

RESPONSE TO SHAUL MAGID'S *THE BIBLE, THE TALMUD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT: ELIJAH ZVI SOLOVEITCHIK'S COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS*

SUSANNAH TICCIATI

King's College London

I have elsewhere distinguished between two Christian approaches to the problem of Christian supersessionism, which I name “accommodationist” and “limiting.”¹ In the first, Christians accommodate Jews *inside* their Christian vision, adapting their Christian vision to make positive room for Jews. In the second, Christians acknowledge the finitude of their vision, and concomitantly the conceivable rationality and integrity of Jewish thought and practice *beyond* that vision. The first interprets Jews in Christian terms, finding a Christian rationale to affirm them. The second allows Jews to be Jews in their difference from Christians (whatever might yet be discovered about that difference). Elijah Zvi Soloveitchik is something like an accommodationist in reverse:

¹ Susannah Ticciati, “Domains, Normativity, and Normativity Across Domains: On Peter Ochs’s *Religion Without Violence*,” *Modern Theology* 37, no. 3 (2021): 721–733.

interpreting the Jesus of the Gospels within the orbit of rabbinic teaching, and finding him perfectly orthodox by rabbinic standards, Soloveitchik accommodates Jesus—and by extension, Christians, once stripped of their misunderstanding of Jesus—within Judaism. While seeking to overcome the antagonism between Judaism and Christianity,² he does not, strictly speaking, accommodate *Christianity*, since his thoroughgoing reinterpretation of Jesus is an implicit critique of a Christian tradition that has misunderstood its own founder. It might be more accurate to say that he accommodates Jesus-followers within his rabbinic Jewish vision.

This assessment only gives us part of the picture, however. For in his rabbinic rereading of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, as mediated to us by Shaul Magid's illuminating edition, Soloveitchik accomplishes something else—something that is potentially of considerable value for Jews and Christians today (as it was, whether acknowledged or not, for those in his own time). Specifically, Soloveitchik's portrait of a rabbinic Jesus serves to undo a number of conceptual binaries that might otherwise be, and indeed have been, employed to pit Judaism against Christianity. Soloveitchik thus makes way for a reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity, not positively in the sense of their integration with one another, but negatively by way of the removal of perceived contradictions between them.³

After a reflection on the allure of binaries in the construction of self over against other, and on the suitedness of Soloveitchik's hermeneutic to their overcoming, I dwell on two sets of examples of his practice at more

² Cf. Shaul Magid, ed., *The Bible, the Talmud, and the New Testament: Elijah Zvi Soloveitchik's Commentary to the Gospels*, trans. Jordan Gayle Levi (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 49. Cf. Introduction, 30.

³ Peter Ochs's *Religion without Violence: The Practice and Philosophy of Scriptural Reasoning* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), of which the essay cited in n. 1 above is a review essay, offers one compelling logical model for the transformation of apparent contradictions into mere differences. See Mark James's review essay of the same work for a very helpful rendition of this logic. Mark James, "Peter Ochs and the Logic of Scriptural Reasoning," *Modern Theology* 38, no. 1 (2022): 128–143. While not drawing directly on Ochs, my analysis in what follows is clearly indebted to him.

length. The first set concerns the inward/outward contrast putatively to be found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). In order to make explicit the implicit fruits of Soloveitchik’s practice in this case, I compare and contrast his treatment of an inward/outward pair in his interpretation of Jesus’ words in the Gospel of Matthew with Martin Luther’s potentially analogous contrast pair of faith and works. The result, to anticipate, is a breakdown of the analogy, and the emergence instead of two distinct thought-worlds that cannot be set in contradictory relation with one another because they lack point-to-point equivalence. They are simply, though also complexly, different from one another.

The second set of examples concerns Jesus’ putative messianic status. As Magid notes, the thoroughlygoing Maimonidean Soloveitchik “takes every opportunity to deflect” a messianic reading of the Gospels.⁴ Magid’s implicit frame for reading Soloveitchik on this score can be found in his *Hasidism Incarnate*.⁵ In engagement with this thought-provoking work, I argue for an alternative construal of the terrain. I propose that when confronted with the question of Jesus’ status, Maimonidean Jews do not strictly deny what Chalcedonian Christians affirm; rather, they inhabit different thought-worlds within which their affirmations and denials are answers to different questions.⁶ I go on to argue, furthermore, that Soloveitchik’s Maimonideanism in fact positively makes way for Chalcedonian Christology by clearing away “false” accounts of Jesus’ messiahship or divinity.

I close by reflecting more broadly on Soloveitchik’s hermeneutical approach of reading the Gospels through the prism of the Talmud and argue for an intrinsic connection between this approach and the

⁴ Magid, *The Bible, the Talmud, and the New Testament*, 292n35. See also Introduction, 25–28.

⁵ Shaul Magid, *Hasidism Incarnate: Hasidism, Christianity, and the Construction of Modern Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).

⁶ For this framing I draw on R. G. Collingwood’s logic of question and answer as put to work by Nicholas Adams. See R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography & Other Writings, with Essays on Collingwood’s Life and Works*, ed. David Boucher and Teresa Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29–43; Nicholas Adams, “Mitigating Theological Disputes: Collingwood’s Question and Answer,” *Louvain Studies* 44, no. 3 (2021): 252–276.

fruitfulness of his results. Soloveitchik does not engage in the historical-critical method of New Testament study so prevalent in his time (and our own) but, as Magid narrates, bypasses it in favour of “premodern” methods of rabbinic harmonisation. Magid concludes, however, that “his attempt to erase the categorical distinctions between Judaism and Christianity in *his* time takes us back to a much earlier time of what was later called ‘Jewish-Christianity.’”⁷ In other words, his ahistorical method yields potentially historically significant results. While this may be, my interest in the following will be in the intrinsic creativity of his ahistorical juxtaposition, irrespective of its historical fruits.

Binaries

It is convenient and tempting to distinguish between different religious traditions by way of conceptual binaries. These are contagious and hard to dislodge. Even when they begin to be dislodged, moreover, the space vacated is all too easily filled by another binary. From the Christian side, E. P. Sanders argued in his comparison between Paul and rabbinic Judaism against the binary construction of Judaism as a religion of works and Christianity as a religion of grace (and by finding abundant rabbinic testimony to grace discovered the rabbis to be good Protestants after all!).⁸ But as “the New Perspective on Paul” burgeoned in his wake, the old binary was replaced by a new one between Jewish ethnocentrism and Christian universalism.⁹ From the Jewish side, Shaul Magid argues against the construction of Christianity as incarnational by contrast with an anti-incarnational Judaism, finding strains of incarnationalism within Judaism.¹⁰ A binary espoused polemically on both sides (although not

⁷ Magid, *The Bible, the Talmud, and the New Testament*, 17.

⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

⁹ See James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). For a critical account along these lines, see Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

¹⁰ Magid, *Hasidism Incarnate*, *passim*.

universally) is of Judaism (and Islam) as strict (atrinitarian) monotheisms over against Christianity as a trinitarian monotheism (and thus, according to some, not strictly a monotheism at all).¹¹

The construction of such binaries may be useful in the shoring up of fragile identities, especially in their gestational phase. Daniel Boyarin highlights this dynamic in his argument for the (late) partitioning of the newly formed “Judaism” and “Christianity” as they emerge from a common melting pot, mutually defining themselves over against one another.¹² But they are by the same token brittle, belied by the more complex reality they seek to suppress. More than this, however, they are (or can become) pernicious, used polemically to critique and dismiss those who fall on the other side of the binary. Dismissal is all too easy because of the caricature involved. Conversely, by preempting the results of empirical observation, they preclude patient attention to the realities so caricatured. Finally, and as I will show in the context of an example to be explored below, conceptual binaries are accretive. One easily breeds (or morphs into) another, which is then conflated with the first. The result is an even greater inability to pay attention to particular, more subtle distinctions.

¹¹ On the Jewish side, see the references to Hasdai Crescas and Moses Maimonides in David Ellenson, “A Jewish View of the Christian God: Some Cautionary and Hopeful Remarks,” in Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al. eds., *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 69–76. The essay in which these occur searches for a cautious rapprochement between Jews and Christians in their understandings of the one God. On the Christian side, see Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981). Moltmann contrasts “monotheism” and “trinitarianism,” although he avoids mapping the contrast onto Judaism and Christianity, largely exploring negotiations within the Christian tradition (although Islam comes in for a couple of sideswipes). Against the backdrop of recent trinitarian enthusiasm, Katherine Sonderegger boldly starts her systematic theology with the *Shema* and a doctrine of divine oneness. See Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1, The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

¹² Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). His emphasis is on the contingent and constructed character of these binaries, imposed in order to tidy up a much more complex reality.

As I suggested in the introduction, Soloveitchik's rabbinic Jesus serves to undo a number of conceptual binaries that could be, and have been, employed to pit Judaism against Christianity. As Magid notes, Soloveitchik's interpretive method was inspired by the Tosafists—medieval commentators on the Babylonian Talmud.¹³ In the same way that the Tosafists sought to harmonise apparent contradictions within the Talmudic text or commentaries on it by appeal to a further texts, Soloveitchik seeks to resolve apparent contradictions between the Gospels and rabbinic teaching (especially those seized on in anti-Jewish reception of the Gospels) by the invocation of Talmudic parallels to the Gospel passages at hand. Thus the overcoming of contradictions, and by extension the binaries into which they might harden, is part and parcel of his interpretive method. Before embarking on two fuller case studies, I will offer a couple of characteristic examples in order to give a flavour of this method, as Magid reads it.

An initial example appears when Soloveitchik, commenting on Matthew 5:16, appeals to BT *Yoma* 86a, in which it is urged that Torah study must be complemented by upright business and kindness to all creatures: Torah study on its own is not enough. Magid hypothesises that Soloveitchik is here countering an anti-Jewish reading of the Sermon on the Mount in terms of a Pauline binary between letter and spirit, which casts rabbinic Judaism as concerned merely with the letter. Soloveitchik, reflects Magid, "suggests that the Talmud itself is aware of Paul's critique and addresses it directly, i.e., that the binary of letter and spirit of the Law is not operative in rabbinic teaching."¹⁴ Another example is found in Soloveitchik's comments on Matthew 8:13–15, in which Jesus heals first a centurion's boy and then Simon Peter's mother-in-law. Not only does he find comparable healings by rabbis in the Talmud, but he (re)interprets the faith of the centurion as faith not in Jesus but in the unity of the creator (a major theme of the commentaries, as Magid highlights). Such a reading

¹³ Magid, *The Bible, the Talmud, and the New Testament*, 17 and n71.

¹⁴ Magid, *The Bible, the Talmud, and the New Testament*, 104n71.

deflects Christian claims concerning Jesus' messianic status and brings Jesus back into the orbit of rabbinic piety, undermining any contradiction between the Gospels' claims for Jesus and rabbinic teaching.¹⁵ My second case study will elaborate on this example in its concern with Jesus' messianic status.

Inward/outward

I turn now to the first case study. In Matthew 5, Jesus exhorts his listeners beyond mere observance of the law (refraining from committing murder and adultery) to the more demanding task of purifying one's thoughts and intentions (refraining from anger and from looking lustfully at a woman; Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28). Or so it has seemed to many a Christian reader, who, armed with the binary between inward attitude and outward action, pits a Christian emphasis on inward piety against a Jewish emphasis on external observance. Such a binary is arguably the backbone of Adolf von Harnack's *What is Christianity?*, which characterises the religion of Jesus as one of universality and interiority, to be contrasted with the particularism and externality of Judaism—the mere husk from which the kernel of Jesus' message was to be extracted.¹⁶ Despite their very different contexts, one arguably finds a precursor to Harnack's binary construction in Martin Luther's contrast between righteousness by faith and the works righteousness or legalism that characterises "Jews, Mohammedans, papists and sectarians."¹⁷ And having done so, it is easy to overlay one construct on the other, resulting in a binary that has all the greater a stranglehold on the imagination by virtue of its lack of conceptual perspicuity. Conversely, taking the heat out of a binary will often involve disentangling the various distinctions that have been

¹⁵ Magid, *The Bible, the Talmud, and the New Testament*, 136–137, esp. n108. See also 149n122, where Magid notes Soloveitchik's frequent citation of miracle stories in the Talmud parallel to those in the Gospels, undermining the (messianic) uniqueness of Jesus.

¹⁶ Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders, 5th ed. (London: Ernest Benn, 1958).

¹⁷ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535; Luther's Works, Vol. 26*, trans. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 10.

conflated within it, which are less likely to be incendiary when considered separately, because they remain much more specific. (A ready analogue can be found in the polarisations of modern politics, in which disparate views are lumped together into polemically opposed packages. Disaggregating these views is a good way to diffuse the knee-jerk antagonism.)

Adding another layer to the inward/outward binary, James Fodor, in commentary on Jesus' command to love your enemies (Matt. 5:44), critically traces a modern tendency to psychologise the command from Kant through Freud to Nietzsche, which corresponds with a rise in "the emotions" as a dominant psychological category. The result is an internalisation of love (and similarly, of hate, anger, or lust), shifting attention from the public sphere of social relations to the private sphere of the psyche.¹⁸ The aim of Fodor's essay is ultimately to reinterpret Jesus' command (in the wider context of the Sermon of the Mount) as concerned not with private inwardness but with "the prescription of concrete, overt, public measures integral to the practices of peace-making, forgiveness and reconciliation."¹⁹ He thus overcomes the inward/outward binary, against the modern tendency towards psychologisation, in favour of the outward.

Soloveitchik does something different. To anticipate, rather than getting rid of either pole of the binary, he shows that the distinction present in the Gospels is also present in the Talmud, turning a possible binary into a two-term relation or "pair."²⁰ This move immediately puts paid to a binary contrast between Christianity and Judaism in which Christianity falls on the side of inwardness and Judaism on the side of outwardness. Whatever is meant by "inward" and "outward," both poles of the distinction can be found on either side of the supposed binary

¹⁸ James Fodor, "'Love Your Enemies': A Love Command Beyond and Before Emotion," paper presented at the Scriptural Reasoning in the University conference, Cambridge, 2019, 1.

¹⁹ Fodor, "'Love Your Enemies,'" 12.

²⁰ See Nicholas Adams, *Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), on the logic of pairs.

contrast (allowing, for a moment, that the Gospels and the Talmud can be taken to stand for Christianity and Judaism). But what Soloveitchik's move enables further is an interrogation of the distinction—of the meaning of its termini and of the relation between them. One illuminating way in which to undertake this interrogation is to compare Soloveitchik's parsing of the distinction with Luther's parsing of his arguably analogous distinction between "faith" and "works." I will continue, for the purposes of the comparison, to denote the poles of the distinction as the "inward" and the "outward," but because they are as yet undefined for either thinker, I will use the terms (in scare quotes) merely as placeholders. We will discover not only that each pole is differently characterised by each speaker, but also that the relation between them is differently characterised. The result of the comparison that Soloveitchik makes way for, in other words, is not the replacement of a binary contrast by a commonality, but the ability to appreciate two different thought-worlds with different internal logics.

Soloveitchik renders Matthew 5:27–28 as follows:

27 You have heard that it was said to the first ones, "You shall not commit adultery."

28 Yet I say to you, whoever gazes at a woman to covet her has surely committed adultery with her in his heart.

And he comments: "*Committed adultery with her in his heart*—this is also in the Talmud (BT *Yoma* 29a): 'Thoughts of transgression lead to transgression.'"²¹ In this formulation, "in his heart" in Matthew corresponds to "thoughts" in the Talmud. Just as Yeshua (Soloveitchik uses the Hebrew name for Jesus) links the "outward" transgression to the "inward," so does the Talmud. There are no grounds for a binary contrast here.

Soloveitchik's reflections on Matthew 5:21–22 are fuller. His version of Matthew 5:21–22a runs:

²¹ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 108.

21 Have you not heard that it was said to the first ones, "You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to a court of law"?

22 Yet I say to you that whoever is enraged against his brother baselessly is liable to a court of law ...

He comments:

Whoever is enraged—now Yeshua begins to clarify his words and demonstrate to everyone that a man who does not possess the good attributes will transgress the entire Torah ... whoever is enraged against his brother baselessly is liable to a court of law, for this evil attribute will lead him to kill a man, as we find in BT *Shabbat* 105b:

He who tears his garment in anger, he who breaks his vessels in anger, and he who scatters his money in anger, you shall regard as an idolater, for these are the tenets of the evil inclination. One day, it tells him, "do this," and the next day, it will tell him, "do that," until it tells him, "worship idols," and he will do so.

Thus we can see that the attribute of anger can cause a man to become an idolater. So, too, the attribute of hatred can cause a man to murder.²²

Again, Soloveitchik maintains both poles of the distinction. Here, however, he goes further by parsing the "inward" as the good or evil attributes (the evil attributes being rooted in the evil inclination). Murder and idolatry are examples of the "outward." Moreover, he further specifies the link between the "inward" and the "outward": "inward" evil is an augur of "outward" evil, and it is so because manifestations of "inward" evil show a person to be in the grip of a force that will eventually produce ("outward") transgression.

Soloveitchik distinguishes between and relates the good attributes and the keeping of the commandments. The potentially equivalent distinction in Luther is that between faith and works. How do they compare? Soloveitchik says that "a man who does not possess the good attributes will transgress the entire Torah."²³ Luther says, "To deny the

²² Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 106–7.

²³ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 106–107.

righteousness of faith [is to] sin against the First, Second and Third commandments, and against the entire Law, because God commands that he be worshiped by believing and fearing him.”²⁴ The equivalence looks promising. But as soon as we begin to probe it, significant differences spring up.

1. First, and noticeably, the emphasis is different. For Soloveitchik, anger (as an evil attribute) is not so much a problem in itself as in what it presages. The real danger is “outward” transgression of the Torah. For Luther, by contrast, sin at its heart is unbelief, while works are a matter of relative indifference, profiting the human being nothing.²⁵ If faith leads to the fulfilment of the law, this redounds to the praise of faith rather than reasserting the importance of the law.²⁶ Soloveitchik’s non-Lutheran emphasis comes through in his comments on Matthew 5:17, “Do not imagine that I have come to violate the Torah . . .”:

Do not imagine—meaning: Do not think that the good attributes that I caution you to perform are the main principle of the Torah and the commandments that the Torah commands you to do are merely secondary, for if so, you may—God forbid—violate one of the commandments. . . . The main principle is good works [and Soloveitchik continues by appealing to Matthew 7:21].

When Soloveitchik gets to Matthew 7:21 in his commentary, he reinforces this lesson by way of a long Talmudic analogy, concluding that Yeshua fears that he will be misunderstood by his disciples as promoting the good attributes at the expense of the performance of the commandments, and thus punctuates his teaching by cautioning against such a misunderstanding. Does Luther’s (at times exclusive²⁷) emphasis on faith fall foul of this cautionary note? This question cannot be answered without probing some of the other differences between Soloveitchik and Luther.

²⁴ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 253.

²⁵ Martin Luther, *Christian Liberty* (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1903), 16.

²⁶ Luther, *Christian Liberty*, 19–20.

²⁷ See *Christian Liberty*, 33.

2. The relation between the two poles of the distinction is different in Soloveitchik and Luther. Luther frequently elaborates his understanding of the relation between faith and works by way of the tree/fruit analogy that he derives from Matthew 7:16–20 (the verses just prior to the one Soloveitchik reads as displaying Yeshua's caution). For Luther, the tree is the person, the good tree being a person of faith and the bad tree a person of unbelief. The fruit are the works that follow from the person: good if done in faith and bad if done in unbelief. He concludes: "But faith, as it makes a man a believer and justified, so also it makes his works good."²⁸ In short, faith produces good works. Or perhaps more accurately, works are made good by being done in faith.

Luther establishes a much tighter connection between faith and good works than Soloveitchik does between good attributes and performance of the commandments. It is interesting to note, in this respect, that Soloveitchik does not read Matthew 7:16–20 (the fruit tree analogy) in relation to the good attributes at all, but rather takes the fruit to be a prophet's disciples, by whose conduct and teaching one will know whether the prophet spoke the truth.²⁹ While faith necessarily issues in good works, good attributes are not necessarily accompanied by performance of the commandments, but must be supplemented by it. Commenting on Matthew 7:26, Soloveitchik says: "If he does not perform all the commandments written in the Torah, to what avail is it if he possesses good attributes?" And he offers a Mishnaic parallel according to which one's deeds must exceed one's wisdom.³⁰ While bad attributes eventually lead to transgression, good attributes do not necessarily lead to keeping the commandments. The symmetry in Luther is lacking in Soloveitchik. But more than this, the kind of connection is different. For Soloveitchik, good attributes are encouraged so that bad attributes do not get in the way of the goal of keeping the commandments. The good

²⁸ Luther, *On Christian Liberty*, 32–33. See also Luther, *Galatians*, 255–257.

²⁹ Magid, 130.

³⁰ Magid, 132–133.

attributes, however, can become detached from keeping the commandments. For Luther, by contrast, faith is something like the overarching context of good works, that which makes them what they are. Enfolded in faith, good works cannot be thought about independently. It is for this reason that Luther can speak of “faith alone” without in fact excluding good works. If he does fall foul of Yeshua’s caution, in other words, he does not do so straightforwardly.

Indeed, Luther’s “faith alone” is more complicated still. In his *Christian Liberty* (the main work I have been drawing from thus far), Luther specifies: “It is most evident that it is faith alone which ... justifi[ies] and save[s] the person; and that a Christian man needs no work, no law, for his salvation” (my emphasis).³¹ Where salvation is not concerned, the value of good works is by no means to be downplayed. If the first half of the treatise is concerned with the Christian as “the free lord of all,” it finds its complement in the second half, which is concerned with the Christian as “the dutiful servant of all.”³² It is here that good works come into their own. In this respect, as Luther says, “We do not then reject good works; nay, we embrace them and teach them in the highest degree.”³³ The treatise culminates in an emphasis on service of the neighbour: in all his works, a Christian should “hav[e] nothing before his eyes but the necessities and the advantage of his neighbor.”³⁴ Luther’s emphasis on faith “alone” paradoxically makes way for a wholesale emphasis on works.

3. If the relation between the two poles in Luther is different from that in Soloveitchik, then what about the poles themselves? If we take the attributes in Soloveitchik to be (internal) dispositions, and thus a plausible commentary on the anger and covetousness in Matthew 5:22 and 28, then Luther’s “faith” is clearly distinguished from them. Having disqualified

³¹ Luther, *Christian Liberty*, 33.

³² The paradoxical contrast is set out at the beginning (*Christian Liberty*, 6). The second half is signalled by Luther’s turn to consideration of “the outward man” (*Christian Liberty*, 31).

³³ Luther, *Christian Liberty*, 35.

³⁴ Luther, *Christian Liberty*, 38.

bodily activities such as praying or fasting as pertinent to justification, Luther unexpectedly goes on to disqualify the activities of the soul itself: "And, to cast everything aside, even speculation, meditations, and whatever things can be performed by the exertions of the soul itself, are of no profit."³⁵ In Soloveitchik's terms, "performance of the good attributes"³⁶ is of no profit for justification. What is needed is "the word alone," received by faith.³⁷ Faith, in short, is not a human activity, inward or outward. It follows that the faith/works pair is quite a different one not only from Soloveitchik's attributes/commandments pair, but also from Jesus' pairs in Matthew 5:21–22 and 27–28. This is counterintuitive for the Christian who has inherited a set of conflated conceptual binaries. It also explains how Luther's emphasis on faith need not be at the expense of works: they are not commensurable categories, like inward and outward actions, whose relative value might be weighed up. Instead, faith as pertaining to justification can be understood to be paired with works as pertaining to life in the world. Each "goes all the way down" in its own sphere.

4. What, finally, about the parallel between Luther's "good works" and Soloveitchik's "keeping the commandments"? Unsurprisingly, the correlation breaks down here too. If faith is no ordinary concept for Luther, then "keeping the commandments" is no ordinary category for Soloveitchik. In commentary on the woman with the flow of blood (Matt. 9:20–22), Soloveitchik explicates the woman's words in Matthew 9:21—"If only I touch his garment, I will be saved"—by way of the following Talmudic passage (from BT *Shabbat* 32b):

He who is careful to observe the command of tzitzit (fringes) will be served by 2,800 slaves, for it is said (Zechariah 8:23): *Thus says YHWH of Hosts: In those days, it shall come to pass that ten men from every nation and*

³⁵ Luther, *Christian Liberty*, 8.

³⁶ For this phrase, see Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 104.

³⁷ Luther, *Christian Liberty*, 8–9.

tongue shall take hold—they will take hold of the corner of the garment of a Jew, saying: “We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

Soloveitchik interprets this to be saying that in the days when it is universally acknowledged that YHWH is one, ten men from each of the seventy nations will take hold of one of the four tzitzit that each Jew has on his garment.³⁸ The tzitzit represent the 613 commandments. They are, moreover, “a symbol of faith in the unity of YHWH,”³⁹ since (as Soloveitchik explains elsewhere) the 613 precepts of which the Torah is composed are eventually reduced by Habakkuk to just one: belief in the unity of God (Hab. 2:4). This is sufficient for salvation.⁴⁰ Hence the woman’s words in Matthew 9:21. The “faith” that saves her is, according to Soloveitchik, faith in the unity of God.

But if this one commandment stands as part for the whole of the Torah, then each of the commandments arguably does the same. As Soloveitchik says of the fringes, to take hold of one is to take hold “by whichever commandment it may be,” and thereby be joined with the Holy One of Israel.⁴¹ It follows that belief in the divine unity does not “fulfil,” and therefore make obsolete, the many commandments—even if it is sufficient for salvation. The divine unity is expressed, rather, in the relation between the parts and the whole of the Torah. The logic, I suggest, is one of synecdoche.

This may help to shed light on Soloveitchik’s frequent linking of belief in the unity of God and the performance of the commandments. In culmination of his commentary on Matthew 7:22–29, he sums up the lessons Jesus came to teach: “[to] believe with a complete heart that YHWH is one and [to] perform his commandments.”⁴² Similarly, in commentary on Matthew 28:17, he says: “Yeshua’s goal was to uphold the Torah of Moses and to instill in the hearts of the people the belief in the

³⁸ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 147–148.

³⁹ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 148.

⁴⁰ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 282–283.

⁴¹ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 148.

⁴² Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 133.

unity of the Creator."⁴³ To the Christian, for whom these two injunctions may seem like chalk and cheese, a different imagination is required to make sense of the "and." If synecdoche is the logic, in which the whole is implicated in the parts, and vice versa, then the "and" is not one of supplementation but one of entailment. To believe in the unity of God *is* (in some sense) to perform the commandments, and vice versa.

Such a hypothesis is corroborated by Soloveitchik's ability at times to summarise Jesus' teaching by reference to one or other of these two "components," not both. On the one hand, parsing Matthew 7:24, "and does them," as belief and performance, he continues by parsing "and does not do them" in 7:25–26 as performing the commandments (without mentioning belief in the unity). This is the foundation without which the edifice will fall.⁴⁴ It makes best sense of this elision to assume that performance entails belief. On the other hand, he frequently highlights (belief in) unity on its own. For example, in his most pithy summary of what Yeshua comes to proclaim, he identifies the good news as the unity of God.⁴⁵ Again, Yeshua's announcement of the kingdom of God is equated with his "instill[ing] in a polytheistic society the belief in [God's] unity."⁴⁶

In summary, the keeping of even a single commandment, for Soloveitchik, catches one up into a world in which the whole Torah shines forth, each commandment implicating all the others, and the unity of YHWH being the principle of their mutual entailment. We are a world apart from Luther's "works," which gain their character from the faith or unbelief in which they are rooted but are of "no profit" for salvation in themselves. For Soloveitchik, each commandment also points beyond itself, but precisely by its entailment of the greater whole to which it points. Thus one commandment alone (as the woman with the flow of blood recognises) is sufficient to draw one into proximity with the God

⁴³ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 268; cf. 331.

⁴⁴ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 132.

⁴⁵ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 392, in commentary on Mark 16:15.

⁴⁶ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 283.

who saves. If, for Luther, “faith alone” brings all else with it, one might say that for Soloveitchik, “one commandment alone” entails the whole.

I have now compared Soloveitchik’s pair (good attributes/keeping the commandments) with Luther’s pair (faith/works) in all its aspects: the emphasis within the pair, the nature of the relation between the two terms, and each of the terms. The comparison broke down on each count, thoroughly undermining any putative equivalence. Instead, the distinctiveness and complexity of each thought-world began to come into view. While points of comparison might still be found, there is no question of a binary opposition.

Messiah

What then of the apparently clearer case of Jesus’ messianic status? Surely it is straightforwardly true that non-Christian Jews deny that Jesus is the Messiah while Christians affirm it, Messianic Jews being the exception that proves the rule. (One might make the broader claim that non-Christian Jews deny that the messiah has already come while Christians affirm it. But this would be to overlook various messiah figures within certain non-normative strands of Judaism.⁴⁷) As mentioned earlier, Magid notes the way in which Soloveitchik evades the question of Jesus’ messianic status wherever the Gospels might otherwise confront him with it.⁴⁸ For example, in commentary on Matthew 9:35, Soloveitchik (characteristically) interprets “the good news of the kingdom” to be “the unity of the creator,” which Jesus has come to instil in people’s hearts. Magid remarks: “Soloveitchik inserts this short comment to deflect any claim of messianism that ‘the good news’ implies in Christian interpretation.”⁴⁹ Magid implies that Soloveitchik denies what Christians affirm: that we have a straight contradiction between the two. Reading Soloveitchik as a

⁴⁷ See Magid, *Hasidism Incarnate*, ch. 4.

⁴⁸ For his overview of this question, see Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, Introduction, 25–28. Magid notes just one place where Soloveitchik directly denies that Jesus is the Messiah.

⁴⁹ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 150n124.

thoroughgoing Maimonidean,⁵⁰ Magid has implicitly drawn the conclusion that Soloveitchik simply cannot accommodate Jesus' messianic status,⁵¹ let alone his status as God incarnate.⁵² This, for Magid, puts Soloveitchik at loggerheads with normative Christianity, even while Soloveitchik's goal is to reconcile Christianity with Judaism. It becomes clear, even if Magid does not explicitly say so, that he achieves this reconciliation only by assimilating the Gospels entirely to normative Judaism.⁵³

I would like to offer an alternative reading, culminating in the claim that Soloveitchik's Maimonideanism is in principle compatible with a Chalcedonian high Christology. This also complicates the incarnational thesis reached by Magid in *Hasidism Incarnate*, as I will show.

I start with the apparently straightforward question "Is Jesus the Messiah?". Following R. G. Collingwood's logic of question and answer, as illuminatingly elaborated by Nicholas Adams,⁵⁴ I will show that the Christian answer in the affirmative is not in fact the logical contradictory of the Jewish answer in the negative. Under the guise of this ambiguous question, Nicene Christians and Maimonidean Jews are in fact answering slightly different specific questions. Maimonides, as Magid remarks, codifies the rabbinic precept that messianic times will be marked by the complete observance of the Torah (written and oral) by all Israel.⁵⁵ As we

⁵⁰ See Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, Introduction, esp. 25–30.

⁵¹ Cf. Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 105n72, in which Magid sets out the rabbinic-Maimonidean criteria for messiahship.

⁵² In *Hasidism Incarnate*, Magid presents the Maimonidean understanding of God's radical transcendence as antithetical to incarnation.

⁵³ Magid implies as much in the combined claims that for Soloveitchik, "Jesus' 'Christianity' [is] nothing more than a form of Judaism," and that Christians have misunderstood Jesus and their own Gospel. See Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 16 and 20, cf. 30.

⁵⁴ Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 29–34; Nicholas Adams, "Mitigating Theological Disputes: Collingwood's Question and Answer," *Louvain Studies* 44, no. 3 (2021): 252–276.

⁵⁵ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 105n72, citing Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Kings," 11:4.

have seen, Soloveitchik understands this to entail in addition the acknowledgment by all the nations that YHWH is one.⁵⁶ The specific question, then, to which Maimonidean Jews (and Soloveitchik in particular) give a negative answer is: “Does Jesus bring the messianic times marked by complete Torah observance in Israel and universal acknowledgment of YHWH?” An answer in the negative is self-evident. Thus, as Magid puts it, “[r]ather than *being* the Messiah, for Soloveitchik Jesus is the one who spreads the necessary condition of belief in divine unity as the prelude to the Messiah.”⁵⁷

It is equally clear, however, once the question is specified in this way, that what Jews deny is not what Christians affirm. What, then, is the Christianly specified question? I suggest that the focal question that gets taken up and further clarified in the development of credal Christianity, reaching its first point of culmination in the Nicene Creed, is the following: “Is Jesus the one through whom God saves the world from sin?” In the context of the Arian controversy, it is argued by the pro-Nicenes that in order to save, Jesus must be fully God: neither a mere creature nor of subordinate divine status. As Athanasius famously says, “For He was made man that we might be made God.”⁵⁸ Thus, when Nicene Christians affirm that Jesus is the Messiah, what they are in fact affirming is that Jesus is God incarnate. “Messiah” as a category has been superseded by “incarnation.”

Such a conclusion begs the further question, however: “Do we not have another binary here?” Christians affirm that Jesus is God incarnate while Jews deny it. True. But again we must ask, are Jews denying precisely what Christians are affirming? Magid, in his *Hasidism Incarnate*, undermines a binary according to which Christians are defined by an

⁵⁶ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 148; cf. 150n124, 239 and 394. Here Soloveitchik is close to Maimonides, who cites Zephaniah 3:9 as a sign of the endtimes — that the peoples will be transformed so as to call upon the name of YHWH (“Laws of Kings,” 11:4).

⁵⁷ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, Introduction, 26.

⁵⁸ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 54.3, NPNF Series 2, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 65.

affirmation of divine incarnation and Jews by a denial of it. His discussion concerns incarnational thinking more generally rather than its specific application to Jesus as God incarnate—but it has significant ramifications nonetheless. He concludes that while “normative” (Maimonidean) Judaism rules incarnation out in principle, Hasidism, in its understanding of the *zaddik* (“righteous one”), has embraced a contiguous phenomenon, even if the term is not used. His hypothesis is that, living in a context in which Christianity was not the dominating force over against which they had to define themselves, Hasidic Jews were free to explore the dynamics of incarnation, unhampered by the concern that this would bring them too close to Christianity. And on Magid’s reading, the results of their explorations brought them close indeed.

Magid understands incarnation to presuppose a “permeable” barrier between the human and the divine, undermining an absolute distinction between them.⁵⁹ He finds such a permeability on the Jewish side in the Hasidic *zaddik*, and on the Christian side in Eastern Orthodox accounts of theosis, rooted in the paradigm case of Jesus.⁶⁰ Whether or not he is right to read Eastern Orthodoxy in this way, I contend that “permeability” is precisely what the Chalcedonian Definition of AD 451 rules out by way of its two-natures Christology.⁶¹ Even if it is possible to find incarnation as permeability at points within the Christian tradition, the Chalcedonian Christology that is normative for large parts of the church, East and West, has a different logic. As the Definition succinctly and memorably puts it in its four denials: Christ exists in two natures, “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” The unity of the natures in Christ’s person does not undermine the (absolute) distinction between them. The human nature does not become divine, nor the divine human. It follows that if what Maimonidean Jews (Soloveitchik among

⁵⁹ See Magid, *Hasidism Incarnate*, esp. 70.

⁶⁰ See Magid, *Hasidism Incarnate*, esp. ch. 4; cf. 67.

⁶¹ The Council of Chalcedon’s “Definition of the Faith” can be found in full form in R. A. Norris (ed.), *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 155–59. The section commonly referred to as “the Chalcedonian Definition” is found on p. 159.

them) deny when they deny the possibility of incarnation is the blurring of a strict human/divine or creature/creator distinction, then they are not denying what Chalcedonian Christians affirm when they affirm that Jesus is God incarnate.

Magid complicates an incarnation/anti-incarnation binary between Christianity and Judaism, with incarnation understood as entailing divine/human permeability or blurring. He does so by finding blurring in pockets on the Jewish side. I have sought to complicate this picture further by recalling the classical Christian definition of incarnation as unity in distinction, with the result that it becomes possible to discover on both the Christian and the Jewish side those who deny incarnation as blurring and those who affirm it. In particular, a new alliance is discovered between Chalcedonian Christians and Maimonidean Jews: both deny permeability or blurring. Moreover, what Chalcedonians affirm in affirming the incarnation is not anything that Maimonideans in principle rule out.

The result is that Soloveitchik's implicit (and sometimes explicit) denial that Jesus is the Messiah (taken as a denial of blurring) is not in contradiction with a Christian affirmation of incarnation. More strongly, by denying an improper understanding of incarnation (by Chalcedonian standards), he makes way for a proper understanding (by Chalcedonian standards)—even if he does not himself embrace it. I will now show concretely how this is so.

First, as Magid points out, Soloveitchik habitually finds Talmudic parallels for Jesus' healing miracles, turning what might have been understood as a sign of his messianic status into "a classic case of rabbinic pious behavior."⁶² Putting this differently, however, one might say that what Soloveitchik undermines is an appeal to Jesus' divinity to explain his ability to do miracles. If Jesus is not distinguished from other (non-divine) human beings by his ability to do miracles, then his miracles can be understood as acts within a fully human life, and thus as entirely compatible with a fully human nature. By extrapolation, it is not the case that his actions must be divvied up between natures—weeping and

⁶² Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 137n108. Cf. 149n122.

expressing hunger, for instance, being ascribed to him in his human nature and miracles and forgiveness of sins to him in his divine nature. Such divvying up would suggest that his divinity intrudes into an otherwise creaturely sphere, blurring the boundary between creature and creator, or resulting (in Chalcedonian terms) in a confusion of natures.⁶³ In other words, what Soloveitchik makes way for in his rabbinicising of Jesus' miracles is a Chalcedonian Christology in which Jesus' divinity is preserved as distinct from his humanity. In this account, Jesus' divinity does not interrupt his human story—it remains a fully human story—but is the hidden backdrop or context of the story as a whole.

Second, Soloveitchik habitually redirects the faith exhibited and extolled in the Gospels from faith in Jesus to faith in the unity of God. A good example is in his commentary on Matthew 9:28–29:

[T]he blind men approached him, and Yeshua said to them, "Do you believe it is in my hand to do this?" They said, "Yes, our master!" He touched their eyes and said, "May it be to you according to your faith!"

Soloveitchik comments: "*Do you believe*—if you believe in the one God, I will be able to save you." And further on: "*According to your faith*—which is to say, if you believe with your whole heart in YHWH, who is one, you will certainly be healed."⁶⁴ While Magid would understand this redirection as an evasion of Jesus' messianic status,⁶⁵ it might alternatively be framed as an implicit critique of Jesuolatry, or worship of Jesus' humanity.

⁶³ The practice of divvying up Jesus' life in this way occurs sporadically in the patristic literature, but it is to be judged erroneous by the standards of the emerging orthodoxy, being ruled out definitively by the Chalcedonian Definition (even if analogous errors persist). See Ian A. McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), for a fuller outworking of a "Chalcedonianism without reserve" and the logical errors it rules out (Jesus' miracles being treated as an important test case). For a classic restatement of a Chalcedonian logic, see also Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 54–61.

⁶⁴ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 148–149. Cf. Soloveitchik's comments on Matthew 8:10, in which he parses "faith as great as this" as "such a great faith in the unity of the creator" (Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 136).

⁶⁵ Cf. Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 96n58.

According to a Chalcedonian Christology, Jesus' humanity serves to direct one to his (hidden) divinity. Worship of Jesus is—properly—worship of the one God incarnate in Jesus. Similarly, faith in Jesus is (properly) not a talisman or badge of salvation, but an entry into union with the God to whom Jesus' human life testifies.

As Soloveitchik spells out in his commentary, just such a critique seems to be articulated in Matthew 7:22–23:

It will be that on that day, many will say to me, "My master, my master, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name do many wonders?" Then I will answer them, saying, "I have never known you. Depart from me, workers of evil!"

Soloveitchik comments:

I have never known you—meaning: Did I come to teach you to believe in me? I came to teach you good attributes and to cause the belief in the one God to take root in your hearts, and to teach you to guard his Torah and his commandments.⁶⁶

If, negatively, Jesuolatry is the target of Soloveitchik's (and Matthew's) critique, then positively, Soloveitchik's emphasis is on "the power of the monotheistic faith" to heal and to save.⁶⁷ Yeshua, rather than coming to teach a new doctrine, or to provide a new object of faith, has the role of instilling in people's hearts the monotheistic faith taught by Moses.⁶⁸ In Chalcedonian terms, the humanity of Christ, far from being a new focus for belief and worship, serves in its union with Christ's divinity to make way for the union of the whole cosmos with the one God of Israel. The unity of YHWH becomes manifest, therefore, in the unity of the cosmos. Commenting on Mark 4:22, Soloveitchik says:

⁶⁶ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 132.

⁶⁷ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 312 and n57. Cf. Soloveitchik's commentary on Mark 16:17, in which he attributes the ability to drive out demons to faith "with all [one's] heart in the unity of God" (Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 392).

⁶⁸ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 331 (commenting on Mark 8:12). Cf. Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 64 (commenting on Matthew 1:1).

The doctrine of truth [the unity of God] is called to go all around the world, and one day all humanity will profess it. Those of you who have become sharers in it, make it public everywhere, and do not, through sinful disregard, proceed to hoard it for yourself.

To believe in the unity of God is to become sharers in a truth that is common to all—that unites rather than divides.

For Soloveitchik, to call Yeshua a messiah means that “he deserved to be Messiah.” And he did so because he was a tzaddik (a righteous one).⁶⁹ According to the Chalcedonian Definition, similarly, Jesus was “like us in all things apart from sin.” Conceptually, Soloveitchik and Chalcedon are a hair’s breadth apart. There is no contradiction between Soloveitchik’s Maimonideanism and Chalcedon’s two-natures Christology. This is not the same as to say that the difference between them is eradicated. Soloveitchik leaves room for the (Chalcedonianly understood) divinity of Jesus, but he does not affirm it. What difference would it make for him to do so? To affirm Jesus’ divinity is to affirm no more and no less than that he is the one through whom God saves the world; that his sinlessness is *the* key (not a key) to the reconciliation of the cosmos with the one God, and thus the restoration of the unity of the cosmos. Other differences potentially follow, such as belief in original sin and the necessity of grace.⁷⁰

Soloveitchik does not affirm these things. But not affirming is not the same as denying them. The core affirmations of Soloveitchik’s rabbinicism (among them, faith in the unity of God, keeping the commandments, and

⁶⁹ Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 277.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, Magid, in Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), brings into question the uniqueness of original sin to Christianity, finding a similar doctrine in Lurianic Kabbala. See Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash*, ch. 1. In the same work, Magid argues that the Deuteronomic transition from Moses as person to the Torah as text, reversed in the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, is similarly complicated by Lurianic kabbalists for whom the divine text (through Torah study) is internalised in the person as the image of God. See Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash*, ch. 5. This undermines a straightforward contrast between Judaism as a text-focused tradition and Christianity as a person-focused tradition.

the immortality of the soul⁷¹) are different from the core affirmations of a Chalcedonian Christianity (among them, the doctrine of the incarnation, original sin, and grace). But they are not contradictories, capable of being set up in relationships of binary opposition. They are (relatively) incommensurable thought-worlds, converging and diverging from one another in ways that escape definitive mapping.

Conclusion

At the opening of this essay, I suggested that Soloveitchik is, on the face of it, an “accommodationist”: that Soloveitchik’s goal of reconciling Christianity and Judaism is accomplished (if at all) by accommodating Jesus and the Gospels within rabbinic Judaism, and thus only by excluding Christians according to their own self-understanding. The body of the essay, however, explored and displayed the much more interesting and far-reaching reconciliation (if that is still the right word) between Judaism and Christianity that he in fact achieves: not through their integration with one another, but through the undermining of perceived contradictions between them.

The first case study, through a comparison between Soloveitchik and Martin Luther, displayed the way in which a characterization of Christianity over against Judaism in terms of an inward/outward binary utterly broke down in the face, first, of an undermining of the binary by both thinkers,⁷² and second, by the emergence of two complex thought-worlds that exploded the possibility of a point-to-point correspondence between them.

The second case study built on these findings by drawing more specifically on the logic of question as expounded by Collingwood and Adams. Within the different thought-worlds they inhabit, the denials of rabbinic Jews and the affirmations of Nicene Christians are, in fact,

⁷¹ I have not explored the last of these. See, e.g., Magid, *The Bible, The Talmud, and the New Testament*, 256.

⁷² This is not to deny that Luther reintroduces such binary thinking in his anti-Jewish invective. At these moments he betrays his own better theological instincts.

answers to different questions. Thus, Jews do not necessarily deny what Christians affirm. On the one hand, one can ask: "Is Jesus the Messiah?, i.e., Does Jesus bring about the endtimes?," and elicit Soloveitchik's answer: "No, but he creates conditions for them by instilling belief in the unity of God." On the other hand, one can ask: "Is Jesus the Messiah?, i.e., Is he the one through whom God saves the world?," and elicit the Christian answer: "Yes, he is God incarnate." In other words, if Jesus is not the Messiah for rabbinic Jews, he is not not the Messiah (as Christians understand it). If Jesus is not merely a rabbi for Christians, he is not not at home among the rabbis of the Talmud. The second case study culminated, over and above these negatively framed conclusions, in the emergence of an unexpected alliance between Soloveitchik's Maimonideanism and a Chalcedonian two-natures Christology.

In conclusion, I suggest that the reconciliatory results of Soloveitchik's inquiry are closely related to his overarching hermeneutical approach. As noted earlier, Soloveitchik takes an ahistorical approach to the Gospels, reading them through the lens of the Talmud. This kind of creative juxtaposition is alien to the modern historical critic. But just so it has the potential to yield what historical-critical reading could not. In the terms of Collingwood and Adams, Soloveitchik's rabbinic frame invites the Gospels, and Jesus' words within them, to be read as answers to different questions than are posed in a Christian context. This makes way for the liberating conclusion, delineated above, that a rabbinic Jesus, rather than being in contradiction with a Christian Jesus, is simply the answer to a different question. A "reconciliation" between Christianity and Judaism is achieved by way of Soloveitchik's discovery and creation of a rabbinic world that can house the Yeshua of the Gospels. This world is not the world of the Christian Jesus, but neither is it in contradiction with it.

A historical-critical approach, in its search for origins, could not have achieved this overcoming of contradiction, since it goes back behind Nicene Christianity and rabbinic Judaism to the common melting pot out of which they only later emerged. But it is only once we have before us the very different worlds that do emerge that the question of their contradictoriness can be raised and answered. Soloveitchik raises this

question for the Judaism and Christianity of his own time. The discovery of a first-century Jewish Jesus would be no direct help to him here, since such a Jesus would be remote both from the Christianity and from the Judaism of his day. But a rabbinic-Maimonidean Yeshua: such a figure can help by throwing into relief rabbinic patterns of reasoning (concerning the Messiah, the Torah, and life after death) against the Christian patterns of reasoning (concerning incarnation, sin, and grace) provoked by the same Gospels. These patterns of reasoning are different but not contradictory.

Magid's edition of Soloveitchik's commentary is a significant landmark in the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue, moving the conversation not only beyond a historicist approach to rapprochement, but also beyond an "accommodationist" approach in which either Christians are accommodated within Judaism or (as more often happens) Jews within Christianity. Instead, Soloveitchik's commentary is shown implicitly to throw Jewish thought into relief against Christian thought, allowing for a genuine dialogue between the two to be staged. My aim in this essay has been to begin to pursue such dialogue as Soloveitchik and Magid have invited, if at times disagreeing with Magid's specific conclusions.