹³³ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 127.

These examples demonstrate that in this type of alteration, the semantic changes to the text were minor and “that the aim was not the restriction of Jewish readings but the channeling of those readings in a direction that was not anti-Catholic while enabling Christians to read these works.”¹³⁴ As mentioned above, the main focus of the censor was on eliminating insults to Christianity and on defining the limits separating Jews and non-Jews. In part, the censor actually enabled the process of creating an independent Jewish domain,¹³⁵ which, when projected forward into the modern age, identifies the divide between matters of public policy and those of private faith. In so doing, censorship also created a shared space for Christians and Jews, such as in their common antipathy towards idolatry that included the implicit Christian acknowledgement that Judaism is not star-worship and therefore lay within some boundary of acceptability.¹³⁶ Censorship was not intended to quash ideological disagreements between Judaism and Christianity, but rather to insure correct belief among Christians and to avoid public challenges to the authority of the Church.¹³⁷

If the impact of censorship on the semantics of Jewish texts was limited, it attempted to have a much bigger impact on the attitude of Jews towards their non-Jewish neighbors. Many of the *piyyutim* found in the Ashkenazi liturgy, for example, display a distinctly anti-Christian and vengeful attitude,¹³⁸ “which became a fundamental element in the formation of consciousness.”¹³⁹ That is, the tone set by the liturgy not only reflected

¹³⁴ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 129-30.

¹³⁵ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 112.

¹³⁶ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 126-28.

¹³⁷ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 153. In fact, the dialogue internal to the Jewish community was not of concern to the Church, and the censorship guidelines are explicit in that such materials should not be altered.

¹³⁸ The Ashkenazi *piyyutim* included early Byzantine *piyyutim* from the Land of Israel, where there was also resentment of Byzantine Christian rule and triumphalism. The tone of the *piyyutim* in the Sephardi liturgy is quite different, reflecting a mood of elevating the soul rather than of seeking revenge against their neighbors.

the historical circumstances under which Jews lived, but also served to shape the attitudes of Jews towards the world around them. As these deprecatory passages were either emended or removed from the liturgy, “[the censor] had a crucial formative influence on the shaping of modern Jewish consciousness.”¹⁴⁰ In fact, these changes have exerted enough influence that modern scholars are sometimes uncomfortable admitting that such hateful attitudes were once significant components of European Jewish identity. Rather than accept that the changes were imposed by Christian censors, there is a tendency to feel that over time the *piyyutim* were eliminated because Jews themselves “found it inappropriate to inspire feelings of hatred and vengeance” at sacred times of the year.¹⁴¹

In this light, let us consider the following blessing recited in the traditional morning service:¹⁴²

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹּא עָשִׂי גּוֹי:	Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has not made me a Gentile.
---------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

This blessing can trace its roots to an ancient Greek formula that gives thanks for being “a Greek and not a barbarian,”¹⁴³ and there are *genizah* fragments that parallel this phrasing (using “an Israelite and not a gentile [*sic*]”).¹⁴⁴ The blessing as stated above corre-

¹³⁹ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 168.

¹⁴⁰ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 168.

¹⁴¹ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 166, citing Daniel Goldschmidt as an example of this phenomenon.

¹⁴² Philip Birnbaum, trans. and ed., *HaSiddur HaShalem: Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 15-16. The translation here is mine; Birnbaum translates “גוי” as “heathen,” a reading that is less true to the meaning of the Hebrew but more suitable for appearances vis à vis non-Jews. A variant in the Hebrew is found in the 1845 German Orthodox prayer book *Siddur Hегyon Leib*, which changes גוי to עובד כוכבים, a change wholly consistent with the typical changes we have been discussing with regard to the medieval period (and that might be reasonably accurately translated as “heathen”). See Jakob Petuchowski, “From Censorship Prevention to Theological Reform: A Study in the Modern Jewish Prayerbook,” *Studies in Modern Theology and Prayer*, Jakob Petuchowski (Eds. Elizabeth R. Petuchowski and Aaron M. Petuchowski, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998), p. 193.

¹⁴³ Kahn, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴⁴ Kahn, p. 12.

sponds to the earliest version found in the Talmud (*b. Menach.* 43b; also *y. Ber.* 9d and *t. Ber.* 6:18), although editions of the Bavli often display the censorship that affected this blessing by using the phrasing “שֶׁעָשָׂנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל” (“who has made me an Israelite”; that is, a Jew).¹⁴⁵ This change was the most common means of emending the blessing, although there are medieval versions that either substitute another word for גוי or remove the blessing altogether. The majority of known medieval Italian prayer books, for example, were censored, although this blessing was often censored by Jews before the Church mandated any changes. By contrast, the lines that were censored in the *Aleinu* (see below) were hardly ever removed by Jews on their own.¹⁴⁶ Because the variation in this blessing appears not to be the result of external pressure, both versions were accepted by the censors.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, medieval Jews often found that self-regulation and cooperating with the Church’s censors were important means of ensuring that they would continue to have access to rabbinic and post-rabbinic literature.¹⁴⁸

There is a significant change in tone from a self-definition rooted in contradistinction to “the other” as compared to a positive, internally-defined identity. Although the negative version of this blessing remained normative, the existence of both versions speaks to the tension felt within the medieval Jewish community between a negative and a positive formulation of Jewish identity.¹⁴⁹ In general, the changes introduced by the censors sought to encourage the positive rather than the negative definition of Jewish identi-

¹⁴⁵ Kahn, pp. 19-20. This variant has also been used in a number of Reform and Conservative liturgies throughout the years, although most Orthodox prayer books retain the traditional form. In many cases, both versions of this blessing were accepted by the censors.

¹⁴⁶ Kahn, pp. 72-76.

¹⁴⁷ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 164-65.

¹⁴⁸ Kahn, pp. 70-71.

¹⁴⁹ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 164-65. This tension persists within the Jewish community even today.

ty,¹⁵⁰ and while they attempted to de-emphasize vengeful aspirations they allowed “Jewish uniqueness” to persist so long as it did not challenge the supremacy of the Church.¹⁵¹

The official relationship between Jewish communities and the Church described here also existed at the personal level (that is, between individual Jews and Christians). Often, the production of printed material was the focus of interactions between Christians and Jews, because of the large number of people involved in the process (editors/censors, typesetters, etc.) and because many Jewish texts were printed by non-Jews such as Daniel Bomberg. These interactions blurred the distinction between “‘internal’ cultural factors (that is to say, Jewish) and those considered as ‘external’ (and thus oppressive).”¹⁵² This is not to suggest that there were not tensions and divisions between Jews and Christians, because both sides certainly contributed to an environment of mistrust. However, we must maintain a more nuanced view of the impact of censorship on medieval texts in general and Jewish literature particularly in order to properly evaluate and understand the processes at play in the revision of the liturgical texts we shall discuss below.

3.1.3. *Influences on Jewish prayer in nineteenth-century Germany*

The sort of change in attitude described above can be clearly seen in the liturgies of nineteenth-century Germany. For the most part, fear of censorship was not an issue for Jews in Germany at that time.¹⁵³ However, censorship was imposed on Jewish texts in Russia under Czar Nicholas I beginning in 1836.¹⁵⁴ It became a common practice for Orthodox prayer books published around this time, and intended for sale in Russia (such as

¹⁵⁰ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 127.

¹⁵¹ Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 154-55.

¹⁵² Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 102-3.

¹⁵³ Petuchowski, “From Censorship Prevention...,” p. 198.

¹⁵⁴ Petuchowski, “From Censorship Prevention...,” p. 199.

Hirsch Edelmann's *Siddur Hегyon Leib*), to have glosses in the margins explaining away many of the seemingly difficult passages in the traditional Jewish liturgy. Jakob Petuchowski categorized the glosses found in *Siddur Hегyon Leib* as fitting into the following four categories:

- (a) Rejection of any invidious comparisons between Jews and non-Jews.
- (b) Denial of the existence of Jewish suffering at the present time.
- (c) Profession of patriotism and absolute loyalty to the government.
- (d) "Spiritualization" of the messianic hope.¹⁵⁵

Petuchowski further notes that these elements are quite similar to the central concerns of the Jewish reformers of the era. However, *Siddur Hегyon Leib* was an Orthodox prayer book, and Edelmann's stated goal was to avoid censorship in those countries where it was in effect (such as Russia).¹⁵⁶

Although both the traditionalists and the reformers may have had a more positive view towards non-Jews than their ancestors (see the discussion above as to one of the key means by which this came about), the manifestations of this attitude were very different. As reflected by Edelmann's prayer book, the traditionalists were more inclined to provide explanations for the liturgy than to change the text itself, while the reformers changed the prayers in response to the very attitudes expressed by the explanatory notes in the Orthodox prayer books.¹⁵⁷ Petuchowski concludes that "[t]he irony of the situation is that the overt philosophy inherent in the marginal glosses ultimately led to the deletion or rewording, by the reformers, of the very phrases which the glosses were originally meant to safeguard."¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, it is not clear that the fear of how non-Jews would react to the

¹⁵⁵ Petuchowski, "From Censorship Prevention...", p. 196.

¹⁵⁶ Petuchowski, "From Censorship Prevention...", pp. 193, 197.

¹⁵⁷ Petuchowski, "From Censorship Prevention...", pp. 202-5.

Jewish liturgy necessitated the sort of self-censorship reflected in the nineteenth-century Reform liturgies; continued use of the traditional liturgy, with appropriate explanations for those unfamiliar with the cultural context of Jewish life, might not have been a barrier to the full acceptance into German society that the reformers sought.¹⁵⁹ This view reflects the underlying conflict apparent in the liturgical examples we will now examine; namely, how much change is necessary to gain acceptance by non-Jews and how much change is too much with regard to remaining faithful to Jewish tradition.

3.2. *Birkat Haminim*

The name of this prayer, *Birkat Haminim* (literally the blessing of the heretics or sectarians), is actually a misnomer; the text is actually a curse against the internal and external enemies of the Jewish people. Unlike the other examples in this study, *Birkat Haminim* is referred to in the Talmud and other rabbinic sources, and so is likely a much older prayer with a much longer history. Thus, there are a great number of variants in the text of this prayer, especially as reflected in the manuscript history available from the Cairo *genizah* and other sources. Because it is beyond our scope to thoroughly investigate all these variants, I will summarize the major groupings with an eye towards understanding the themes and targets of the prayer that have made it problematic over the years.

3.2.1. *Difficulties with the traditional text*

Because of the great number of versions of *Birkat Haminim*, it is quite difficult to establish *the* traditional text of the prayer. Appendix B reproduces a chart from Uri Ehrlich and Ruth Langer's study of the early textual history, and summarizes the major

¹⁵⁸ Petuchowski, "From Censorship Prevention...", p. 205.

¹⁵⁹ Petuchowski, "From Censorship Prevention...", pp. 205-6.

groupings of manuscripts from ²*Erets Yisra²eil* and Babylonia found in the Cairo *genizah*. Ehrlich and Langer hypothesize that variant 6 is the earliest of the texts, and that the versions of ²*Erets Yisra²eil* came from it. Variant 6 is the version presented in *Siddur Rav Sa^cdiah*, and was probably used in many eastern communities even though it is no longer in use today.¹⁶⁰

It appears that the other Babylonian variants arose from variant 2 of ²*Erets Yisra²eil*.¹⁶¹ As time progressed, it appears that the text was elaborated by expanding the lists of synonyms used (for example, “תעקר” became “תעקר ותשבר” and then “תעקר ותשבר” (”ותכניע”), a very typical characteristic of Jewish prayers. In addition, a passage aimed at the (external) enemies of the Jewish people was added, a change that was then reflected in the *chatimah*, where the earlier use of רשעים (“evildoers”) was changed to אויבים (“enemies”).¹⁶² We can thus see that the prayer was originally aimed in part at the early Judeo-Christians,¹⁶³ and then later was expanded to include (and perhaps even focus on) the external enemies of the Jewish people. The antipathy towards those who had established the divergent sect may very well have arisen because it is harder to accept those who abandon the group than those who were outside the group to begin with.¹⁶⁴

Babylonian variant 5 is the one of most interest to us, as its arrangement is the same as that found in *Seder Rav^c Amram* and all of the European rites.¹⁶⁵ Because the

¹⁶⁰ Uri Ehrlich and Ruth Langer, “The Earliest Texts of the Birkat Haminim,” *HUC Annual* 76 (2005), pp. 77-78.

¹⁶¹ Ehrlich and Langer, p. 76.

¹⁶² Ehrlich and Langer, pp. 72-75.

¹⁶³ Those Jewish followers of Jesus who were initially a sect of Judaism before the differences became so great that Christianity emerged as a separate religion. The prayer was probably also aimed at gnostic sectarians, the *minim* who the Sages discuss most in tannaitic and amoraic literature.

¹⁶⁴ Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), p. 178.

¹⁶⁵ Ehrlich and Langer, pp. 76-77.

pre-censorship European versions of the prayer vary only in minor details of wording, and not in their structure or in the references they make,¹⁶⁶ we will use this version as the base for our discussion. The text is thus as follows:¹⁶⁷

למשומדים אל תהי תקוה	For the apostates let there be no hope
וכל והמינים כרגע יאבדו	and let all the heretics vanish in an instant
וכל אויבי עמך מהרה יכרתו	and all the enemies of Your people speedily be cut off
ומלכות זדון מהרה תעקר ותשבר בימינו	and the kingdom of arrogance may You speedily uproot and shatter in our days.
ברוך אתה יי שובר אויבים ומכניע זדים	Blessed are You, O Lord, who breaks enemies and subdues the arrogant.

Hence, we can discern four targets of the curses contained here:

- The משומדים. These were apostates, Jews who had converted to Christianity (or Islam).¹⁶⁸
- The מינים. In rabbinic times this term probably referred to those adherents of the Judeo-Christian sect,¹⁶⁹ but in medieval Europe this referred to Christians.¹⁷⁰ In all of the *genizah* texts from ³*Erets Yisra³eil*, as well as in most of the Babylonian ones, the phrase reads והנצרים והמינים (the Christians and the sectarians). The initial understanding of מינים as “heretics” is reinforced by the use of the Hebrew אפיקורוסין (the usual rabbinic term for heretics) in place of מינים in at least some versions of the *Mishneh Torah*.¹⁷¹
- The אויבים. This refers to the enemies of the Jewish people.
- מלכות זדון. The “kingdom of arrogance” probably referred to the oppressive civil government, initially the Roman Empire, then the Byzantine Christian Roman Empire, and then the medieval Christian authorities.

¹⁶⁶ Ehrlich and Langer, pp. 82-84.

¹⁶⁷ Ehrlich and Langer, pp. 72-73. Translation mine.

¹⁶⁸ Karff, p. 34.

¹⁶⁹ Karff, p. 34.

¹⁷⁰ Ehrlich and Langer, p. 82. The shift in meaning is perhaps reflected in the fact that almost all of the manuscripts include “נצרים ומינים” (Christians and sectarians) together. See Ehrlich and Langer, pp. 78-79.

¹⁷¹ *Sefer Ahavah*, p. 76.

As we might expect, the explicit references to Christians and to the ruling powers would not sit well with the medieval censors. However, some of the changes usually attributed to external censorship (such as replacing משומדים with מלשינים, “slanderers”) were made in most prayer books even before censorship was established, reflecting a certain Jewish sensitivity to maintaining good relations with their neighbors even in the absence of the enforcement of correct doctrine.¹⁷² An example of the effects of medieval censorship can be seen in the manuscript versions of *Machzor Vitry*, where essentially all of the offending nouns have been removed except for אויבי עמך.¹⁷³

The cumulative effects of censorship and editing of this prayer over the past centuries can be seen by comparing the above version with the text found in Birnbaum:¹⁷⁴

למשומדים אל תהי תקוה	וְלַמְלִשְׁיָנִים אֵל תְּהִי תִקְוָה,	For the slanderers let there be no hope,
וכל והמינים כרגע יאבדו	וְכָל הָרָשָׁעָה כְּרָגַע תֵּאָבֵד,	and let all evil vanish in an instant,
וכל אויבי עמך מהרה יכרתו	וְכָל אוֹיְבֶיךָ מִהֲרָה יִכָּרֶתוּ;	and all Your enemies speedily be cut off;
ומלכות זדון מהרה תעקר ותשבר בימינו	וְהַזֵּדִים מִהֲרָה תֵּעָקֵר וְתִשָּׁבֵר, וְתִמָּגֵר וְתִכְנָע בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ,	the arrogant may You speedily uproot and shatter, and may You overthrow and subdue them speedily in our days.
ברוך אתה יי שובר אויבים ומכניע זדים	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ שׁוֹבֵר אוֹיְבִים וּמַכְנִיעַ זֵדִים.	Blessed are You, O Lord, who breaks enemies and subdues the arrogant.

¹⁷² Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 163-64.

¹⁷³ Yaakov Y. Teppler, *Birkat haMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World* (Trans. Susan Weingarten, Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 372.

¹⁷⁴ Birnbaum, *HaSiddur HaShalem*, p. 87. The translation is mine, of Birnbaum's Hebrew text.

For each of the four targets mentioned above, there has been a substitution: מלשינים for אויבי עמך (that is, Israel's enemies), רשעה (evil)¹⁷⁵ for מינים, אויבך (Your [that is, God's] enemies) for אויבי עמך (that is, Israel's enemies), and זדים (the arrogant) for מלכות זדון. In each case, a more neutral term has replaced the more pointed terms in the original text.

3.2.2. *Changes arising in the Reform tradition*

The usual Reform approach to the problems presented by *Birkat Haminim* has been to omit it from the liturgy altogether. Indeed, except for Geiger (the most creative of the nineteenth-century Reform liturgists with regard to handling the Hebrew text), this is the route taken by all of the nineteenth-century European liturgies in this study,¹⁷⁶ as well as most of the American liturgies. Geiger provides the following version in his 1854 prayer book:¹⁷⁷

וּלְמַלְשָׁנוֹת אֱלֹהֵי תִקְוָה וְכָל־הַרְשָׁעָה כָּרָע
תֵּאבֵד וְהַזְדוֹן תִּכְנֶעַע בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְיָ שֶׁבֵר הַרְשָׁעָה וּמִכְנֶעַע הַזְדוֹן:

And for slander let there be no hope and
let all evil vanish in an instant and arro-
gance be subdued speedily in our days.
Blessed are You, O Lord, who breaks evil
and subdues arrogance.

The two obvious elements of Geiger's adaptation are that it is shorter than the traditional version, and that all the references have been abstracted ("slander" instead of "slanderers," "evil" instead of "evildoers," etc.). Certainly this has the effect of universalizing the message of the prayer, because it is not aimed at any group of people but rather at the abstract notions of wickedness that all religion seeks to subdue. However, the abstraction of this prayer breaks the parallel imagery between the traditional text of *Birkat Haminim*

¹⁷⁵ See the discussion of Geiger's changes below.

¹⁷⁶ The 1819 Hamburg prayer book only included Shabbat services in any case.

¹⁷⁷ Abraham Geiger, ed., *Israelitisches Gebetbuch für den öffentlichen Gottesdienst im ganzen Jahre* (Breslau, 1854), p. 42. The translation of the Hebrew text is mine.

and *Birkat Hatsadikim*, the following blessing. In the traditional versions, *Birkat Haminim* curses those who detract from Judaism, while *Birkat Hatsadikim* praises the righteous ones who enhance it (especially converts, who are in some sense the opposite of the heretics or apostates who have abandoned Judaism).¹⁷⁸

Geiger's 1870 prayer book provides a similar version:¹⁷⁹

וְהַתּוֹעִים אֵלֶיךָ יָשׁוּבוּ וְכָל־הָרָשָׁעָה מְהֵרָה תֵּאבֵד
וְהַזֵּדוֹן תִּכְנֶיַע בְּיָמֵינוּ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ שׁוֹבֵר רָשָׁע
וּמִכְנִיעַ זֵדוֹן:

And let those who have strayed return to You¹⁸⁰ and let all evil speedily vanish and arrogance be subdued in our days. Blessed are You, O Lord, who breaks evil and subdues arrogance.

Aside from some minor grammatical differences and a slight rearranging of the words of the prayer, the only significant difference as compared to the 1854 version is the opening, which once again refers to people instead of abstract notions. However, the noun תּוֹעִים (“transgressors”) is neutral in the sense that it does not have an historical association with *Birkat Haminim* itself¹⁸¹ (as do מְלַשְׁיָנִים, מִיָּנִים, etc.) and so can refer to the general category of wrongdoers without arousing the tensions associated with the specific terms. In addition, the prayer asks for the transgressors to return to God, rather than being wiped out. This idea is certainly prominent in the Jewish emphasis on *t’shuvah*, and is more palatable than a call to destroy one’s enemies. In neither the 1854 nor the 1870 prayer book does Geiger provide a full German translation of blessings 7 through 15 of the *Amidah*; rather he provides an interpretive paraphrase of the entire series in a single paragraph (the

¹⁷⁸ Hammer, p. 179.

¹⁷⁹ Abraham Geiger, ed., *Israelitisches Gebetbuch für den öffentlichen Gottesdienst im ganzen Jahre* (Berlin, 1870), vol. 1, p. 22. The translation of the Hebrew text is mine.

¹⁸⁰ This phrase is adapted from the traditional *Havineinu*, an abbreviated text that may be said in place of the intermediate blessings of the *Amidah* when one is not able to recite the full text. The original phrase, however, is וְהַתּוֹעִים עַל דַּעַתְךָ יִשְׁפֹּטוּ (“May those who have strayed be judged according to Your wisdom”).

¹⁸¹ As mentioned above, the historical association (at least liturgically) is with *Havineinu*.

text is identical in both editions). The portion relevant to our study reads, “Hasten the coming of your kingdom...when evil, enmity, etc. shall disappear”¹⁸²

In terms of the American prayer books, Merzbacher, Wise, and Einhorn all omit *Birkat Haminim*. The first *Union Prayer Book* (UPB), published in 1892, provides a single English reading combining the themes of the intermediate blessings, including the call to “let the reign of wickedness vanish like smoke and all dwellers on earth recognize Thee alone as their King. May every prejudice and injustice against Israel, Thy people, disappear and all Thy children be united in a covenant of peace and love.”¹⁸³ The exhortation to end “prejudice and injustice” against Jews, while timely then as now, certainly detracts from the universalistic tone the Reform liturgy generally sought to set. (That phrase was deleted from the 1895 UPB, while the rest of the passage quoted above remains the same.¹⁸⁴) It should be noted that “the reign of wickedness,” taken from the traditional text of the prayer, has the resonance of a call to overthrow an oppressive government. In late antiquity and in the Byzantine era, this would have been Rome, but subsequently this would have been understood as any government that oppresses Jews.¹⁸⁵ While this connection would not be apparent without being familiar with the traditional liturgy, it is still a less universal phrasing than is found in Geiger’s versions of this prayer.

The 1918 Revised edition of the UPB,¹⁸⁶ the 1940 Newly Revised edition,¹⁸⁷ and

¹⁸² German translation courtesy of Dr. Richard Sarason.

¹⁸³ Central Conference of American Rabbis, סדר תפילות ישראל *Union Prayer Book* (Cincinnati, 1892), pp. 166-67.

¹⁸⁴ Central Conference of American Rabbis, סדר תפילות ישראל *The Union Prayer-Book for Jewish Worship, Part I* (Cincinnati, 1895), p. 275.

¹⁸⁵ In the 1890s, the Russian Empire still qualified as such an oppressive regime, but the editors of the *Union Prayer Book* probably understood this phrase in a more abstract way.

¹⁸⁶ Central Conference of American Rabbis, סדר תפילות ישראל *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship, Part I* (Rev. ed., Cincinnati, 1918), pp. 296-97.

¹⁸⁷ Central Conference of American Rabbis, סדר תפילות ישראל *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship, Part I* (Newly rev. ed., New York, 1940), pp. 322-23. The English translation includes the phrase “Let

*Gates of Prayer*¹⁸⁸ all omitted *Birkat Haminim* entirely from their daily services. The prayer was restored, however, in the 1994 gender-neutral edition of *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat and Weekdays*, and retained in a slightly abbreviated form in *Mishkan T'filah*.

This version of *Birkat Haminim* is based on Geiger's text:¹⁸⁹

<p>וְלִרְשָׁעָה אֵל תְּהִי תִקְוָה, וְהַתּוֹעִים אֵלֶיךָ יָשׁוּבוּ, וּמַלְכוּת זֶדוֹן מִהֵרָה תִשָּׁבֵר. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, שׁוֹבֵר רָשָׁע מִן הָאָרֶץ.</p>	<p>And for wickedness, let there be no hope, and may all the errant return to You, and may the realm of wickedness be shattered. Blessed are You, Adonai, whose will it is that the wicked vanish from the earth.</p>
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There is one critical difference in the Hebrew text, and one in the translation, that distinguish this version from Geiger's. The first difference is the use of the phrase מַלְכוּת זֶדוֹן, with its resonance to the traditional liturgy as discussed above with regard to the first editions of the UPB. The second difference is the translation "that *the wicked* vanish from the earth," which is inaccurate¹⁹⁰ as well as obviating the attempt to focus on *t'shuvah* rather than vengeance. This reflects ongoing ambivalence about *Birkat Haminim*. While the historical prayer was aimed at certain groups such as Jewish apostates or the oppressors of Jews, it is not incompatible with a modern reading as a call to root out evil from the world. The latter view finds support in a story about Rabbi Meir from the Talmud, wherein he prays for the death of some thugs who were making trouble for him. Beruriah, his wife, admonishes him to pray for them to repent rather than that they should die.¹⁹¹ At the very least, our prayers should be ideologically consistent on this point.

wickedness and hatred cease," but the Hebrew does not include any reference to *Birkat Haminim*.

¹⁸⁸ Chaim Stern, ed., שְׁעָרֵי תְפִלָּה *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), p. 41.

¹⁸⁹ Elyse D. Frishman, ed., מִשְׁכַּן תְּפִלָּה *Mishkan T'Filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), p. 88. The translation is that found in *Mishkan T'filah*.

¹⁹⁰ רָשָׁע means "evil" or "wickedness"; רָשָׁעִים (note the difference in the vowels) means "an evil person."

¹⁹¹ *b.Ber.* 10a. This example is also cited in Hammer, p. 183.

3.3. The ^cAleinu

The ^c*Aleinu* has been said at the end of all three daily services since no later than the year 1300, although it originally was part of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy where it introduced the *Malkhuyot* verses. That setting emphasized the theme of the messianic ideal of a united humanity serving the one God.¹⁹² We cannot be certain when the text of the ^c*Aleinu* was written; it is almost certainly not of ancient origin and is not mentioned in the Talmud or any of the other rabbinic sources.¹⁹³ Stylistically, the ^c*Aleinu* is a *piyyut* with meter but not rhyme, and is in this regard comparable to the introductions to the *Zikhronot* and *Shofarot* verses. The ^c*Aleinu* likely antedates the sixth or seventh century, when *piyyutim* became more elaborate.

The text of the ^c*Aleinu* found in *Seder Rav* ^c*Amram* is virtually identical to the traditional text we have today:¹⁹⁴

1	עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל לתת גדולה ליוצר בראשית.	It is our duty to praise the Lord of all, to attribute greatness to the Fashioner of Creation.
2	שלא עשאנו כגויי הארצות ולא שמנו כמשפחות האדמה.	Who has not made us as the peoples of the [various] lands and has not ordained [our lot] as the families of the earth.
3	שלא שם חלקנו כהם וגורלנו ככל המונם.	Who has not assigned our portion as theirs and our destiny as all their host.

¹⁹² Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy A Comprehensive History* (Trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), p. 71.

¹⁹³ Elbogen, p. 119.

¹⁹⁴ Goldschmidt, pp. 141–42. Translation mine. Except for a few inconsequential differences, this version also appears in Israel Davidson, Simcha Assaf, and Issachar Joel, eds., *סידור רב סעדיה גאון Siddur Rav Sa^cdiah Ga^on* (Jerusalem: Mekitsei Nirdamim, 1941), p. 221. Note that this is the first paragraph of the ^c*Aleinu*, to which we will limit our discussion because it adequately illustrates the difficulty with the traditional text and the changes that have been made over the years.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | שהם משתחוים להבל וריק ומתפללים אל אל לא יושע. | For they bow down to emptiness and vanity and pray to a god who does not save. ¹⁹⁵ |
| 5 | ואנו ¹⁹⁶ כורעים ומשתחוים לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא. | But we bend the knee and bow down ¹⁹⁷ before the King over the king of kings, the Holy One blessed be He. |
| 6 | שהוא נוטה שמים ויוסד ארץ ומושב יקרו בשמים ממעל ושכינת עזו בגבהי מרומים. | For He spreads out the heavens and establishes the earth; the dwelling of His glory is in the heavens above, and the presence of His might at the elevated heights. |
| 7 | הוא אלהינו ואין עוד אחר. ¹⁹⁸ אמת מלכנו ואפס זולתו. | He is our God and there is no other besides [Him]. In truth [He is] our King and there is none apart from [Him]. |
| 8 | ככתוב בתורתו וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך כי ה' הוא האלהים בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת אין עוד. | As it is written in His teaching, ¹⁹⁹ “Know this day and return to your heart for the Lord, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth below there is no other. |

As we can see, this text itself is not really a prayer in the sense of petition (it is actually the introduction to the subsequent prayer), but rather a statement of faith in the One eternal God.²⁰⁰ The general problem here arises in that the *Aleinu* “[singles] out the people Israel for a special covenant and witness.”²⁰¹ This concept has proven problematic in Jewish relations with non-Jews, both because of the perception on the part of non-Jews that Jews are arrogant and because of the self-image of Jews as superior to other peoples. Tra-

¹⁹⁵ This line is not in Birnbaum, *HaSiddur HaShalem* (pp. 135-36); see below regarding the censorship of this line in particular.

¹⁹⁶ Most of the Hebrew versions print ואנחנו; the difference is merely stylistic.

¹⁹⁷ Today's text adds the word “ומודים” (and render acknowledgement) here. See Birnbaum, *HaSiddur HaShalem*, pp. 135-36; this is also found in *Machzor Vitry* (see below).

¹⁹⁸ Birnbaum does not have the word “אחר” (besides [Him]) here, nor the *vav* before the word אין.

¹⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 4:39

²⁰⁰ Hammer, p. 207.

²⁰¹ Karff, p. 34.

ditionally, the special duty and position of Jews is seen as arising from God's gift of Torah, which was not given to the other peoples. Hence, Jews have God as their portion, while the other peoples have only "emptiness and vanity."²⁰² *ḲAleinu* is furthermore a reminder of God's unity, and therefore a suitable conclusion to our prayers to God.²⁰³

The particular problem with the *ḲAleinu* arises in line 4, which goes beyond stating that Israel is set apart from the other nations (as discussed above, this by itself was not necessarily problematic to the medieval Church) to denigrating the gods of those other nations as "emptiness and vanity." One outdated theory has been to interpret this as a statement against idolatry, possibly dating to the Maccabean era. This interpretation is clearly apologetic, because there is significant evidence that the text of the *ḲAleinu* is not that early. As a statement against idolatry, the Creation imagery then becomes a statement against idolizing the elements of Creation rather than the Creator. Although the text is not specifically aimed at Christianity in this interpretation, it can undoubtedly be understood that way.²⁰⁴ Certainly, if the text is later (Byzantine, for example), then it likely is directed against Christianity (even if not exclusively). However, it is clear that medieval European Jews understood this passage as an expression of hostility towards Christianity (and possibly Islam).²⁰⁵ For example, in the *Siddur Chasidei Ashkenaz* we find the following comment on the phrase "For they bow down to emptiness and vanity":²⁰⁶

²⁰² Moshe Hershler, ed., סדור רבנו שלמה *Siddur of R. Solomon b. Samson of Garmaise [Worms], including the Siddur of the Chasidei Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem, 1971), p. 213.

²⁰³ Hershler, *Siddur*, p. 124.

²⁰⁴ Hammer, pp. 207-8. Even Jakob Petuchowski falls into this trap, basing his opinion on nineteenth-century German sources that would clearly have been motivated by an apologetic attitude, as we shall demonstrate. See Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 299-300.

²⁰⁵ Karff, pp. 34-35.

²⁰⁶ Hershler, *Siddur*, pp. 124-25.

רמז על [ישו], שעתידין האומות לטעות אחריו. [וריק] גימ' [ישו].	An allusion to [Jesus], for in the future ²⁰⁷ the nations would mistakenly follow after him. [Vanity] is gematria for [Jesus]. ²⁰⁸
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A footnote points out that the original manuscript contains erasures, which have been filled in here. The given emendations make perfect sense, and in particular the idea of idolatry does not fit because of the use of “follow after *him*” and because of the stated numerical equivalence. Based on this evidence, and our earlier discussion of the apologetic tendency of some modern scholars in the light of medieval censorship, it seems quite likely that these lines were originally intended to refer to Christianity.

3.3.1. Medieval changes to the ^C*Aleinu*

Based on the informing of a Jewish convert against the Jewish community around the year 1400, line 4 from Rav ^CAmram's version of the ^C*Aleinu* was frequently censored in medieval prayer books.²⁰⁹ Generally, this took the form of removing the line altogether, but blank space was often left in its stead. This not only made it obvious that a part of the text was missing, but did so “in a way that reminds the reader of the eliminated content and even exaggerates its importance.”²¹⁰ We find this exact change in *Machzor Vitry*, the ^C*Aleinu* from which is otherwise virtually identical to that found in *Seder Rav ^CAmram*.²¹¹ Another example of an altered medieval text of this line is found in the Italian rite, which shifted the sense to the past and explicitly referred to idol worship, as follows:²¹²

²⁰⁷ *Siddur Chasidei Ashkenaz* (Hershler, *Siddur*, p. 124) attributes ^C*Aleinu* to the biblical Joshua, who was supposed to have recited it when seeing the idols of the other peoples at Jericho.

²⁰⁸ Both וריק and ישו (the Hebrew for Jesus) total 316 when the numerical values of the letters are added up.

²⁰⁹ Elbogen, pp. 71-72.

²¹⁰ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 164.

²¹¹ Hurwitz, p. 75. The only other significant changes are the addition of the word ומודים in line 5, as noted above, and the changing of בתורתך to בתורתו in line 8.

²¹² Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932), p. 316.

שהיו משתחוים לאילים ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע	Who used to bow down to idols and pray to a god who does not save.
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The ^c*Aleinu* continued to attract attention even in early modern Europe. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a study of the matter in Prussia resulted in an edict regarding the ^c*Aleinu* issued on 28 August 1703 “that [the Jews] must eliminate certain words, not spit, and not hop during its recitation.”²¹³ The edict also required that the ^c*Aleinu* be recited audibly²¹⁴ and provided for government officials to be in the synagogue to enforce the edict.²¹⁵ These prohibitions remained in effect until Emancipation; Frederick II’s 1750 charter for the Prussian Jews provides for Jewish religious autonomy

on the condition that they must always refrain, under penalty of death and complete expulsion of the entire Jewry from Berlin and our other cities, from such abuses as the Jewish prayer which begins *Alenu* etc., as has already been emphatically decreed in detail in the edicts of 1703 and 1716.²¹⁶

From these examples, we can see how the changes to the ^c*Aleinu* arose from the medieval sensibilities discussed earlier. However, we also know that most Ashkenazi Orthodox prayer books even until today have omitted the line that was censored.²¹⁷ The prayer was never censored in non-Christian countries, and remains intact in non-Ashke-

²¹³ Elbogen, p. 72. There was a custom, that has persisted even to today, of spitting on the floor when saying the words “emptiness and vanity,” because רֵק (emptiness) sounds like רוֹק (spittle).

²¹⁴ So that the recitation could be monitored to insure that the required words were omitted. In terms of traditional practice, there seems to be a disagreement as to how ^c*Aleinu* was to be recited. *Machzor Vitry* (Hurwitz, p. 75; *siman* 99) and *Siddur Rashi* (Buber and Freimann, p. 210; *siman* 419) indicate that it should be recited בלחש (“quietly”), while *Sefer Kol-Bo* (*siman* 70) indicates that the entire congregation recites it בקול רם (“in full voice”).

²¹⁵ Elbogen, p. 72.

²¹⁶ Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book: 315-1791* (Rev. ed., Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999), pp. 107-8.

²¹⁷ Nosson Scherman, ed., נוסח אשכנז: סדור ארבת שלום: נוסח אשכנז, *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur: Nusach Ashkenaz* (2nd ed., Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1987), p. 158, has restored this line, albeit in parentheses. Shlomo Tal, ed., נוסח אשכנז: סדור רנת ישראל: *Siddur Rinat Yisrael: Nusach Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem, Israel: Hotsa’at Moresheet, 1983), p. 101, has brought it back as well. However, as noted above, Birnbaum does not include it.

nazi prayer books. The fact that this line was not restored even when Jewish texts were no longer censored tells us that Jews as well as Christians were uncomfortable with the sentiments expressed in the original text. Hence, we have here an example of how censorship has not only arisen from a particular set of sensibilities, but also has served to shape those sensibilities over time. That is, while Jews originally may have been comfortable denigrating Christianity during the recitation of the ^c*Aleinu*, once the offending line was removed and the cultural context changed to accommodate this change, the attitude of Jews towards the ^c*Aleinu* and its message changed as well.²¹⁸

3.3.2. Changes to the ^c*Aleinu* in the Reform tradition

More than with either *Birkat Haminim* or with *Kol Nidrei*, there has been a great deal of variation in how Reform liturgists have approached the ^c*Aleinu*. In large part, this is because none of the Reform liturgies completely did away with the ^c*Aleinu*, but rather edited it so as to avoid the difficulty of overt Jewish particularism (especially in lines 2 and 3 from above).²¹⁹ As we shall see, there is variation in approach as to whether the Hebrew text and/or the English text is altered, and whether the Hebrew and English versions (in those books with both) match up to each other.

Of the nineteenth-century prayer books in this study, the Hamburg prayer books are the only ones that use the traditional text of the ^c*Aleinu* (without the “emptiness and vanity” line, of course). In both the 1819 and 1841 editions, the original usage of the

²¹⁸ Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 164.

²¹⁹ None of the Reform liturgies in this study include the line “For they bow down to emptiness and vanity...” The liturgies from the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston, SC, however, do include the translation of the full version of the ^c*Aleinu*, including this line. This is because of the Sephardi liturgical origins of the Charleston group (as mentioned above, the Sephardi version of the liturgy was not censored as was the Ashkenazi version, and so retained this line).

^c*Aleinu* is retained, in that it only appears in the *Musaf* service for Rosh Hashanah,²²⁰ but does not appear as a concluding prayer for any of the services. While the Hebrew is the same in both volumes, the German translation (here presented in English as translated by Jakob Petuchowski) contains a key difference. The translation of lines 2 and 3 from the German reads, “He hath not made us like unto many of the peoples of the earth, and hath not commingled us with the heathen tribes. Our destiny is not like unto theirs, nor our portion like unto that of their great multitude.”²²¹ The key differences between this version and the Hebrew text are in the qualification “many of the peoples” and in the introduction of the “heathen tribes” here. The effect is that, rather than describing Jewish separation from their Christian neighbors, the passage now serves to state that Jews are distinguished from the heathens, hence neutralizing the concern over particularism.²²² The 1841 version, however, hews more closely to the original Hebrew, stating “...that He did not let us become like unto the peoples of the lands, and that He did not make us like unto those tribes of the earth; that He did not make our portion equal unto theirs, nor our destiny like unto that of their great multitude.”²²³ While this retains the use of the word “tribes,” the distinction of “heathens” is gone. It is also significant that the German and the Hebrew are more closely aligned, so that the message received by those praying in Hebrew (that is, the Jewish congregants) and those reading the German translation (including the non-Jewish visitors as well as some of the Jewish congregants) is the same.

²²⁰ S. I. Fränkel and M. I. Bresselau, eds., *Ordnung der öffentlichen...Nach den Gebrauche des Neuen-Tempel-Vereins in Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1819), pp. 106-7; *Gebetbuch...nach dem Gebrauch des Neuen Israelitschen Tempels in Hamburg* (2nd ed., Hamburg, 1841), pp. 162-63.

²²¹ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 301.

²²² See the above discussion about this issue with regard to censorship, and in particular the note regarding Birnbaum’s translation of the blessing “שְׁלֵא עֲשֵׂנוּ גוֹי.”

²²³ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 301.

The remainder of the nineteenth-century liturgies we will examine made modifications to the Hebrew text of the ^c*Aleinu* in order to alleviate the problems presented by lines 2 and 3. The 1841 West London *Forms of Prayer* replaces lines 3, 4, and 5 with:²²⁴

אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ	who hath chosen us from amongst all people and hath given us his Law.
עַל־כֵּן אֲנַחְנוּ מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא	Therefore we humble ourselves before the supreme King of kings! the holy and blessed One,

We can see here that the translation is faithful to the modified Hebrew text. While the idea of “chosenness” is not eliminated here, it is not repeated as it is in the original. Furthermore, the idea of chosenness is specifically and explicitly tied to the giving of the Torah, which is less problematic than the idea that the destiny of the Jewish people is somehow different from that of other peoples. In addition, the change from *וְאֲנַחְנוּ* to *עַל־כֵּן* eliminates the disjunction because of the deleted line, and the repetition of bending the knee and bowing and rendering acknowledgement has been eliminated.

Geiger’s creativity is on display with his handling of the ^c*Aleinu* as in other places. In his 1854 prayer book, he provides the following in place of lines 2 and 3:²²⁵

שֶׁנִּגְלָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְהוֹדִיעָם אֶת־רְצוֹנוֹ וְכָרַת אִתָּם אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ וְהִנְחִילָנוּ תּוֹרָתוֹ	who revealed to our ancestors and made known to them His will, and established with them His covenant, and bequeathed to us His Torah.
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Like the West London version, Geiger connects the idea of Jewish particularism to the giving of the Torah. However, he also adds in mention of the covenant, which is a more

²²⁴ David W. Marks, ed., *Forms of Prayer Used in the West London Synagogue of British Jews* (London, 1841-43), vol. 1, p. 25. The translation is from here as well.

²²⁵ Geiger, 1854, pp. 61-62. The translation of the Hebrew text is mine.

concrete reference than we find in the original text but also maintains the idea of Jews as a people set apart. This is certainly a more traditional view of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews than we will see in the later (American) liturgies.

Geiger's 1870 prayer book presents a different Hebrew text:²²⁶

<p>עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל לְתַת גְּדֻלָּהּ לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית</p> <p>שְׁשֵׁם חֲלֻקְנוּ לְיַחַד אֶת שְׁמוֹ וְקִרְבָּנוּ לְעִבּוּדָתוֹ</p>	<p>We, who acknowledge His Unity and are called to dedicate ourselves to His Name and to His service, we, in particular, are obligated to praise the Lord of the Universe, and to proclaim the greatness of the world's Creator...</p>
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While the German translation is fairly close to the Hebrew, there is one particular difference that I wish to mention. Geiger's version is rooted in human choice to "acknowledge His Unity" rather than God "[making] our portion to unify His name," a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew. In either case, though, the emphasis on God's unity carries a certain resonance when contrasted with the Christian concept of the Trinity. While both Christians and Jews believe in one God, the mention here of God's unity must have served to emphasize the theological difference between the religions. This will contrast with the early American Reform liturgies, which all sought to downplay such divisions and emphasize the universality of Judaism.

One of the most influential of the nineteenth-century Reform liturgists, especially for American Reform, was Leo Merzbacher. His Hebrew version of the ^c*Aleinu*, for example, is still in use today in *Mishkan T'filah*, the newest American Reform siddur. Instead of altering lines 2 and 3 in the traditional text of the ^c*Aleinu*, Merzbacher replaced them with line 6 and the first half of line 7, as follows:²²⁷

²²⁶ Geiger, 1870, vol. 1, p. 39. The translation of Geiger's German text is from Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 303.

²²⁷ Leo Merzbacher, ed., *The Order of Prayer for Divine Service* (New York, 1855), vol. 1, pp. 24-25. In

עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל	It is peculiarly our duty to praise the Lord of all;
לתת גדלה ליוצר בראשית	to ascribe greatness to him who formed the world in the beginning;
שהוא נוטה שמים ויסד ארץ	he who stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth;
ומושב יקרו בשמים ממעל	the residence of whose glory is in the heavens above;
ושכינת עזו בגבהי מרומים	and the divine majesty of whose power is in the highest heavens.
הוא אלהינו אין עוד	He is our God, and there is no other!
קהל ואנחנו כרעים ומשתחוים ומודים	Cong. Thus we bend knee and prostrate ourselves
לפני מלך מלכי המלכים	before the Supreme King of kings,
הקדוש ברוך הוא:	the holy and blessed one!

Merzbacher's text then continues with the second half of line 7 and line 8 from the traditional text. In this version, the element of particularism has been completely removed, and the element of one, universal God of Creation is brought to the fore. While the text is entirely taken from the traditional version of the ^c*Aleinu*, and we could argue that the change to the text is relatively minor, the theological impact is tremendous. As evidenced by its widespread²²⁸ and continued use, it is clear that Merzbacher's ^c*Aleinu* has continued to find favor with Reform Jews both poetically and ideologically.

addition to the textual changes, Merzbacher also labeled the rubric as "Adoration" (השתחויה in the Hebrew), a practice that would be retained through all the editions of the old *Union Prayer Book*.

²²⁸ For example, Isaac Mayer Wise used this version of the ^c*Aleinu* in his 1857 *Minhag Amerika*; although Wise's translation was different, it is still a faithful rendering of the Hebrew. See Wise, Kalisch, and Rothenheim, p. 37 in the Hebrew volume; pp. 31-32 in the English volume.

Another influential early American Reform liturgy was David Einhorn's *Olat Tamid*, presented here via Bernard Felsenthal's 1872 translation. Although the passage he presents covers both paragraphs of the traditional ^c*Aleinu*, we will only examine the portion corresponding to the first paragraph, as we have been doing throughout this section.

Einhorn deletes the Hebrew text of the ^c*Aleinu* entirely, and paraphrases it in German.

Felsenthal's translation is as follows:

It behooves us to praise the Lord of the universe, to glorify the Creator of the world, who has delivered us from the darkness of false belief, and sent us the pure light of his revelation. We bow before him, the King of kings, the Most-holy, who has built heaven, and founded earth. He alone is our God, none besides. Thus speaks the Holy Writ: Recognize it, and ponder it in thy heart, that the Eternal is God in heaven above as on earth below, and none besides.²²⁹

In this version, Einhorn and Felsenthal have made three significant changes to the text of the ^c*Aleinu*. The first is replacing lines 2 and 3 with the universal vision of "who has delivered us from the darkness of false belief, and sent us the pure light of his revelation."

By not mentioning Torah here, or even service to God, this text completely eliminates any vestige of particularism. The second emendation is the abbreviation of line 5, just as we saw in the 1841 West London liturgy. The final change is the elimination of the second halves of lines 6 and 7, which remove the most anthropomorphic sections of the text. That is, we acknowledge God as Creator but not as King, and we do not address God's dwelling place in any way. This is certainly in keeping with the rationalist mindset associated with nineteenth-century Reform, especially with the radical wing of which Einhorn was a leading exponent.

²²⁹ Bernard Felsenthal, trans. and ed., *Book of Prayers for Israelitish Congregations* (New York, 1872), Trans. of David Einhorn, ed., עלת תמיד *Gebetbuch für Israelitische Reform-Gemeinden* (Baltimore and New York, 1858), pp. 41-42.

Now that we have examined some of the earliest Reform versions of the *ᶜAleinu*, let us turn to the evolution of the text in the American Reform movement. The 1892 UPB contains three distinct versions of the *ᶜAleinu*, although the *ᶜAleinu* does not appear in every service.²³⁰ The *ᶜAleinu* is essentially the same in the daily evening service as in the first Shabbat evening service, the first part of which is a slight reworking of the Einhorn/Felsenthal version discussed above.²³¹ The only significant change is that the phrase “pure light of his revelation” is changed to “light of His truth.”²³² Line 5 from the traditional text²³³ is presented in Hebrew (the only Hebrew in this version of the *ᶜAleinu*) as well as transliteration, and translated as “We bow the head and bend the knee before the Ruler of the universe, and bless His holy name!”²³⁴ The text concludes with a translation of the second half of line 7 and of line 8 (hence eliminating line 6 and the first half of line 7). However, instead of referring to God as “our King,” the version here contains “our Father, our God, our Helper.”²³⁵ The effect of these changes is to eliminate any mention of particularism or chosenness. In addition, the Creation imagery is reduced, only occurring at the beginning and at the end of the reading. The emphasis here is entirely on the universal God as the source of eternal truth.

This emphasis is taken even further in the version of the *ᶜAleinu* found in the second Shabbat evening service:

Ye servants of truth and righteousness, who stand in the presence
of the Eternal One in this solemn moment of devotion, unite in ren-

²³⁰ It is omitted from the weekday morning service and the third Shabbat evening service.

²³¹ The daily evening version (CCAR, UPB 1892, p. 146) retains Felsenthal’s “It behooves us” whereas the Shabbat evening version begins “It is our duty,” which is closer to the meaning of the Hebrew and is more in keeping with the majority of other versions of the text.

²³² CCAR, UPB 1892, p. 17.

²³³ As opposed to the abbreviated version in Einhorn.

²³⁴ CCAR, UPB 1892, p. 17.

²³⁵ CCAR, UPB 1892, p. 17.

dering praise and thanksgiving to Him, who spread out the heavens and founded the earth, whose seat of glory is the boundless universe, and whose omnipotence pervades all being and keepeth all things in life and light. He is our God, there is none beside Him.

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION:

*Váanachnu, kór'im, umishtáchavim, umódim, lifné Mélech mal'ché
hammelochim, Hakkodósh, boruch hu.*²³⁶

READER:

Before Him we bow in reverence and humility, and acknowledge that He alone is our God, as is announced in Holy Writ: Thou shalt know this day, and reflect in thy heart that God is the Lord, and none beside Him.²³⁷

Here, the idea of universal praise for God is placed right at the beginning of the passage. The Creation imagery is eliminated from the beginning and the end of the prayer (changing the biblical quote in the final line!), and is only present in the middle. While this imagery is more extensive than in the previous version, it comes after the opening, which sets a decidedly anti-particularistic tone for the whole reading.

The final version of the ^C*Aleinu* in the original UPB is that for the Shabbat morning service, which is an amalgamation of Merzbacher's Hebrew (above the line) and the English from the Shabbat evening service presented above.²³⁸ This is clearly an attempt to bridge the divide between the more traditional and more radical elements in American Judaism at that time. The Hebrew text is clearly Reform in nature, but certainly much more traditional theologically than the English versions provided by the UPB. The variety of texts of the ^C*Aleinu* presented in this original UPB allows for variation in the text recited at the service, as well as reflecting the variety of perspectives that existing in

²³⁶ It is interesting to note that the transliteration given here is according to the Ashkenazi pronunciation, given that one of the criticisms of early Reform was in adopting the Sephardi pronunciation in its place.

²³⁷ CCAR, UPB 1892, p. 26.

²³⁸ CCAR, UPB 1892, p. 54.

American Reform even in the nineteenth century (and hence the challenges inherent in fashioning a united movement).

Unlike the variety of versions provided by the 1892 UPB, the other three major editions (1895, 1918, and 1940) provided a single version of the ^c*Aleinu*.²³⁹ This version is, for many people, one of the quintessential expressions of Reform Judaism, and is still present in the American Reform liturgy today, over a century later:

Let us adore the ever-living God, and render praise unto Him who spread out the heavens and established the earth, whose glory is revealed in the heavens above and whose greatness is manifest throughout the world: He is our God, and there is none else.

We bow our head and bend our knee and magnify the King of kings, the Holy One, the Ever-blest.²⁴⁰

The *ואנחנו כורעים* line is given in Hebrew only, followed by the well-known “May the time not be distant” reading written by David Philipson. These few brief lines concisely touch on all of the themes in the traditional text except, of course, for the chosenness of Israel.

Now that we have examined these sources, we have all the pieces we need to understand how the ^c*Aleinu* has been treated in the more contemporary American Reform liturgies. Unlike the UPB, both *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah* provide multiple options for this rubric, with different theological outlooks. In *Gates of Prayer*, the first version of ^c*Aleinu* provides the traditional Hebrew text (with the customary omission of the “emptiness and vanity” line); the first part (lines 1-3) is translated as “We must praise the Lord of all, the Maker of heaven and earth, who has set us apart from the other families

²³⁹ CCAR, UPB I 1895, p. 48; CCAR, UPB I 1918, p. 58; CCAR, UPB I 1940, p. 71. The versions are the same among these three books, except that in the 1940 edition the reference to bending the knee has been removed.

²⁴⁰ CCAR, UPB I 1895, p. 48.

of earth, giving us a destiny unique among the nations.”²⁴¹ The text corresponding to lines 2 and 3 vary from the Hebrew in two significant regards. The first is that they are not repetitive (the Hebrew of each line has two parallel clauses expressing the same idea), and the second is that the formulation is positive (“who has set us apart”) rather than negative (“who has not ordained our lot”). As discussed above, one of the issues dating back to medieval Europe (if not earlier) is the tension between Jewish self-definition in positive terms as compared to defining Judaism in opposition to other cultures and religions. The only other variance between the Hebrew and the English in this version is that the part of line 6 addressing God’s dwelling is not translated, in order to avoid the anthropomorphic imagery.

The second ^C*Aleinu* in *Gates of Prayer* combines Merzbacher’s Hebrew text (through line 5) side-by-side with “Let us adore” from the UPB. The translation of line 5 is the same as in the first version: “We therefore bow in awe and thanksgiving before the One who is Sovereign over all, the Holy One, blessed be He.”²⁴² The passage concludes with the venerable “May the time not be distant,” also from the UPB. In this juxtaposition, we can see that “Let us adore” is a reasonable translation of the Merzbacher text, and so this pairing works nicely at that level.

The third ^C*Aleinu* also uses the same Hebrew text as the second version, but with a more modern English text that elaborates more natural imagery that resonates with the references to Creation in the original:

Let us revere the God of life, and sing the praise of Nature’s Lord,
who spread out the heavens and established the earth, whose glory
is proclaimed by the starry skies, and whose wonders are revealed

²⁴¹ Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, p. 615.

²⁴² Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, p. 617.

in the human heart. He is our God; there is none else. With love
and awe we acclaim the Eternal our God, the Holy One, blessed be
He.²⁴³

The particularism of the traditional text is still absent here, so in this regard the third version differs from the second not in its ideological tone but rather in the contemporary nature of its language.

The final version of ^C*Aleinu* in *Gates of Prayer* draws on Geiger's 1870 version for its Hebrew text, replacing lines 2 and 3 of the traditional text with שְׁמוֹ חֲלָקֵנוּ וְהוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ. ²⁴⁴ This version retains Geiger's reference to unifying God's name, but replaces Geiger's reference to being drawn to God's "service" with the Jewish mission being to magnify God's reign (a messianic reference). Lines 6-8 are omitted here as well. The English is not a translation so much as a thematic reading emphasizing God's protection in all circumstances:

We praise Him who gave us life. In our rejoicing He is God; He is
God in our grief. In anguish and deliverance alike, we praise; in
darkness and light we affirm our faith. Therefore we bow our heads
in reverence, before the Eternal God of life, the Holy One, blessed
be He.²⁴⁵

This version of the ^C*Aleinu* is intended as a response to the Shoah; from that perspective it avoids the references to God's glory on earth found in the other versions, as well as affirming the need to maintain our faith in God both in dark times and in good times.

Mishkan T'filah does not introduce any new material in its presentation of the ^C*Aleinu*, at least not in terms of its ideology of particularism. The primary changes here are in making the English passages gender-neutral, which has required the reworking of

²⁴³ Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, p. 618.

²⁴⁴ Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, p. 620.

²⁴⁵ Stern, *Gates of Prayer*, p. 620.

the translations but not the Hebrew text. The first version of the ^C*Aleinu* is essentially the same as version 2 from *Gates of Prayer*, except that the opening of the English has been altered to read “Let us now praise the Sovereign of the universe, and proclaim the greatness of the Creator...”²⁴⁶ This English opening appears in the second version of the ^C*Aleinu* in *Mishkan T’filah*, which otherwise is the same as the first version in *Gates of Prayer*.²⁴⁷ The third version of the ^C*Aleinu* uses the same Hebrew as the fourth version from *Gates of Prayer*, but with a faithful English translation rather than the thematic reading discussed above.²⁴⁸ The final version of the ^C*Aleinu* corresponds to that from the UPB, except that the language has been changed to second person in the English to avoid the masculine references to God. The translation of line 5, however, is the “We bow in awe and thanksgiving...” from *Gates of Prayer* version 1.²⁴⁹

As we can see from this brief liturgical history, there are two main contemporary views within the Reform movement on the question of particularism. One view is represented by the traditional Hebrew text with a not-quite-complete English translation. This view acknowledges the idea of chosenness in Jewish thought, and feels secure enough in America to embrace this concept, albeit in a modern incarnation that may equate chosenness with a special mission rather than as an indication that Jews are superior to other people in some way. In the other view, we find the rejection of particularity, which focuses the ^C*Aleinu* on the messianic ideal of a united humankind in service to the one God. Much of the variability outside of these two views is related to the God language that is used, in particular some of the anthropomorphic imagery associated with God as Creator.

²⁴⁶ Frishman, pp. 586 (top), 589.

²⁴⁷ Frishman, pp. 586 (bottom), 588.

²⁴⁸ Frishman, p. 587 (top).

²⁴⁹ Frishman, p. 587 (bottom), 589.

3.4. *Kol Nidrei*

Unlike the other prayers from the Jewish liturgy that we have discussed, *Kol Nidrei* was not subject to external censorship at any point in time. However, as we shall see below, it has still presented significant problems in relations between Jews and non-Jews throughout its history, and has undergone several significant changes that were generated from within the Jewish community. *Kol Nidrei* is recited at the beginning of the evening service for Yom Kippur, in the midst of several passages that are actually better suited to setting the penitential mood for the day. We will first discuss the *Kol Nidrei* recitation in its liturgical context, and then discuss the origins and evolution of the text we have today.

3.4.1. *Context and meaning of Kol Nidrei*

If we look at the traditional liturgy for the beginning of the evening service for Yom Kippur without *Kol Nidrei*, the text reads perfectly well, forming a spare yet quite suitable introduction to the day's penitential theme. This opening passage reads:²⁵⁰

בְּיָשִׁיבָה שֶׁל מַעְלָה וּבְיָשִׁיבָה שֶׁל מַטָּה,	By the authority of the heavenly court And by the authority of the earthly court,
עַל דְּעַת הַמָּקוֹם וְעַל דְּעַת הַקָּהָל,	With the consent of the Omnipresent One And with the consent of this congregation,
אָנוּ מְתִירִין לְהִתְפַּלֵּל עִם הָעוֹבְרִיִּים.	We declare it is lawful to pray with sinners.

²⁵⁰ Philip Birnbaum, trans. and ed., *High Holyday Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 489-90. The translation is Birnbaum's. It should be noted that the entire ritual described here (including *Kol Nidrei* itself) is essentially the same in Chaim Stern, ed., *שְׁעַר תְּשׁוּבָה Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978), pp. 251-53. *Gates of Repentance* adds some English readings, and the translations are different, but the Hebrew text is virtually identical.

Birnbaum states that this passage was added to the liturgy by Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg based on the passage in *b.Ker.* 6b that states כל תענית שאין בה מפושעי ישראל אינה תענית (‘‘Any fast that does not include the sinners of Israel is not a fast’’).²⁵¹ That is, on Yom Kippur especially any Jew must be given the opportunity to make atonement, regardless of the gravity of his sins.

After *Kol Nidrei*, the following biblical verses appear, followed by the *She-hecheyanu* blessing:²⁵²

וְנִסְלַח לְכָל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִגְר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכָם,
כִּי לְכָל הָעָם בְּשָׁגָגָה.

May all the people of Israel be forgiven, including all the strangers who live in their midst, for all the people are in fault.²⁵³

סֶלַח נָא לַעֲוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כַּגִּדֹּל חֶסֶדְךָ, וּכְאֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁאַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד הַנֵּה. וְשֵׁם
נֶאֱמַר:

O pardon the iniquities of this people, according to thy abundant kindness, even as thou hast forgiven this people ever since they left Egypt.²⁵⁴

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה סֶלַחְתִּי כַדְבַּרְךָ.

The Lord said: ‘‘I pardon them as you have asked.’’²⁵⁵

In combination with the opening passage, we have here a plea for forgiveness for the entire community, and an assurance that God will be responsive to our pleas. As we shall see, *Kol Nidrei* itself does not fit into this thematic structure, and in fact interrupts the flow of this text.

The text of *Kol Nidrei* in use today is as follows:²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Birnbaum, *High Holyday Prayer Book*, p. 489n.

²⁵² Birnbaum, *High Holyday Prayer Book*, pp. 491-92. The translation is Birnbaum’s.

²⁵³ Numbers 15:26

²⁵⁴ Numbers 14:19

²⁵⁵ Numbers 14:20

²⁵⁶ Birnbaum, *High Holyday Prayer Book*, pp. 489-90. The translation is Birnbaum’s.

כָּל נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרֵי וְחֻרְמֵי, וְקוֹנָמֵי וְכַנּוּיֵי, וְקִנּוּסֵי
וְשְׁבוּעוֹת, וְנִדְרָנָא וְדִאֲשְׁתַּבְּעָנָא, וְדִאֲחֻרְמָנָא
וְדִאֲסָרָנָא עַל נַפְשָׁתָנָא,

All personal vows we are likely to make,
all personal oaths and pledges we are like-
ly to take

מִיּוֹם כְּפָרִים זֶה עַד יוֹם כְּפָרִים הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ
לְטוֹבָה,

between this Yom Kippur and the next
Yom Kippur,

כְּלֵהוֹן אֲחֻרְטָנָא בְּהוֹן. כְּלֵהוֹן יְהוֹן שְׂרוֹן, שְׁבִיקוֹן
שְׁבִיתוֹן, בְּטָלִין וּמְבָטְלִין, לֹא שְׂרִירִין וְלֹא קִימִין.
נִדְרָנָא לֹא נִדְרֵי, וְאֶסְרָנָא לֹא אֶסְרֵי, וְשְׁבוּעָתָנָא
לֹא שְׁבוּעוֹת.

we publicly renounce. Let them all be re-
linquished and abandoned, null and void,
neither firm nor established. Let our per-
sonal vows, pledges, and oaths, be consid-
ered neither vows nor pledges nor oaths.

There are three significant divisions of the text. The first is a listing of various types of vows, oaths, and prohibitions, each of which has a specific technical definition in Jewish law. The second is the specification of the time period to which the renunciation of vows applies, and the third is the actual statement that the vows and other obligations should be considered invalid. The first and third sections appear in Aramaic, while the phrase comprising the second section is in Hebrew.

The treatment of the subject of vows and related obligations in Jewish tradition is quite complex and technical. As the details of this topic are not necessary or useful for our present discussion, I will comment briefly on the salient points and then move on to the difficulties presented by *Kol Nidrei* and the evolution of the text in response to those difficulties. The Bible discusses the taking of vows (cf. Numbers 30, for example), which was evidently a common ancient practice often related to taking on the obligation to bring an offering to God or to do or not do some other action.²⁵⁷ In addition to the biblical situations in which a vow may be cancelled (e.g., by a father who still has legal authority over his daughter²⁵⁸), the Talmud further adds procedures for nullifying vows according to the

²⁵⁷ Idelsohn, pp. 225-26.

idea of חרטה (regret). This concept encompasses situations when the person making the vow should not have done so (such as during a moment of anger) as well as when there is some fact or circumstance (פתח חרטה, or opening of regret) which would have prevented the person from making the vow had he been aware of that fact or properly considered its import.²⁵⁹

There are two relevant rabbinic passages that impact our understanding of *Kol Nidrei*.²⁶⁰ The first is a passage from *b.Ned.* 23b, which states:

<p>והרוצה שלא יתקיימו נדריו כל השנה יעמוד בראש השנה ויאמר כל נדר שאני עתיד לידור יהא בטל</p>	<p>The one who desires that his vows for the entire year should not be binding should stand at Rosh Hashanah and say, "Any vow that I will vow in the future shall be cancelled."</p>
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Although the *Kol Nidrei* that we know is more elaborate than the formula that appears here, and the practice has been shifted from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, we can see in this passage the origin of the custom of reciting *Kol Nidrei*. It is important to note that, as in the *Kol Nidrei* text presented above, this passage applies to vows made in the future, not those made in the past. The other passage is found in *m.Yoma* 8:9:

<p>עברות שבין אדם למקום יום הכפורים מכפר עברות שבין אדם לחברו אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה את חברו</p>	<p>For transgressions that are between a man and God, Yom Kippur atones. For transgressions that are between one man and another, Yom Kippur does not atone, until the offender will placate the other.</p>
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This passage establishes a general principle regarding the observance of Yom Kippur, that matters between people must be resolved by them before atonement may be made. In

²⁵⁸ See Numbers 30:4-6.

²⁵⁹ Stuart Weinberg Gershon, *Kol Nidrei: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994), pp. 19-20.

²⁶⁰ Idelsohn, p. 226.

the context of *Kol Nidrei*, this clearly limits the scope of that formula to vows that one makes and obligations that one takes on to God, and does not have any bearing on oaths and obligations between people.

3.4.2. *Issues concerning the traditional text*

Despite the common modern understanding among Jews that *Kol Nidrei* does not apply to obligations between people, it has historically given rise to accusations of Jews as untrustworthy. One manifestation of this situation was the Oath More Judaico that medieval Jews often had to take when involved in legal matters with non-Jews.²⁶¹ In addition to emphasizing the distrust of Jews, this oath and its accompanying ceremonies (e.g., taking the oath while standing on a pig's skin) also served to shame those who were forced to take it. In some places, these oaths remained in place until the eighteenth century or later.²⁶² Even in more recent times, the attacks on *Kol Nidrei* have continued. In a 1921 article from the *Dearborn Independent* (a publication known as a mouthpiece for Henry Ford's anti-semitic sentiments), *Kol Nidrei* is depicted as a "prayer [that] breaks down the common ground of confidence between men," in particular because it addresses future vows that one may take and not to past vows that one has found it impossible to fulfill.²⁶³

For the *ga'onim* in Babylonia, the custom of saying *Kol Nidrei* as well as the general idea of annulling vows were both controversial (especially among the *ga'onim* of Sura). Indeed, the study of tractate *Nedarim* was even suspect, as we see in the following quote from Yehudai Ga'on:²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 335.

²⁶² Levitats, Isaac, "Oath More Judaico," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (2007).

²⁶³ "Kol Nidre: Jews' Immoral Prayer," *Dearborn Independent* (5 November 1921), Reprinted by Brown & Barrows (London). The complete article is reproduced in Appendix D.

²⁶⁴ *Ga'on* of Sura from 757-61.

We do not revoke vows or annul oaths because we have not expounded upon the talmudic tractate for vows in more than 100 years. ... We do not comprehend the profundity of these matters and we do not have the authority to annul vows, much less to annul oaths. It is not practiced at the two academies or anywhere else in all of Babylonia to revoke vows and to annul oaths. ... There is no sage in this generation who knows how to revoke vows and to annul prohibitive vows. Likewise, you too should be strict with regard to vows, and with oaths all the more so, and don't deviate from the custom of the academies.²⁶⁵

While Yehudai was probably referring to the annulment of vows in general, rather than *Kol Nidrei* specifically,²⁶⁶ some of his successors were more specific. So, for example, Natronai bar Hillai²⁶⁷ stated that, “[w]e do not practice in the two academies or anywhere else to annul vows, neither on Rosh haShanah nor on Yom Kippur. However, we have heard that in other countries they say ‘all vows (*kol nidrei*) and prohibitions,’ but we have neither seen nor heard of it from our rabbis.”²⁶⁸ However, this statement is more descriptive of the practices in Babylonia and elsewhere, rather than prescriptive as to what the correct practice should be. A more prescriptive statement comes from Hai bar Nachshon.²⁶⁹ While he wrote that “[i]t is the practice of the people in our region to say on Yom Kippur ‘all vows’ (*kol nidrei*),”²⁷⁰ he also ruled that

[t]he law is according to Rava [who ruled that the anticipatory invalidation of future vows should not be taught to the public]. Therefore we do not act according to this *mishnah* [*sic*].²⁷¹ We do not revoke vows, neither on Rosh haShanah nor on Yom Kippur. We have not heard from our rabbis about this practice at all. Like-

²⁶⁵ Gershon, p. 68.

²⁶⁶ Lawrence Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 101.

²⁶⁷ *Ga'on* of Sura from 853-58.

²⁶⁸ Gershon, p. 68.

²⁶⁹ *Ga'on* of Sura from 885-96.

²⁷⁰ Gershon, p. 62.

²⁷¹ The *mishnah* would be *m.Ned.* 3:1, but the practice of annulling vows on Rosh Hashanah actually appears in the talmudic passage we discussed earlier (*b.Ned.* 23b).

wise, you too should be strict and not deviate from the custom of the academies.²⁷²

Similarly, Sa^cdiah Ga^oon²⁷³ did not include *Kol Nidrei* in his prayer book and held the opinion that a community could recite the formula to absolve themselves from a collective vow that cannot be fulfilled, but that it was not suitable for individual use.²⁷⁴

On the other side, Hai bar Sherira²⁷⁵ and ^cAmram²⁷⁶ are virtually the only gaonic sources to support the use of *Kol Nidrei* in the liturgy.²⁷⁷ Although we no longer have any copies of Hai bar Sherira's *siddur*, we know from other medieval sources that *Kol Nidrei* was included in it. However, there is an important difference between the version that Hai bar Sherira used and the contemporary version we presented above, namely that the time period is specified in the past (מיום הכפורים שעבר עד יום הכפורים הזה הבא עלינו) rather than in the future.²⁷⁸ In addition to the question of the legitimacy of annulling vows in

²⁷² Gershon, pp. 70-71.

²⁷³ Ga^oon of Sura from 928-42.

²⁷⁴ Gershon, p. 70.

²⁷⁵ Ga^oon of Pumbedita from 998-1038.

²⁷⁶ Ga^oon of Sura from ca. 858 until his death ca. 875. Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 191, posits that ^cAmram headed a rival academy while Natronai was still ga^oon of Sura. It is unclear if ^cAmram then succeeded Natronai as ga^oon of the main academy in Sura or continued to head his own academy. While Gershon and Hoffman both present the view that ^cAmram also thought of *Kol Nidrei* as "a foolish custom," I believe that the passage from *Seder Rav* ^cAmram on which this is based actually refers to the practice of saying *Shehecheyanu* aloud in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, when there is no cup of wine over which to say the blessing (although Rav ^cAmram does indicate that the custom of saying *Kol Nidrei* is not universal, by his introduction ויש שעושין כך, "And there are those who do thus"). See Appendix C for a reproduction of the relevant material from *Seder Rav* ^cAmram along with my translation.

Among later sources, there is disagreement regarding how the מנהג שטות ("foolish custom") comment from ^cAmram is to be applied. *Sefer Hamanhig* (*Hilkhot Yom Kippur*, *Siman* 56, page 59b) is explicit in stating that the "foolish custom" is reciting *Kol Nidrei*. Rabbeinu Yerucham (*Nativ* 7, part 1, page 50, column 4), on the other hand, cites ^cAmram without mentioning the מנהג שטות phrase; Yerucham does however support reciting both *Kol Nidrei* and *Shehecheyanu* in the synagogue even without the cup of wine (as is explicit in *b. Eruv*. 40b). In both cases, I would argue that the writers are spinning the material from Rav ^cAmram to support their own opinions, rather than providing us with an interpretation of what ^cAmram is actually saying.

²⁷⁷ Hoffman, p. 102. Gershon (p. 71) also cites Paltai as allowing *Kol Nidrei*, but Hoffman (pp. 101-2) cites evidence that the opinion may not have been written by Paltai, and that if it were, he almost certainly did not include *Kol Nidrei* in his summary of the liturgy for the Yom Kippur evening service.

general, this question of the specified time period was a major source of controversy among the medieval sources.

Unlike the tenor of the discussion in the gaonic sources, the medieval Ashkenazi sources indicate that the practice of saying *Kol Nidrei* was nearly universal. So for example, Rabbeinu Shlomo of Worms disregards the earlier gaonic objections to *Kol Nidrei* and instead focuses on the necessity of the formula as a means of absolving guilt for the unfulfilled vows that every person carries with him.²⁷⁹ He evidently considered this need significant enough to justify the repetition of *Kol Nidrei* three times based on the fact that some people will be late to the synagogue, and should not be deprived of reciting the formula.²⁸⁰ The one significant change to the text of *Kol Nidrei* that Rabbeinu Shlomo indicates is that the words *בכתוב בתורתך* before the *ונסלח* line should be omitted because the biblical verse (Numbers 15:26) is not a proof text for the annulment of vows.²⁸¹ The effect of this change is to separate the *ונסלח* line from the body of *Kol Nidrei* itself, where it had appeared in the text from *Seder Rav*^c *Amram*. This is the form in which we find these texts in the modern liturgy.

Because the medieval sources accept *Kol Nidrei* as a fixed component of the Yom Kippur rituals, the debate was no longer over whether or not *Kol Nidrei* was to be said, but rather over the legal status of the formula. Rabbeinu Tam argued that *Kol Nidrei* did not constitute an halakhic annulment of vows. However, rather than using this position to argue against reciting the text at all, Rabbeinu Tam used the passage from *b.Ned.* 23b

²⁷⁸ Hoffman, p. 102. The version of *Kol Nidrei* in *Seder Rav*^c *Amram* is also specified in the past.

²⁷⁹ Gershon, pp. 76-77.

²⁸⁰ Hershtler, *Siddur*, p. 235; *siman* 101.

²⁸¹ Gershon, p. 77. The context of the biblical verse concerns the procedure for gaining forgiveness when the community has committed idolatry.

presented above to advocate for changing the language of *Kol Nidrei* to refer to future vows (the text we have today), for which there is no halakhic objection to preemptive annulment. But, unlike Sa^cdiah, Rabbeinu Tam was clear that *Kol Nidrei* only applied to the annulment of personal vows (vows one imposed on oneself) and not to vows made between two people.²⁸² Rabbeinu Tam's position was not universally held, though. The Rosh, for example, argued that *Kol Nidrei* was in fact a valid annulment of past vows in accordance with talmudic tradition.²⁸³ However, the Rosh addressed concerns about potential abuses of *Kol Nidrei* "by arguing that his generation did not take their vows lightly."²⁸⁴ However, this was clearly not the case.

The fears of the *ga'onim* with regard to *Kol Nidrei* and the nullification of vows is borne out by medieval evidence that some Jews misused *Kol Nidrei* to absolve themselves from legitimate vows. For example, *Sefer Hamanhig* states that "for what one person swears to another—and certainly to the government or a court—there is neither *heter* nor *hafarah* nor [even the possibility of] requesting annulment at all! The punishment of one who violates such vows will be very severe, God save him."²⁸⁵ The danger expressed here is also represented by Yerucham b. Meshullam, who indicated that many Jews were committing perjury under the mistaken notion that *Kol Nidrei* would absolve them of wrongdoing.²⁸⁶ So despite the preponderance of rabbinic opinion that *Kol Nidrei* only applied to personal vows, it seems that the behavior of average Jews did nothing to discourage the mistrust of them engendered by the text of *Kol Nidrei*.

²⁸² Gershon, pp. 77-80.

²⁸³ Gershon, pp. 86-88.

²⁸⁴ Gershon, p. 88.

²⁸⁵ Gershon, p. 81.

²⁸⁶ Gershon, p. 82.

The key element that cemented *Kol Nidrei* as a beloved part of Jewish tradition is the melody that is nearly universal among Ashkenazi Jews, which originated in Germany around 1500.²⁸⁷ Within a century of its appearance, Mordechai Jaffe of Prague wrote of his failure to correct the linguistic deficiencies in the text of *Kol Nidrei*:

All of the language of *kol nidrei* that the *chazzanim* chant now is not precise and is in error...most of the content of *kol nidrei* that is printed in the prayer books has no substance nor any meaning except for the melody...how many times I tried to fix it and to teach the *chazzanim* what was correct but they were not able to change at the time of prayer because the customary melody was on their lips.²⁸⁸

Clearly, the folk custom had won out over the halakhic debate. With the universally-accepted position of *Kol Nidrei* in the liturgy, the debates over whether or not it was permitted, or whether or not it constitutes a valid annulment of vows, were moot. The accepted and beloved melody rather than the technical halakhic argumentation would determine the form of the text that we continue to chant today.

3.4.3. *Changes arising in the Reform tradition*

The medieval ambivalence regarding *Kol Nidrei* only intensified in the modern age, as did the divide between the folk custom and considered opinions against reciting the formula. For example, the subject of *Kol Nidrei* was discussed at the 1844 Brunswick rabbinical conference, in the context of trying to persuade the several governments in Germany to do away with the Oath More Judaico so that Jews could properly integrate into German society. The attendees at the conference, including both rabbis who represented reformist congregations and those who hoped to introduce reforms into their con-

²⁸⁷ Idelsohn, p. 228.

²⁸⁸ Gershon, p. 90.

gregations, were unanimous in declaring that *Kol Nidrei* should be removed from the liturgy by the following Yom Kippur. The feelings that certain of the rabbis at the conference expressed indicating their inability to succeed in this effort were practical rather than ideological. Rabbi Bodenheimer, for instance, had already submitted the liturgy for approval.²⁸⁹ District Rabbi Goldmann, a rabbi who was interested in introducing reforms into his congregation, expressed reservations about whether he would be able to convince his congregants to accept such a change.²⁹⁰ In neither case was the rabbi in question opposed to removing *Kol Nidrei* from the liturgy, however. It should also be noted that in cases where *Kol Nidrei* was not included in the published prayer books, it is not necessarily the case that its recitation was omitted from the service. In my copy of the 1922 UPB II (which apparently belonged to Rabbi Bertram Korn), there is a handwritten note before the hymn “O Day of God” that simply says “Kol Nidre [*sic*].”

While all of the nineteenth-century Reform liturgies we are studying omit *Kol Nidrei* itself as well as the passage preceding it (...*בְּיִשְׁבָּהּ שֶׁל מַעֲלָה*), almost all of them retain at least some of the accompanying verses included in the traditional liturgy. The one exception is Merzbacher, who simply begins the Yom Kippur evening service with Psalm 130 (“Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord! hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications...”²⁹¹) followed by *Bar’khu*. A more typical example is found in the Hamburg liturgies, which retain the traditional verses following *Kol Nidrei*.²⁹² This same formula appears in Einhorn as well.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, pp. 336-37.

²⁹⁰ Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform*, p. 35.

²⁹¹ Merzbacher, vol. 2, p. 5.

²⁹² Fränkel and Bresselau, p. 126; *Gebetbuch*, p. 182. The verses are in a different order; the *וְנִסְתָּח* line appears last, just before *Shehecheyanu*.

²⁹³ Felsenthal, p. 170.

The 1841 West London liturgy demonstrates a pattern that is followed by all of the other liturgies we will examine—substituting a psalm or hymn for *Kol Nidrei* (as did Merzbacher, although the West London liturgy was earlier by some fourteen years). In the case of David Marks's liturgy, the chosen substitute is Psalm 38 ("O Lord, do not rebuke me in thy wrath; neither chastise me in thy hot displeasure..."²⁹⁴). Marks further omits the ונסלח line, although he retains the other verses that follow *Kol Nidrei* in the traditional liturgy as well as *Shehecheyanu*.²⁹⁵

As we have come to expect, Abraham Geiger presents the most creative substitution in his 1854 prayer book:²⁹⁶

כָּל-פְּשָׁעֵי וּפְשָׁעֵי הַקֹּהֵל הַזֶּה וּפְשָׁעֵי כָל-עַמֶּךָ
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִחֶם וְהַעֲבִירָם מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ וְטִהַר לִבֵּנוּ
מִזִּמָּה כְּפֻרִים זֶה עַד יוֹם כְּפֻרִים הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ
לְטוֹבָה לִבֵּנוּ נִשְׁבֵּר רוּחֵנוּ נִדְכָּא מַעֲשִׂים אֵין
אֶתֵּנוּ בְּצִדִּיקְתְּךָ נִשְׁעֲנֵנוּ נָא רַחוּם אֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ כִּי
עָפָר אֲנַחְנוּ כְּעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ נָא אֵל תִּגְמַל:

Cast away, All-merciful One, all of my offenses, all the sins of this congregation and of Your entire people Israel. May they be cast away from You. Purify our hearts that we may grow in piety from this Day of Atonement to the next (may You grant it to us!). Our hearts are broken, our spirits humbled. We have no deeds to put before You (for our justification); we can only rely on your graciousness. All-gracious One, You will not abandon us, we who are born of dust. You will not requite us according to our misdeeds.

Geiger follows this text with the verses that traditionally follow *Kol Nidrei*. Certainly Geiger's new prayer is more in keeping with the spirit of supplication and penitence that characterize Yom Kippur than is *Kol Nidrei*. As is his custom, Geiger retains as much of

²⁹⁴ Marks, vol. 4, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ Marks, vol. 4, p. 3. It is interesting to note that Marks includes the "והוא רחום" line before Bar'khu (see the note in Appendix C on Rav ^cAmram's liturgy). This indicates the origins of the West London liturgy in the Spanish-Portuguese rite.

²⁹⁶ Geiger, 1854, p. 358. Translation of Geiger's German text courtesy of Dr. Richard Sarason. The German translation of the new Hebrew prayer and of the subsequent responses is fairly close to the Hebrew.

the traditional language and structure as is compatible with his liberal ideology, and comes up with creative ways of rectifying the deficiencies that he cannot retain in his liturgy.

In his 1870 prayer book, Geiger does not retain the new prayer described above, but instead presents Leopold Stein's 1840 hymn "O Tag das Herrn!" (O Day of God).²⁹⁷ This hymn was one of the common substitutions for *Kol Nidrei* in the classic Reform liturgies, having also been used by Wise in his 1866 *Machzor*,²⁹⁸ as well as in the 1894 and 1922 UPBs.²⁹⁹ These latter books also include Psalm 130 following the Stein hymn, and retain all of the traditional verses following *Kol Nidrei*.³⁰⁰

The 1945 UPB did not use Stein's hymn, but introduced its own interesting liturgical passage. Following Psalm 130, the 1945 book contains the following passage, recited by the reader after taking the Torah scrolls out of the Ark (a customary practice when reciting *Kol Nidrei*):

All prayers which the children of Israel offer unto Thee, O our Father, that they may depart from sin, from guilt and from wickedness, and follow the ways of Thy Torah, the ways of justice and righteousness; yea, all the resolutions which we make from this Day of Atonement until the coming Day of Atonement—may they be acceptable before Thee, and may we be given strength to fulfil [*sic*] them. We have come to seek atonement and to ask Thy par-

²⁹⁷ Geiger, 1870, vol. 2, pp. 139-40. Interestingly, Geiger indicates that the sermon is to be delivered in between the second and third verses of the hymn. While it was common at the time for the sermon to come early in the service, I find it odd that it would come in the middle of a work such as Stein's hymn.

²⁹⁸ Isaac M. Wise, כפי מנהג אמעריא: תפילות בני ישורון לראש השנה, ליום הכפורים, *The Divine Service of American Israelites for the New Year, for the Day of Atonement* (Cincinnati, 1866), vol. 2, pp. 30-33. Wise only includes the single וְנִסְלַח line and *Shehecheyanu* after Stein's hymn.

²⁹⁹ Stein's hymn also appears in Emil G. Hirsch, *Dr. David Einhorn's עלת תמיד: Book of Prayers for Jewish Congregations—New Translation After the German Original* (Chicago, 1896), pp. 64-66. This is an innovation of Hirsch's, as the hymn does not appear in Einhorn's German original nor in Felsenthal's 1872 translation.

³⁰⁰ Central Conference of American Rabbis, סדר תפילות ישראל, *The Union Prayer-Book for Jewish Worship, Part II* (Cincinnati, 1894), pp. 89-91; Central Conference of American Rabbis, סדר תפילות ישראל, *The Union Prayer-Book for Jewish Worship, Part II* (Rev. ed., Cincinnati, 1922), pp. 95-97.

don and forgiveness. Turn us in full repentance unto Thee, and teach us to undo the wrongs which we have committed. Thus will thy great and revered name be sanctified among us.³⁰¹

This passage combines the creativity of Geiger in providing a more suitable introduction to the Yom Kippur liturgy than *Kol Nidrei*, but also draws on some of the language of *Kol Nidrei*. So while the phrase “the resolutions which we make from this Day of Atonement until the coming Day of Atonement” recalls *Kol Nidrei*, the following phrase turns the focus from annulling the vows we cannot keep to asking for the ability to be able to fulfill the obligations we do take on.

The initial printing of the 1945 UPB included the full text of *Kol Nidrei* after this new prayer. However, in the face of considerable objection to the inclusion of the traditional text in the prayer book, subsequent printings simply printed “כָּל נִדְרֵי” (The Kol Nidre Chant)” at the bottom of the page.³⁰² This provides a fitting example of the evolving tension between those ideologically-motivated members of the movement who disregarded the powerful emotional pull of *Kol Nidrei* (and especially its melody) and those whose ideological leanings could not conquer these passions. As happened in the medieval period, emotion trumped ideology as *Gates of Repentance* reintroduced the full *Kol Nidrei* text to the Reform liturgy.

As was the case with the ^c*Aleinu*, the early reformers came up with several creative methods of addressing the problems they perceived with the traditional *Kol Nidrei*. This generally consisted in substituting a biblical psalm or contemporary reading for the traditional text. The approach here is a hybrid of the approaches to the other liturgical

³⁰¹ Central Conference of American Rabbis, סדר תפילות ישראל *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship, Part II* (Newly rev. ed., New York, 1945), p. 130.

³⁰² As in the Marks liturgy, the וְנִסְלַח line is omitted while the other verses that follow *Kol Nidrei* in the traditional liturgy, as well as *Shehecheyanu*, are retained.

examples we have studied. As with *Birkat Haminim*, the traditional text is eliminated in almost every case. And as with the ^c*Aleinu*, a more suitable substitute is provided (although in the case of the ^c*Aleinu* the substitution was generally for a part of the traditional text and not for the entire passage).

Chapter 4. Vernacular Prayer in the Roman Catholic Tradition

It goes almost without saying that the process by which the vernacular was introduced into Catholic worship was very different from the means by which the Jewish liturgy was reformed. While the Jewish liturgical changes of the nineteenth century came about from the bottom up, largely through the efforts of congregational lay leaders and in opposition to the established Jewish rabbinical leadership, the opposite was true in the case of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council represented a top-down statement from the leadership of the Church to Catholics everywhere. However, while these movements for reform began about 150 years apart, they were both responses to modern social circumstances that necessitated serious reflection on the relationship of the respective religions to the worlds in which they found themselves. In this chapter, we will briefly examine the historical background to the liturgical reforms arising from the Second Vatican Council, and then discuss some of the significant liturgical changes that came out of these reforms.

4.1. Vernacular usage prior to the Second Vatican Council

As we discussed above, with regard to the impact of Church censorship on the Jewish liturgy, the Protestant Reformation had a significant impact on the self-definition of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, the major official gathering of Catholic Church leaders during the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent (1545-63), “sought to curb abuses and to settle matters that had been thrown into question by the success of Protestantism.”³⁰³ As the Council attempted to provide definitive answers on matters of Catholic

belief and practice, one of the major areas addressed at Trent was the standard liturgy for all Catholics. To that end, the Council established the Congregation of Sacred Rites, which continues to function to this day as the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The ensuing reforms of the medieval liturgy resulted in the Roman liturgy becoming virtually the only rite in the Roman Catholic Church from the late sixteenth century until the liturgy was reformed in the wake of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.³⁰⁴ As a result of the Roman rite becoming the official liturgy of the Church, most of the local rites previously in use were lost (except in France).³⁰⁵

There are two significant elements of the Tridentine liturgy for our purposes. The first is the continued use of Latin even after the rise of national languages in the Middle Ages (and the consequent loss of Latin literacy by many if not most Catholics), and the second is the hieratic nature of the rituals, which were performed by the priest on behalf of the people. For example, the people did not actively participate in the rituals of the Mass, and did not often partake of the consecrated bread and wine offered during Communion.³⁰⁶ However, several factors compensated for the lack of understanding of the liturgy by the people, including the increased prominence of the vernacular sermon, the various biblically-themed forms of art found in the churches, and the increasingly sophisticated music composed for the performance of the Mass.³⁰⁷ So even though a deep understanding of the prayers was within the reach only of those who were learned enough to

³⁰³ Susan J. White, "Christian Worship since the Reformation," *The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship* (Eds. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. 189.

³⁰⁴ Baldovin, John C, "Christian Worship to the Eve of the Reformation," *The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship*, p. 174.

³⁰⁵ White, pp. 189-90.

³⁰⁶ Baldovin, p. 175.

³⁰⁷ Josef A. Jungmann, *The Mass: An Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Survey* (Trans. Julian Fernandez, ed. Mary Ellen Evans, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1976), pp. 178-79.

understand the Latin text as well as the historical context for the prayers, the issue of the common understanding of the liturgy did not become a concern until the major reforms of the twentieth century.³⁰⁸ Indeed, hand missals (missals used by the laity) containing translations of the Latin liturgy were prohibited until the time of Pope Leo XIII, who served from 1878-1903.³⁰⁹

However, the existence of an official liturgy for the whole Church for nearly 400 years did not preclude efforts at reform prior to the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. For example, the Synod of Pistoia in 1786 issued a decree that denounced the continued usage of Latin in the liturgy. Although this decree did not have any practical impact on the liturgy, it does show the effect of the Enlightenment on the thinking of at least some people within the Church.³¹⁰ In the twentieth century, advocates of liturgical reform had been active for some decades before the Second Vatican Council was convened. These advocates

envisioned a liturgy in which people would (1) experience themselves once again as participants rather than spectators; (2) experience full, conscious, and active participation in the rites through the use of vernacular languages in place of Latin; and (3) recognize the intimate connection between worship and the demands of justice and charity that authentic eucharistic participation placed on their daily lives.³¹¹

To be sure, the dominant form of Catholic worship remained the Tridentine Latin Mass, although responsive portions of other sacraments³¹² “were permitted to be celebrated in the vernacular as early as 1954.”³¹³ We shall also discuss other liturgical changes prior to

³⁰⁸ Hughes, *Language*, pp. 2-3.

³⁰⁹ Kathleen Hughes, “The Changing Face of Roman Catholic Worship,” *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*, p. 73.

³¹⁰ White, p. 195.

³¹¹ Hughes, “The Changing Face...,” pp. 72-73.

³¹² For example, baptism and marriage.

³¹³ Jeffrey Michael Kemper, *Behind the Text: A Study of the Principles and Procedures of Translation*,

the Second Vatican Council's reforms when we examine particular passages of the liturgy below.

4.2. The Second Vatican Council and vernacular prayer

Before beginning our discussion of the reforms brought about by the Second Vatican Council, we must note that two issues that were universally joined in the Reform changes to the Jewish liturgy—ideological changes to the text of the prayers and translation to the vernacular—were in fact treated separately in the process of reforming the Catholic liturgy.³¹⁴ So for example, the initial English translation of the Canon was not approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith because of several small omissions relative to the Latin text, and a subsequent communication on the issue indicated that "...the sole version for the languages spoken in several countries, is to render faithfully the text of the Roman Canon, without variations, omissions, or insertions which would make it different from the Latin text."³¹⁵ The distinction in these two areas is further indicated by the ongoing practice of publishing the Church's Latin rites in an official *editio typica*, used as the base text for any translations to be prepared.³¹⁶ This section will address the process and issues related to the use of vernacular prayer in Catholic worship, while the following section will present several examples of changes to the underlying Latin texts that are significant for our discussion of interfaith relations.

Among the first statements produced by the Second Vatican Council was the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, which was promulgated on 4 December 1963. The over-

Adaptation, and Composition of Original Texts by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1992), p. 15n.

³¹⁴ Hughes, "The Changing Face...", p. 74.

³¹⁵ Kemper, pp. 157-58.

³¹⁶ Hughes, "The Changing Face...", p. 77.

riding concern of this document was to provide for “the full and active participation by all the people”³¹⁷ in Catholic worship. One of the main foci of the liturgical changes associated with this goal was permission to use the vernacular in reciting the liturgy.³¹⁸ It is important to note that this permission was *not* a mandate to use the vernacular. The *Constitution* explicitly required that Latin was to be maintained in the liturgical rites, while also stating that “...since the use of the vernacular, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or in other parts of the liturgy, may frequently be of great advantage to the people, a wider use may be made of it, especially in readings, directives and in some prayers and chants.”³¹⁹ The decision regarding the extent to which the vernacular would be used rested with the local authorities, with the approval of the Vatican.³²⁰ Despite the impression that the use of the vernacular was to be limited, there was also a provision for more extensive changes to be approved when these changes would be “useful or necessary.”³²¹ Because of the number of such applications for wider use of the vernacular, the local authorities had assumed complete responsibility for the decision regarding how much of the Mass was to be said in the vernacular by 1971.³²²

However, in this time the issue of authority with regard to liturgical reform was quite significant. The issue is mentioned repeatedly in the relevant letters and instructions that followed the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. For example, the September, 1964, *Instruction on the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states that “[i]t belongs to the Church’s authority to regulate the sacred liturgy. Nobody, there-

³¹⁷ Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1975), p. 8.

³¹⁸ Jungmann, *The Mass...Survey*, pp. 179-80.

³¹⁹ Flannery, p. 13.

³²⁰ Flannery, p. 13.

³²¹ Flannery, p. 14.

³²² Flannery, p. 39.

fore, is allowed to proceed on his own initiative in this domain...³²³ The need for repeated assertions regarding the Church's authority leads to the conclusion that there were challenges to this authority. Indeed, despite the suggestion in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* that an all-vernacular Mass was not intended, and the fact that certain parts of the Mass (such as the Canon) were not intended ever to be recited in the vernacular,³²⁴ the extremely positive reaction to the initial experiences of vernacular in the Mass gradually changed this view to allow the whole liturgy to be recited in the vernacular. Among the other reasons for this change was a sense that the liturgy was "fragmented" by the use of multiple languages in the service, and because of "unauthorized liturgical innovation" in Holland.³²⁵

In response to the demand for English translations to be used for public worship, and in light of the many countries in which such translations could be used, the International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL)³²⁶ was formally constituted in 1965. The mandate of this body was "[t]o work out a plan for the translation of liturgical texts and the provision of original texts where required in language which would be correct, dignified, intelligible, and suitable for public recitation and singing."³²⁷ Although ICEL cannot force the national bishops' conferences to use the translations they prepare, there are significant motivations for having shared English translations.³²⁸ These include encouraging greater participation in the services, and because "consistent vocabulary, struc-

³²³ Flannery, p. 50.

³²⁴ Kemper, pp. 105-6.

³²⁵ Kemper, pp. 106-7.

³²⁶ The organization's name has since been changed to the International *Commission* on English in the Liturgy, but the acronym ICEL is unchanged.

³²⁷ Kemper, p. 366. Prior to the creation of the ICEL translations, bishops wishing to use English for liturgical purposes had to choose a temporary translation to use. These were generally taken from existing hand missals (see Kemper, p. 17).

³²⁸ Kemper, pp. 20-21.

ture, and phraseology serves to give identity and a sense of belonging to those who hear it.”³²⁹ In some sense, the Church was here trying to maintain the sense of unity that was previously provided by the universal Latin liturgy used throughout the world.³³⁰

One significant obstacle to the challenge of creating workable English translations of the liturgy that would be suitable for use in public worship is that prior to this time, the Church had little familiarity with vernacular liturgical translations for official proclamation. The translations contained in the hand missals that existed were intended for private reading while following the Mass, not for reading aloud.³³¹ To address this problem, and demonstrating how deeply the reforms of the Second Vatican Council went in changing the attitude of the Church towards other religions (and particularly towards Protestantism), ICEL aimed to draw on the experiences of other churches with English-language worship.³³² In addition to conferring with liturgists from other Christian denominations in developing their texts, ICEL has participated in such ecumenical groups as the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) and the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC), and contributed to their publications (ICET’s *Prayers We Have in Common* and ELLC’s *Praying Together*).³³³

Putting aside the ongoing debate about whether the vernacular should even be used in Catholic worship (and a significant amount of the feedback ICEL received in response to their draft liturgies concerned this issue and not the translations themselves³³⁴),

³²⁹ Kemper, pp. 55-56.

³³⁰ Kemper, p. 57, 57n.

³³¹ Kemper, p. 15.

³³² Kemper, p. 21.

³³³ Kemper, pp. 46-47. ICET was an international body composed of members from a number of different Christian denominations. The purpose of ICET was to produce common English versions of shared liturgical texts. It issued three editions of its texts in the 1970s before ceasing to function in 1975. ELLC, a successor body to ICET, was founded in 1983.

³³⁴ Kemper, p. 104n.

ICEL was faced with a number of potential contradictions and differences of opinion regarding the ideology of translation. These are reflected in the translation principles adopted by the ICEL's advisory committee as well as later documents. For example, the standard for an acceptable translation was that "[it] must faithfully express the meaning of the original texts."³³⁵ However, recognizing that certain linguistic forms and usages of the Latin liturgy would not translate into modern languages, the 1969 Instruction on the Translation of Liturgical Texts directed that ICEL focus on having intelligible texts instead of literal translations, and also recognized that ICEL might need to create new texts under certain circumstances instead of translating existing Latin texts.³³⁶

The translation principles also required that translations consider the sacred nature of the traditional liturgy and the history of English religious writing on the one hand, and contemporary English usage that would be aimed at "the middle range of church-goers rather than to the least or the most intelligent and literate," not to mention a euphonic quality that would render the texts easy to read and to set to suitable music.³³⁷ While one aspect to this divide is the style of language to be used, with liberals preferring a contemporary style and more conservative members of the group preferring an older (but not archaic) style,³³⁸ the committee also had to address the fact that the idioms of English vary greatly because it is in such wide usage around the world. The conclusion drawn by the committee was that rather than focusing on "any particular 'idiom', [the translation] must aim at good, straight, simple English which brings understanding to the unlearned and delight to the literate."³³⁹

³³⁵ Kemper, p. 369.

³³⁶ Kemper, pp. 94-96.

³³⁷ Kemper, p. 369. See also pp. 77-78.

³³⁸ Kemper, p. 75.

In addition to the more general issues about linguistic style, ICEL also had to address specific issues such as the language to be used in addressing God.³⁴⁰ Should such language take on an egalitarian character, or maintain the traditional hierarchy found in the Latin liturgy? For example, ICEL translated the Latin *famulus* as “friend,” to which some objected because doing so disregards the fact that we humans are still God’s servants.³⁴¹ Similarly, there was a debate regarding the use of “thou-forms” for addressing God. For some, such language is evocative and serves to imbue prayer with a certain formal, sacred character. On the other hand, others felt that these uses were artificial and that such “special language...implied that God was distant from the human experience.”³⁴² And even though there was a feeling that other churches would abandon the “thou-forms” and so the English version of the Catholic liturgy should avoid them in order to stay “relevant,”³⁴³ the version of the Lord’s Prayer in the 1974 Sacramentary based on the ICEL translations continued to use the “thou-forms” because the older translation was so cherished by the faithful.³⁴⁴

Following the work of preparing initial translations of the entire Latin liturgy, ICEL was able to focus on the process of revising the English texts in light of further experience using the texts. One of the main foci in the 1970s was on addressing chauvinistic language, including anti-semitism in the liturgy.³⁴⁵ In addition to the ways in which Jews

³³⁹ Kemper, p. 89.

³⁴⁰ This particular issue as well as the question of gender-sensitive language in the liturgy were also addressed by other religious groups beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, including, of course, Judaism and in particular Reform Judaism.

³⁴¹ Kemper, p. 141.

³⁴² Kemper, p. 149.

³⁴³ Kemper, p. 150.

³⁴⁴ *The Sacramentary: Approved for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See. English Translation Prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 561-62.

³⁴⁵ Kemper, p. 230.

were portrayed in the non-biblical liturgical passages, such as the Good Friday intercessions and the Reproaches, anti-semitism historically had been aroused by the liturgical use of certain passages from the New Testament, such as the Passion narratives, and especially the account found in the Gospel of John, with its repeated use of “the Jews.” In addition, there was the theological issue of the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament arising from the doctrine of supersessionism;³⁴⁶ that is, the idea that Jesus’s legacy, as reflected in the New Testament, represented a new covenant between Christians and God that supplanted the Jewish covenant with God described in the Hebrew Bible (hence the origin of the term “Old Testament”). In some measure, these issues had already been addressed in the activities of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent reforms. The Good Friday intercessions had already been revised (see below). Furthermore, the issue of supersessionism had been ameliorated by the acknowledgement (in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in 1965) that the Hebrew Bible contains “the true Word of God [that preserves] a lasting value,”³⁴⁷ and by the spirit of reconciliation between Christianity and Judaism expressed by the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate*) and the subsequent *Guidelines on Religious Relations with the Jews*.³⁴⁸ In light of these reforms, the ICEL did not feel that anti-semitism was an acute problem in the liturgical texts, and also not one that could be readily addressed in the ongoing revisions of the prayer translations.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Kemper, pp. 243–45.

³⁴⁷ Flannery, p. 759.

³⁴⁸ See Flannery, pp. 738–49.

³⁴⁹ Kemper, p. 249.

Now that we have developed an understanding of the impetus and process by which the Catholic liturgy came to be celebrated in the vernacular, let us examine some specific passages in the liturgy with regard to the changes that were made to the text of the prayers.

4.3. Examples of changes following the Second Vatican Council

In this section, we will examine two passages from the Good Friday liturgy whose traditional texts are problematic from the standpoint of interfaith relations: the intercession for the conversion of “the perfidious Jews” and the Reproaches. As mentioned briefly above, the thornier issue to resolve is not these passages, but the Passion narratives recited on Good Friday. Because changing the biblical text is much more problematic, this issue needs to be addressed by educating congregants with regard to the context in which the text arose and the ways in which the text is to be understood in the modern context.³⁵⁰ In particular, it must be recognized that the Passion from the Gospel of John, with its many references to “the Jews” collectively being responsible for the death of Jesus often led to acts of brutality against Jews in medieval Europe on Good Friday.³⁵¹ That having been said, we will now focus our attention on the Good Friday liturgy, and how its view of Jews has changed.

³⁵⁰ Eugene J. Fisher, “The Roman Liturgy and Catholic-Jewish Relations Since the Second Vatican Council,” *Twenty Years of Jewish-Catholic Relations* (Eds. Eugene J. Fisher, A. James Rudin, and Marc Tanenbaum, New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 138ff.

³⁵¹ Joanne M. Pierce, “Holy Week and Easter in the Middle Ages,” *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times* (Eds. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), p. 170.

4.3.1. Good Friday intercessions (*Orationes Solemnnes*)

The intercessions found in the Catholic liturgy are petitionary prayers “for the Church and for the world.”³⁵² These types of petitions were part of the daily liturgy going back to at least the fifth century,³⁵³ although by the beginning of the sixth century they had been removed from the daily Mass by Gelasius (pope from 492-96).³⁵⁴ The general form of these prayers consists of an introductory paragraph declaring the intention, followed by the congregation kneeling for silent prayer, and then a collect, or summary, of the prayer by the priest.³⁵⁵ Today, the intercessions in this form are only found in the Good Friday liturgy,³⁵⁶ although there are some manuscripts that include them on the Wednesday of Holy Week as well.³⁵⁷ The text used in the Tridentine liturgy appears to date from around the eighth century.³⁵⁸

The Tridentine liturgy contains nine intercessions on Good Friday: “for the church, for the pope, for the assembled clergy, for the ruler, for the catechumens,³⁵⁹ for all who are in straits and in danger, for the heretics and schismatics, for the Jews and for the heathens.”³⁶⁰ While most of these prayers appear in other early Christian liturgies as well,

³⁵² Jungmann, *The Mass...Survey*, p. 185.

³⁵³ G. G. Willis, “The Solemn Prayers of Good Friday,” *Essays in Early Roman Liturgy*, G. G. Willis (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), pp. 7-8.

³⁵⁴ Willis, p. 39.

³⁵⁵ John Allyn Melloh, “Revising Holy Week and Easter Rites,” *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, p. 221.

³⁵⁶ Willis, pp. 7-8.

³⁵⁷ Willis, p. 18.

³⁵⁸ Willis, p. 11.

³⁵⁹ Those preparing for conversion but who have not yet been baptized.

³⁶⁰ Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development [Missarum Sollemnia]* (Trans. Francis A. Brunner, New York: Benziger, 1955), p. 482. The designation “For the Jews” appears in a number of English-language sources from the 1950s. See, for example, John B. O’Connell, ed., *The Missal in Latin and English. Being the Text of the Missale Romanum with English Rubrics and a New Translation* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1958), p. 371. However, the official rubric for the prayer remained “For the Conversion of the Jews” until the reforms resulting from the Second Vatican Council.

the Eastern rites do not contain the intercessions for the Jews, for the heathens, and for heretics and schismatics,³⁶¹ and the non-Roman Western liturgies do not appear to include the intercession for the Jews.³⁶² The revision of the Latin rite issued in 1970 changed the order of the intercessions (those for the ruler and for those in danger were moved to the end) and also significantly modified the senses of three of the prayers.³⁶³ The first of these was the prayer for heretics and schismatics, which was recast as a prayer for the unity of Christians.³⁶⁴ The Tridentine version of the prayer characterized the heretics as “those souls who are deceived by the imposture of the devil”³⁶⁵ and petitioned God to “rescue them from all their errors and deign to call them back to their holy mother, the Catholic and Apostolic Church.”³⁶⁶ In this version of the prayer, we can sense the importance of saving those who have strayed from within the Church (as compared to the subsequent petitions to bring Jews and pagans into the fold), but also an awareness of the Church’s sense of superiority over the heretics.³⁶⁷ We also can see the importance placed on the idea of the Church as universal, a theme we shall return to in our discussion of issues for interfaith relations in the following chapter.

The revised version of the prayer, titled “For the unity of Christians,” maintains the idea of the Church’s universality (although this is presented much more gently with regard to non-members of the Church). However, the air of superiority and the idea of

³⁶¹ Willis, p. 6.

³⁶² Willis, pp. 28-31.

³⁶³ The order of the intercessions in the revised liturgy (*Sacramentary*, pp. 142-55) is as follows: For the Church, For the Pope, For the clergy and laity of the Church, For those preparing for baptism, For the unity of Christians, For the Jewish people, For those who do not believe in Christ, For those who do not believe in God, For all in public office, and For those in special need.

³⁶⁴ Melloh, p. 220.

³⁶⁵ O’Connell, p. 370.

³⁶⁶ O’Connell, p. 370.

³⁶⁷ In the historical context of the Council of Trent, this prayer was obviously aimed at Protestants.

non-Catholics as being influenced by the devil are gone, and are replaced by a spirit of accord with other Christians. Hence, the text reads as follows:

Let us pray for all our brothers and sisters who share our faith in Jesus Christ, that God may gather and keep together in one Church all those who seek the truth with sincerity.

Almighty and eternal God, you keep together those you have united. Look kindly on all who follow Jesus your Son. We are all consecrated to you by our common baptism. Make us one in the fullness of faith, and keep us one in the fellowship of love.³⁶⁸

The revised version of the prayer represents a significant theological shift for a Church seeking the delicate balance between the ultimate truth of its own beliefs and a desire to engage with other Christians in a meaningful manner. This same tension is illustrated in the changes to the other intercessions as well.

The second intercession that was modified was that for the conversion of the heathens, which gave rise to two intercessions, one for those who do not believe in God and one for those who believe in God but not in Christ.³⁶⁹ This latter prayer was particularly aimed at Muslims, a “necessary and significant” change that was introduced because of the use of the vernacular.³⁷⁰ The Tridentine version prays “that almighty God will banish wickedness from their hearts; so that, forsaking their idols, they may be converted to...Jesus Christ...”³⁷¹ The particular themes that are absent in the revised prayers are that of non-believers as wicked, as idolaters, and of the call to convert them to the Church. Hence, the new version, more neutrally titled “For those who do not believe in God,” hopes that nonbelievers “may find [God] by sincerely following all that is right.”³⁷² Fur-

³⁶⁸ *Sacramentary*, p. 153.

³⁶⁹ The former is more nearly a parallel to the prayer for the heathens, while the latter may best be seen as a newly-added prayer.

³⁷⁰ Melloh, p. 220.

³⁷¹ O’Connell, p. 371.

³⁷² *Sacramentary*, p. 154.

thermore, accepting the difficult history between the Church and nonbelievers, the text continues “Grant that, in spite of the hurtful things that stand in their way, they may all recognize in the lives of Christians the tokens of your love and mercy, and gladly acknowledge you as the one true God...”³⁷³ Similarly, the new prayer “For those who do not believe in Christ” hopes “...that the light of the Holy Spirit may show them the way to salvation” and that they will “find the truth as they walk before you in sincerity of heart.”³⁷⁴ More significantly for aspirations of interreligious dialogue and understanding, the prayer also asks God to “[h]elp us to grow in love for one other.”³⁷⁵

Finally, the intercession for the conversion of the Jews was recast as a prayer for the Jewish people.³⁷⁶ Because this is most relevant for our purposes, we will examine the evolution of this prayer in more detail. Before we examine the text of the prayer, we should note that there is a significant issue of choreography with regard to this intercession. Unlike the other intercessions, it was usual not to kneel for silent prayer during the prayer for the Jews. This custom dated to some time between the eighth and tenth centuries, although there is variance among manuscripts as to whether the genuflection is included here.³⁷⁷ However, the genuflection was restored in 1955, even before the reforms instituted in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.³⁷⁸ This change is reflected in the various editions of the Roman missal. The 1952 edition contains these instructions after the first paragraph of the prayer for the Jews, “Non respondetur Amen, nec dicitur Orémus, aut Flectámus génua, aut Leváte, sed statim dicitur:” (Do not respond Amen, neither

³⁷³ *Sacramentary*, p. 154.

³⁷⁴ *Sacramentary*, p. 154.

³⁷⁵ *Sacramentary*, p. 154.

³⁷⁶ Melloh, p. 220.

³⁷⁷ Willis, pp. 11-12, 17-18.

³⁷⁸ Piet van Boxel and Margaret McGrath, “Anti-Jewish Elements in Christian Liturgy,” *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy* (Ed. Eugene J. Fisher, New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 161.

say “We pray,” nor “We bow the knee,” nor “Rise,” rather, remaining in place, say:)³⁷⁹

However, the O’Connell hand missal (published in 1958) and the 1962 *Missale Romanum* both include the same directions as for the other intercessions.³⁸⁰

The Tridentine version of the prayer reads as follows:

Let us pray also for the unbelieving Jews: that our God and Lord will remove the veil from their hearts, so that they too may acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ.

Almighty, eternal God, who dost not withhold thy mercy even from Jewish unbelief, heed the prayers we offer for the blindness of that people, that they may acknowledge the light of thy truth, which is Christ, and be delivered from their darkness: through the same.³⁸¹

Before we examine the changes instituted by Pope Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council, we should note that both references to Jewish unbelief were deleted by Pope John XXIII in 1958.³⁸² While this did not change the main thrust of the text, for the Jews to convert to Christianity, it does acknowledge Judaism as a valid faith tradition. Similarly, the O’Connell missal titles this prayer “For the Jews” instead of “For the conversion of the Jews,” a change that would become official with Paul’s modifications.³⁸³

The revised prayer sets a very different theological tone with regard to how the Church views the status of Jews vis à vis redemption:

³⁷⁹ *Missale Romanum: Ex Decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini Restitutum S. Pii V Pontificis Maximi Jussu Editum Aliorum Pontificum Cura Recognitum a Pio X Reformatum et Benedicti XV Auctoritate Vulgatum*, (Neo Eboraci: Benziger Brothers, 1952), p. 182. Translation of the Latin courtesy of Dr. Richard Sarason.

³⁸⁰ O’Connell, p. 371; *Missale Romanum: Ex Decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini Restitutum Summorum Pontificum Cura Recognitum* (Editio Iuxta Typicam, Novi Eboraci: Benziger Brothers, 1962), p. 175.

³⁸¹ O’Connell, p. 371.

³⁸² van Boxel, pp. 161-62.

³⁸³ O’Connell, p. 371; *Missale Romanum: Ex Decreto Sacrosancti Œcumenici Concilii Vaticani II Instauratum Auctoritate Pauli PP. VI Promulgatum* (Editio typica, Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970), p. 254. Note that *Missale Romanum* 1962, p. 175, retains the traditional rubric “For the conversion of the Jews” while *Sacramentary*, p. 153, uses the even more sensitive title “For the Jewish people.”

Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant.

Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to your Church as we pray that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption.³⁸⁴

At one level, the phrase “the fullness of redemption” may be seen as a euphemism for accepting Jesus as Christ; indeed, this is how the average lay Catholic may interpret the text. However, the correct interpretation of the revised prayer in light of *Nostra Aetate*³⁸⁵ and other declarations of the Second Vatican Council is that while the Church believes that redemption is mediated through Christ, that does not necessarily mean that Jews (or others) must recognize Christ by converting in order to achieve redemption.³⁸⁶ All people who pursue righteousness and truth according to their own conscience have a share in the kingdom of heaven; in fact, faithful non-Catholics are saved not *despite* their position but rather *because of it*.³⁸⁷ In all of these changes, we can see a very clear progression of the Church in not only adapting the liturgy to the vernacular, but also in reflecting the spirit of ecumenism and interreligious understanding set out by the Second Vatican Council as reflected in *Nostra Aetate*. In particular, it is most significant for interfaith relations that the Church now recognizes the validity of faith traditions other than its own, while also emphasizing the shared values and goals that connect believers from those different traditions (and even those who profess no such belief system).

³⁸⁴ *Sacramentary*, p. 153.

³⁸⁵ See Flannery, pp. 738–42.

³⁸⁶ Indeed, the covenant referred to in the text of the prayer is God’s covenant with Abraham, as renewed with the entire nation at Sinai.

³⁸⁷ Dohrman Byers, Telephone interview, 23 February 2009.

4.3.2. *Reproaches (Improperia)*

Unlike the significant liturgical changes to the intercessions, the text of the Reproaches recited during the veneration of the cross on Good Friday has not changed between the Tridentine liturgy and the post-Vatican II liturgy. The Reproaches are a responsive collection of verses that contrast God's biblical acts on behalf of the people with the ungrateful acts of the people in rejecting Jesus. The overt problem with this passage is that the biblical acts are largely connected with God's redemption of Israel during the Exodus, while the people's rejection of Jesus is described by "the various sufferings endured by Christ during his passion."³⁸⁸ For example, consider the following excerpts from the Reproaches themselves:

My people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me!

I led you out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom,
but you led your Savior to the cross.

...

For forty years I led you safely through the desert.
I fed you with manna from heaven
and brought you to a land of plenty;
but you led your Savior to the cross.

...

For your sake I scourged your captors and their firstborn sons,³⁸⁹
but you brought your scourges down on me.

...

I led you from slavery to freedom
and drowned your captors in the sea,³⁹⁰
but you handed me over to your high priests.

³⁸⁸ Pierce, 170.

³⁸⁹ The Latin original mentions Egypt explicitly; hence O'Connell (p. 373) translates this as "For thy sake I scourged Egypt with her first-born."

³⁹⁰ Here again, the Latin explicitly mentions Egypt and Pharaoh; hence O'Connell (p. 373) has "I led thee out of Egypt, drowning Pharaoh [*sic*] in the Red Sea."

...

I led you on your way in a pillar of cloud,
but you led me to Pilate's court.³⁹¹

While the overt sense of the Reproaches is supersessionist and anti-Jewish, the correct Catholic interpretation is that it is the *Christian worshipper* being rebuked for his unfaithfulness. However, we can legitimately question whether most worshippers are sophisticated enough to understand this underlying meaning correctly.³⁹²

While the unmodified text of the Reproaches remains in the Roman liturgy, they are optional in its current form, and many churches either omit them or substitute another reading "because of the susceptibility of anti-Semitic [*sic*] interpretations."³⁹³ Indeed, the instructions preceding the liturgy for the veneration of the cross in the 1974 Sacramentary state that "[d]uring the veneration the antiphon 'We worship you, Lord,' the Reproaches, or other suitable songs are sung."³⁹⁴ The antiphon³⁹⁵ cited is printed in the Sacramentary, and is a translation of a text added to the Latin liturgy after the Second Vatican Council.³⁹⁶ This text makes no mention of reproach or rebuke, but rather praises God and asks for God's blessing:

We worship you, Lord.
we venerate your cross,
we praise your resurrection.
Through the cross you brought joy to the world.

May God be gracious and bless us;
and let his face shed its light upon us.

³⁹¹ *Sacramentary*, pp. 163-64.

³⁹² van Boxel, p. 162.

³⁹³ Melloh, p. 222.

³⁹⁴ *Sacramentary*, p. 158.

³⁹⁵ A short text that accompanies a passage from the Psalms. In this case, the biblical passage is Psalm 67:2 (in the Hebrew Bible, corresponding to Psalm 66:2 in the Vulgate).

³⁹⁶ *Missale Romanum* 1970, p. 258.

We worship you, Lord.
we venerate your cross,
we praise your resurrection.
Through the cross you brought joy to the world.³⁹⁷

In addition to this text, some congregations use contemporary versions of the Reproaches that use modern allusions as well as biblical references. Other congregations make sure their congregants are educated as to the correct meaning of the Reproaches (that they are addressed to the worshippers, not to the Jewish people).³⁹⁸ So while the explicit text of the Reproaches remains problematic, there are a number of methods used in contemporary liturgical practice to mitigate these problems.

³⁹⁷ *Sacramentary*, p. 159.

³⁹⁸ Melloh, p. 222.

Chapter 5. Comparison of Jewish and Roman Catholic Traditions

As we can see, the advent of vernacular prayer in both Jewish and Roman Catholic traditions is part of a wider set of liturgical changes in response to modernity. In both traditions, these changes have generally been oriented towards greater acceptance of the validity of other faith traditions, although the mechanisms by which the changes came about differ in many key respects. In this final chapter, I will summarize and compare the changes to the Jewish and Catholic liturgies, with an eye towards understanding the methods by which problematic attitudes have been addressed by both faith communities. I will then conclude with some thoughts on the tensions between group identity and inter-faith relations in both Jewish and Catholic traditions.

5.1. The impact of vernacular prayer on the liturgies

Consider the following story:

There was a hasid who could not master the Hebrew language but was only able to learn the letters of the alphabet. He was much troubled by this, believing that not knowing the Hebrew language made it impossible for him to pray. A rabbi whom he consulted told him not to worry but simply to recite the letters he knew and God would make words of them.³⁹⁹

From a traditional Jewish perspective, this story provides support for the view that Jews should pray in Hebrew regardless of how limited their ability. However, it is perhaps more telling than all of the liturgical changes we have examined that this tradition was not reproduced here from any of the Jewish sources used in this thesis, but rather was cited by a Catholic theologian with regard to the acceptability of congregants not under-

³⁹⁹ Hughes, *Language*, p. 3n.

standing the words of the Mass. Not only does this fact speak to the common phenomena accompanying the use of the vernacular for prayer in both Jewish and Catholic traditions, but this citation also speaks to the appreciation that Jews and Catholics have gained for each other's traditions in the past 40 years.

The key commonplace related to the use of vernacular prayer in both traditions is the tension between the sense of group identity provided by the traditional languages of prayer and the pull of modernity, both in terms of the lack of fluency in the traditional languages among many of the laity and in terms of the concept of individual autonomy. This latter element expresses itself as an expectation on the part of the worshippers that they will participate in the prayer service rather than observing the leader reciting the prayers on their behalf. These commonalities exist despite the different sociological phenomena associated with the actual implementation of the liturgical changes in Jewish and Catholic traditions. In the Jewish tradition, the changes were implemented in a more ad hoc manner, initially from the bottom up, and the pragmatic considerations of assimilating to a certain degree into the surrounding culture overrode the particularistic theological and ideological concerns of the rabbis.⁴⁰⁰ On the other hand, the reforms introduced to the Catholic liturgy were motivated by the formal theological statements of the Second Vatican Council and proceeded in a much more organized and hierarchical fashion.

For all the sociological differences, the types of changes made to the liturgies exhibit a remarkable degree of similarity. This is most evident when we compare the

⁴⁰⁰ That is not to say that nineteenth-century German Jews became, or even sought to become, entirely assimilated into German society. Certainly they maintained a distinctively Jewish identity. However, many of the reforms introduced into the synagogue (such as the use of an organ, the sermon, and matters of decorum, among others) were modeled on Protestant practices and represented an effort by Jews to cast Judaism in the forms of their neighbors so as to demonstrate their national loyalty as good Germans.

changes to *Birkat Haminim* and those to the intercession for the heretics and schismatics. Certainly, the similarities begin with the similar themes of these prayers in their original forms, as both are essentially polemics against those members who have strayed from the “authentic” religious body. Furthermore, though, the revisions made to both prayers shift the focus from a particularistic attack on what divides people to a call to address common concerns.⁴⁰¹ In the case of *Birkat Haminim* the shift was subtle, changing the focus from eradicating the so-called evildoers to removing evil from the world. The change in language to the intercession for the heretics and schismatics as it was recast as a call for Christian unity, on the other hand, is quite dramatic. The subject of the Tridentine version of the prayer is “those souls who are deceived by the imposture of the devil,”⁴⁰² while the new version addresses “all our brothers and sisters who share our faith in Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰³

Another comparison we can make is between the ^c*Aleinu* and the intercession for the Jews. In both cases, the prayers express a particularism that is problematic with regard to interfaith relations in the modern world. The examples of revised texts presented above (including the censored, medieval European versions of the ^c*Aleinu*) serve to disavow claims that one tradition has an exclusive claim on divine truth and on a covenantal relationship with God. While the traditional version of the ^c*Aleinu* is found in many Reform liturgies, its continued presence has been accompanied by a change in the meaning of “chosenness” that acknowledges the validity of other religious traditions and their relationships with God even as it continues to recognize the unique place of the Jewish people in history. This sort of change to the understanding of a liturgical text rather than to

⁴⁰¹ As we discussed above, most of the Reform Jewish liturgies deleted *Birkat Haminim* outright. However, those versions that retained the prayer made revisions along the lines discussed here.

⁴⁰² O’Connell, p. 370.

⁴⁰³ *Sacramentary*, p. 153.

the text itself is also characteristic of *Kol Nidrei* and the Reproaches; in both cases the traditional versions of the texts are still in use despite the difficulties they present.⁴⁰⁴ In these cases, the primary method of change is in the explanation and education that accompany the usage of the texts. Hence, Jews are taught that *Kol Nidrei* is restricted in its scope to obligations one assumes for oneself or with God, while Catholics are taught that the Reproaches are intended to rebuke the worshipper for his unfaithfulness, and is not intended to castigate Jews for not believing in Jesus.

5.2. The tension between group identity and interfaith relations

For both Jews and Catholics, one of the fundamental challenges to pursuing interfaith relations is the necessity of preserving the particular identity of one's own group. However, this challenge arises from very different places in the two traditions. Jewish theology has always held that redemption is universal, open to all people who conduct themselves in accordance with the covenant God made with Noah after the flood. Nevertheless, Jewish views of non-Jews have largely been shaped by centuries of oppression that often included forced conversions and other detriments to maintaining Jewish identity. Christianity, on the other hand, historically gave primacy to belief in Jesus as Christ, rather than on one's actions, and so redemption was restricted to those who demonstrated faith in Jesus. In addition, European Christianity enjoyed the luxury of a dominant political position that allowed a triumphalist view of other religions to emerge.

The asymmetry of these theological positions poses a significant challenge for interfaith interactions. While Christians visiting a synagogue may feel comfortable joining

⁴⁰⁴ While we have examined the modifications of or substitutions for *Kol Nidrei* that were widely used in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Reform, the traditional text has been restored in the recent liturgies.

in English parts of the liturgy, viewing the experience as connecting them with the roots of their own faith, the same is not true of Jews visiting a church who will feel uncomfortable with rituals rooted in Jesus as Christ.⁴⁰⁵ This inequality is recognized by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, which acknowledges that Christians may celebrate Pesach seders, but directs that "the rites...should be respected in all their integrity."⁴⁰⁶ Seeking to understand the Jewish traditions and find the common historical roots is desirable, but attempts to "Christianize" those rituals are not.⁴⁰⁷ Because of this situation, we can understand that the significant change that has led to the improvement of Jewish-Catholic relations in recent decades occurred in the Church. As an example of the relationship between theology and practice, we have the old custom of venerating Simon of Trent, whose 1475 murder led to blood libel charges against the Jews. This practice was banned by the Congregation of Rites "on the same day that *Nostra Aetate* was promulgated."⁴⁰⁸

The theological changes in Catholic doctrine resulting from the Second Vatican Council represents a sort of *tsimtsum* (contraction)⁴⁰⁹ on the part of the universal Church to allow the space for other theological stances to exist in relationship with the Church. However, while this process allows for engaging in interfaith dialogue, it also can exacerbate the sense of loss among some believers who have an emotional attachment to the traditional beliefs and forms of worship that have been changed. Significantly, among both Jews and Catholics this sense of loss is not only felt among older people who grew up with the more traditional practices. Increasingly, younger people have sought to engage

⁴⁰⁵ Karff, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁰⁶ Gurrieri, p. 60.

⁴⁰⁷ Gurrieri, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁰⁸ Fisher, p. 137.

⁴⁰⁹ In Jewish mystical tradition, *tsimtsum* represents God's voluntary diminution either of the divine self, to provide the space the universe needs to exist, or of divine power, so that humans can be invested as God's partners in shaping the world in which we live.

with their roots through traditions their parents or grandparents cast aside, a phenomenon that Jacob Neusner has called “reversionism.” Although attempts to capture a sense of the sacred that is too often obscured by the detritus of the modern world are admirable if not necessary, the problem arises when such efforts conflict with well-considered theological adaptations to modern realities.⁴¹⁰ While this conflict is exhibited with regard to Jews who join ultra-Orthodox communities, the most visible recent example has occurred with regard to the relationship between the arch-conservative Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) and the Roman Catholic Church.⁴¹¹

In the summer of 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued a proclamation allowing wider use of the Tridentine Latin liturgy, including the Good Friday prayer for the conversion of the Jews. Although the language of the prayer was modified (in part due to pressure from Jewish groups) to read, “Let us also pray for the Jews: That our God and Lord may illuminate their hearts, that they may acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Savior of all men,” this is still a theological step backwards relative to the modified prayer introduced after the Second Vatican Council. When coupled with the January 2009 reinstatement of four bishops from SSPX (who had been excommunicated when they were ordained contrary to the Vatican’s instructions), we can see the conflict between the Church’s desire to bring SSPX back into the fold and its desire to maintain good relations with the Jewish people. In this case, the complicating factor is that one of the four reinstated bishops, Richard Williamson, has publicly denied that six million Jews died in the Holocaust. The

⁴¹⁰ David N. Power, “Worship in a New World: Some Theological Considerations,” *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship*, pp. 166-68.

⁴¹¹ The particular problem is that SSPX does not recognize the changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council, including those that have done so much to advance Jewish-Catholic relations over the past half-century. It must also be noted that while this example concerns the Catholic Church, the issues we will discuss are equally applicable to situations that may arise within the Jewish community.

firestorm of controversy associated with this fact, as well as the frequent conflation in the press of the Latin mass with the Tridentine rite, mask the fact that there are really four separate issues at play in this situation:

1. The question, internal to the Church, of whether the four bishops have renounced the heresy that caused their excommunication in the first place. By extension, this question applies to SSPX as well.
2. The issue of the Church's view of Holocaust denial and whether or not it constitutes heresy. The Pope has stated forcefully that Holocaust denial is incompatible with Church doctrine, but it does not appear to rise to the level of heresy that would prevent the reinstatement of Bishop Williamson.
3. The subject of the language of the liturgy. There is no question that the Mass and other prayer services (the Good Friday service, for example, is not a Mass) may be celebrated, in part or in whole, in Latin.
4. The matter of the liturgical text to be used. This is the crux of the liturgical problem, and concerns the theological stance of the Church vis à vis the issues addressed by the Second Vatican Council in general, and by *Nostra Aetate* in particular.

Recognizing the distinctions identified here is crucial for addressing the underlying issues that impact Jewish-Catholic relations. The distinction between items 1 and 2 is significant because it is the second issue that affects interfaith relations. Reinstating the bishops by itself is not of great concern outside the Church; the fact that a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church has publicly expressed opinions, opposed by the preponderance of the evidence, that are deeply hurtful to Jews is of grave concern to the Church's relationship with the Jewish people. Similarly, as we have discussed extensively in this thesis, the language in which the liturgy is prayed and the operative text of the prayers are two separate issues. The issue of concern is not that groups within the Church wish to pray in Latin, but rather that conservative groups wish to restore the Tridentine rite with the consequent theological implications regarding the attitudes expressed towards Jews.

Ultimately, the issues run quite deep, as the Church tries to maintain its authority when there is such a divide with regard to the ecumenical views expressed by *Nostra Aetate*.

In some sense, it is easier for Jewish groups to navigate this sort of issue. Because there is no one central authority, Jewish groups can happily operate autonomously in areas of disagreement (such as their worship practices and theological outlooks) while coming together around matters of common concern (such as issues of social justice). Because the authority of the Vatican is central to Roman Catholicism, there is a sense that issues of theology must have a common doctrinal position for the Church as a whole; hence the conflict and tension when there is dissent within the body of the Church. It is not necessary for all groups within the Church to actively engage with Jewish groups, but it is necessary that the Church avoid the perception that it sanctions anti-Jewish attitudes, especially among ordained leaders of the Church. It almost goes without saying that successful interfaith dialogue depends on all parties being able to accept the others where they are, without even covert attempts to influence their beliefs. As we have come to understand here, it is critical to understand both how the distinctive ritual forms and prayer traditions of our religious traditions express an underlying theological or ideological position, and how to separate those forms from the underlying content. In this way, we will be able to focus on addressing the significant issues for our interfaith relations while being able to appreciate the particular forms that define our different religious communities.

Appendix A: Censorship Guidelines from *Sefer Hazikkuk*⁴¹²

1. Any mention of the word *avodah zarah* [idolatry], unless it refer explicitly to idolatry practiced in the past, should be replaced by *aku"m*, that is, “worshippers of celestial bodies.” If, however, it is understood as referring to idolatry that existed prior to the coming of our Lord, it is acceptable.
2. Any mention of the word *tzelamim* [idols] should be followed by the words *shel aku"m* [of worshippers of celestial bodies].
3. When the word *goy*, *goyim*, *nokhri*, or *nokhrit* [Gentiles] appears, if it may be understood as implying slander, insult, or vilification of the Gentile, the word should be erased and replaced by *aku"m*. If, however, it deals with any of the laws of the Hebrews, such as the laws of the Sabbath or prohibited foods, or wine touched by a Gentile or such, it is acceptable.
4. This, however, is on condition that idolatry not be mentioned, such as “the thoughts of the *nokhri* are turned toward idolatry” or “a *goy* certainly pours libations to idols,” etc., which certainly should be erased completely.
5. Any time the word *meshumad* [the hostile Jewish term for convert] is mentioned, but not insultingly, it should not be erased but replaced by the word *aku"m*. But if it is mentioned in disgrace, it should be erased completely.
6. Any time the word *umot* [the nations] is mentioned, the word *aku"m* should be added afterward.
7. If, however, this name be understood as referring to all the nations of the world today, or if it be understood as referring specifically to our nation in this generation, the entire matter should be erased, for it would be worse to emend it to *aku"m*.
8. Any praise referring to the nation of Israel that implies a disgrace for us, and that is understood as referring to the current time, should be erased completely.
9. Any insult against the foreskin must be specified as referring to the past. For example “the foreskin is disgusting.” It should rather say, “the foreskin was disgusting.”
10. Any place in the Bible where debate or disagreement exists between our faith and theirs, if a challenge be explicitly posed to our understanding, or if evidence be brought to support their understanding, even if the Christians and their scholars are not mentioned by name, the entire matter should be erased. Yet if the matter is explained according to their opinion, and no challenge be posed against our faith, it is acceptable.

⁴¹² Reproduced from Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 121-23.

11. In any place in which any one of the laws of our faith or our doctrine be condemned, or any of our customs or practices, or if a king or officer or priest of the holy priests of our nation be vilified, the passage should be completely erased.
12. Any place mentioning anything whose subject is a great heresy and a great error, such as the transmigration of souls or that all souls were created during the six days of Creation, or that the Holy One, blessed be He, cries, or that the souls of the wicked are demons and evil spirits, or that the evil spirits which enter the bodies of men are the souls of the wicked dead, or other such matters, should be completely erased.
13. Any place mentioning the names Edom, Rome, or Italy in a disgraceful way should be completely erased.
14. Any place mentioning that the Holy One, blessed be He, suffers for the loss of Israel should be completely erased.
15. Any place mentioning those who died for their faith, such as those who died in Portugal or Spain, if it be mentioned that they sanctified the name of God through this, or if they be called saints or righteous, it should be erased completely.
16. Any place mentioning holidays, festivals, and holy days of ours in a disgraceful manner, such as *lifne eideihem* or that it is forbidden for Israelites to do business with them on those days, should be erased completely.
17. The names of the festivals explicitly mentioned there should be erased as well, such as Calenda and Saturnas, etc.
18. Any place mentioning monks, priests, bishops, dukes, or the pope, which cannot be understood as referring to those who lived before the coming of our Lord, should be completely erased.
19. Any place where we find mention of anyone who came after the coming of our Lord and is called a saint or a *tzaddik* or that refers to a congregation as a holy assembly, or as the congregation of God, all this should be erased.
20. Yet all this requires careful investigation [*iyyun*] with wisdom and knowledge, especially where idolatry is mentioned.

I greet the visage of the Lord.

ᶑEres Yisraᶑeli Rite

Babylonian Rite

1 (8 MSS) 2 (2 MSS) 3 (8 MSS) 4A (21 MSS) 4B (17 MSS) 5 (6 MSS) 6 (24 MSS)

1 (8 MSS) 2 (2 MSS) 3 (8 MSS) 4A (21 MSS) 4B (17 MSS) 5 (6 MSS) 6 (24 MSS)

[illegible]

Appendix C: *Kol Nidrei* in *Seder Rav^c Amram*⁴¹⁵

וכך אמר [...] ריש מתיבתא. מנהג שלנו ובבית
רבינו שבבבל.

לאחר שאוכלין ושותין וחוזרים לבתי כנסיות
להתפלל תפלת ערבית, כיון שעומד ש"ץ
לפרוס את שמע מברך שהחיינו, וכל כך למה.

שמה יש אחד מישראל שלא בידך. אבל תלמיד
חכם שרוצה לברך בפני עצמו כשהולך לבית
הכנסת, הרשות בידו, שאמרנו (עירובין מ:)

הלכתא אומר זמן בראש השנה וביום
הכפורים. ואמרנו, זמן אומרו אפילו בשוק.

ויש שעושין כך: כשעומד ש"ץ מתחיל ואומר
כך.

Thus said...the head of the academy. This
is our custom and in the academies in
Babylonia:

After one eats and drinks and returns to the
synagogues to pray the evening service,
when the leader stands to recite *Sh'ma^c* he
says *Shehecheyanu*; but why?

Perhaps there is an individual Jew who has
not said the blessing. But the scholar who
wants to say the blessing to himself when
he goes to the synagogue is permitted to do
so, as we have said.⁴¹⁶

The *halakhah* is that [one recites the bless-
ing for] the season⁴¹⁷ on Rosh Hashanah
and on Yom Kippur. And we [further]
said, [the blessing for] the season is recited
even in the market.⁴¹⁸

And there are those who do thus: When the
leader stands he begins and says as
follows:

כי"י מז	כי"י א	Manuscript 47	Manuscript 1
כל נדרים ואסרים ושבועות וקיומים וחרמן שנדרנו ושאסרנו ושחרמנו ושנשבענו ושקבענו על נפשנו בשבועה	כל נדרי ואסרי ושבועי וקיומי דנדרנא ודאסרנא על נפשנא בשבועה	All vows and prohibi- tions and oaths and pledges and exclu- sions that we have vowed and prohibited and excluded and sworn and fixed on our souls with an oath	All vows and pro- hibitions and oaths and pledges that we have vowed and pro- hibited on our souls with an oath
מיום הכפורים שעבר עד יום הכפורים הזה הבא עלינו. בכלם חזרנו ובאנו לפני אבינו שבשמים.		from last Yom Kippur until this Yom Kip- pur that has come to us. In everything we have returned and come before our Father in heaven.	

⁴¹⁵ Reproduced from Goldschmidt, pp. 162-63. Translation mine.

⁴¹⁶ See *b. Eruv*. 40b.

⁴¹⁷ That is, *Shehecheyanu*.

⁴¹⁸ That is, even without having a cup of wine over which to recite the blessing.

אם נדר נדרנו אין כאן נדר. אם אסר אסרנו אין כאן אסור.	If we have vowed a vow it is not a vow. If we have made a prohibition it is not a prohibition.
אם חרם חרמנו אין כאן חרם. אם שבועה נשבענו אין כאן שבועה. אם קיום קיימנו אין כאן קיום.	If we have decreed an exclusion it is not an exclusion. If we have sworn an oath it is not an oath. If we have established a pledge it is not a pledge.
בטל הנדר מעיקרו. בטל האיסור מעיקרו. [בטל החרם מעיקרו.]	The vow is annulled retrospectively. The prohibition is annulled retrospectively. [The exclusion is annulled retrospectively.]
בטלה השבועה מעיקרה. בטל הקיום מעיקרו.	The oath is annulled retrospectively. The pledge is annulled retrospectively.
אין כאן לא נדר ולא אסור ולא שבועה ולא קיום.	There is not here neither vow nor prohibition nor oath nor pledge.
יש כאן מחילה וסליחה וכפרה.	There is here pardon and forgiveness and atonement.
ככתוב בתורתך. ונסלח לכל עדת בני ישראל ולגר הגר בתוכם כי לכל העם בשגגה.	As it is written in Your Torah: ⁴¹⁹ “Forgiveness shall be granted to the whole community of the children of Israel and the foreigner residing in their midst, for the whole nation has erred unintentionally.”
ואומר ברוך שהחיינו, לפי שאין כוס ביום הכפורים לאמרו.	And he says <i>Shehecheyanu</i> , even though there is no cup [of wine] on Yom Kippur for saying it [the blessing].
אבל שגרו ממתבתא הקדושה שמנהג שטות הוא זה ואסור לעשות כן.	But [they] sent word from the holy academy that this is a foolish custom and it is forbidden to do thus.
ומתחיל והוא רחום עד פורס סוכת שלום עלינו ועל כל עדת בני ישראל ועל ירושלים.	And he begins with “He is compassionate” ⁴²⁰ until “spreads his shelter of peace over us and over the entire congregation of the children of Israel and over Jerusalem.” ⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ Numbers 15:26.

⁴²⁰ Psalm 78:38, which along with Psalm 20:10 precede *Bar'khu* in the evening service of *Seder Rav^c Amram*. This is traditionally the beginning of the daily evening service in both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi rites. In the Spanish-Portuguese rite, these verses are also included before *Bar'khu* on Yom Kippur evening.

⁴²¹ That is, through *Hashkiveinu*, the end of *Q'rī²at Sh'ma^c* in the evening service.

Appendix D: Kol Nidre: Jews' Immoral Prayer⁴²²

Price 1d

KOL NIDRE*

JEWS' IMMORAL PRAYER

The "Kol Nidre" and its Basis

The "Kol Nidre" is a Jewish prayer named from its opening words, "All vows" (kol nidre). It is based on the declaration of the Talmud:—

"He who wishes that his vows and oaths shall have no value, stand up at the beginning of the year and say: 'All vows which I shall make during the year shall be of no value.'"

It would be pleasant to be able to declare that this is merely one of the curiosities of the darkness which covers the Talmud, but the fact is that "Kol Nidre" is not only an ancient curiosity; it is also a modern practice. In the volume of *revised* "Festival Prayers," published in 1919 by the Hebrew Publishing Company, New York, the prayer appears in its fullness:—

"All vows, obligations, oaths, or anathemas, pledges of all names, which we have vowed, sworn, devoted, or bound ourselves to, from this day of atonement until the next day of atonement (whose arrival we hope for in happiness), we repent, beforehand, of them all, they shall all be deemed absolved, forgiven, annulled, void and made of no effect; they shall not be binding, nor have any power; the vows shall not be reckoned vows, the obligations shall not be obligatory, nor the oaths considered as oaths."

If this strange statement were something dug out of the misty past, it would scarcely merit attention, but as being part of a *revised* Jewish prayer book printed in the United States in 1919, and as being one of the high points of the Jewish religious celebration of the New Year, it cannot be lightly dismissed after attention has once been called to it.

Indeed, the Jews do not deny it. Early in the year, when a famous Jewish violinist landed in New York after a triumphant tour abroad, he was besieged by thousands of his [...]

* From the "Dearborn Independent" November 5th, 1921

⁴²² Reproduction of the pamphlet "Kol Nidre: Jews' Immoral Prayer." Certain passages of my copy of this article are difficult to read due to the poor quality of the copy, so I have made my best guess as to the correct text.

admirers, and was able to quiet their cries only when he took his violin and played the “Kol Nidre.” Then the people wept as exiles do at the sound of the songs of the homeland.

In that incident the reader will see that (hard as it is for the non-Jew to understand it!) there is a deep-rooted, sentimental regard for the “Kol Nidre” which makes it one of the most sacred of possessions to the Jew. Indefensibly immoral as the “Kol Nidre” is, utterly destructive of all social confidence, yet the most earnest efforts of a few really spiritual Jews have utterly failed to remove it from the prayer books, save in a few isolated instances. The music of the “Kol Nidre” is famous and ancient. One has only to refer to the article “Kol Nidre” in the Jewish Encyclopædia to see the predicament of the modern Jew. He cannot deny; he cannot defend; he cannot renounce. The “Kol Nidre” is here and remains.

If the prayer were a request for forgiveness for the broken vows of the past, normal human beings could quite understand it. Vow, promises, obligations and pledges are broken, sometimes by weakness of will to perform them, sometimes by reason of forgetfulness, sometimes by sheer inability to do the thing we thought we could do. Human experience is neither Jew nor Gentile in that respect.

But the prayer is a holy advance notice, given in the secrecy of the synagogue, that no promise whatever shall be binding, and more than not being binding is there and then violated before it is ever made.

The scope of the prayer is “from this day of atonement until the next day of atonement.”

The prayer looks wholly to the future, “we repent, aforehand, of them all.”

The prayer breaks down the common ground of confidence between men—“the vows shall not be reckoned vows; the obligations shall not be obligatory, nor the oaths considered as oaths.”

Babylonish Character of Judaism

It requires no argument to show that if this prayer be really the rule of faith and conduct for the Jews who utter it, the ordinary social and business relations are impossible to maintain with them.

It should be observed that there is no likeness here with Christian “hypocrisy,” so-called. Christian “hypocrisy” arises mostly from men holding higher ideals than they are able to attain to, and verbally extolling higher principles than their conduct illustrates. That is, to use Browning’s figure, the man’s reach exceeds his grasp; as it always does, where the man is more than a clod.

But the “Kol Nidre” is in the opposite direction. It recognises by inference that in the common world of men, in the common morality of the street and the mart, a promise passes current as a promise, a pledge as a pledge, an obligation as an obligation—that there is a certain social currency given to the individual’s mere word on the assumption that its quality is kept good by straight moral intention. And it makes provision to drop below that level.

How did the “Kol Nidre” come into existence? Is it the cause or effect of that untrustworthiness with which the Jew has been charged for centuries?

Its origin is not from the Bible, but from Babylon, and the mark of Babylon is more strongly impressed on the Jew than is the mark of the Bible. “Kol Nidre” is Talmudic and finds its place among many other dark things in that many-volumed and burdensome invention. If the “Kol Nidre” ever was a backward look over the failures of the previous year, it very early became a forward look to the deliberate deceptions of the coming year.

Attempts at “Explaining” Kol Nidre

Many explanations have been made in an attempt to account for this. Each explanation is denied and disproved by those who favor some other explanation. The commonest of all is this, and it rings in the over-worked note of “persecution.” The Jews were so hounded and harried by the bloodthirsty Christians, and so brutally and viciously treated in the name of the loving Jesus (the terms are borrowed from Jewish writers) that they were compelled by wounds and starvation and the fear of death to renounce their religion and to vow that thereafter they would take the once despised Jesus for their Messiah. Therefore, say the Jewish apologists, knowing that during the ensuing year the terrible, bloodthirsty Christians would force the poor Jews to take Christian vows, the Jews in advance announced to God that all the promises they would make on that score would be lies. They would say what the Christians forced them to say, but they would not mean nor intend one word of it.

That is the best explanation of all. Its weakness is that it assumes the “Kol Nidre” to have been coincident with times of “persecution,” especially in Spain. Unfortunately for this explanation, the “Kol Nidre” is found centuries before that, when the Jews were under no pressure.

In a refreshingly frank article in the Cleveland *Jewish World* for October 11th, the insufficiency of the above explanation is so clearly set forth that a quotation is made:—

“Many learned men want to have it understood that the ‘Kol Nidre’ dates from the Spanish Inquisition, it having become necessary on account of all sorts of persecution and inflictions to adopt the Christian religion for appearances’ sake. Then the Jews in Spain, gathering in cellars to celebrate the Day of Atonement and pardon, composed a prayer that declared of no value all vows and oaths that they would be forced to make during the year. ...

“The learned men say, moreover, that in remembrance of those days when hundreds and thousands of Maranos (secret Jews) were dragged out of the cellars and were tortured with all kinds of torment, the Jews in all parts of the world have adopted the ‘Kol Nidre’ as a token of faithfulness to the faith and as self-sacrifice for the faith.

“*These assertions are not correct.* The fact is that the formula of ‘Kol Nidre’ was composed and said on the night of the Yom Kippur quite a time earlier than the period of the Spanish Inquisition. We find, for instance, a formula to invalidate vows on Yom Kippur in the prayer book of the Rabbi Amram Goun [*sic*], who lived in the ninth century, about five hundred years before the Spanish Inquisition; although Rabbi Amram’s formu-

la is not 'Kol Nidre' but 'Kol Nidrim' ('All vows and oaths which we shall swear from Yom Kippurim to Yom Kippurim will return to us void')....

The form of the prayer in the matter of its age may be in dispute; but back in the ancient and modern Talmud is the authorization of the practice: "He who wishes that his vows and oaths shall have no value, stand up at the beginning of the year and say: 'All vows which I shall make during the year shall be of no value.'"

That answers our reader's question. This article does not say that all Jews thus deliberately assassinate their pledged word. It does say that both the Talmud and the prayer book permit them to do so, and tell them how it may be accomplished.

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