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Translated into English by Claude from the digitized copy (Frankfurt city library, from the library of Dr. A. Berliner) of David Kaufmann, Vom jüdischen Katechismus (Budapest: Samuel Zilahy, 1884), first published in Hungarian in the monthly Magyar Zsidó Szemle. Numbers in grey brackets mark the beginning of each printed page of the original. All footnotes are the translator's; Kaufmann's essay has none. A few identifying notes (marked in the source report) were written from general knowledge and should be checked before publication.

[p. —] On the

Jewish Catechism

by

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Budapest
Samuel Zilahy
1884

[p. —] [Published] in Hungarian in the February issue of the monthly *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*.[1]

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[p. —] If anything could still surprise us Jews, nothing was better suited to do so than the reproach, hurled at us especially in these days from so many different quarters and with such evident relish, that people still do not know what we actually believe, and that among us there is not even that cheap expedient, the catechism, from which one might obtain information and counsel about our obscure doctrine. We believe in the truthfulness and the good will of those who assert such things: they do not know us; they really know nothing about us. But ignorance and want of knowledge have never yet, anywhere else in the world, been a legal title to speak about, let alone against, a subject; everything requires a certain preparation, which nowadays, with every branch of learning so fully built out, is no easy matter at all; only about and against us Jews is it permitted to speak off the cuff, uninformed, devoid of knowledge, straight from the gut. It is a fruitless feeling to grow indignant any longer at what is said against Jews with so light a hand; but one's composure can desert one when one sees the matron Judaism being asked for her papers. If abstractions could speak, then, I think, the old woman would not be at a loss for the telling word: Since when have I not had the honour of being known by you? We ought to know each other only too well! Why, it would even [p. 4] seem to me that we were somewhat related, if a daughter counts herself among one's relatives. They have dragged me through the mud, soiled my garment, at times even with blood; I have grown old in pain and torment, but I am still, so to speak, the mother; he whom you worship so ardently, with all the fervour of your soul, played upon my lap … — And tears roll down the furrowed face. But abstractions do not speak, and so the old woman puts up with having

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[1] Translator: *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* ("Hungarian Jewish Review"), the learned monthly founded in Budapest in 1884 by Wilhelm (Vilmos) Bacher and Joseph Bánóczi; this essay appeared in its first volume.

things said to her face at which she can only smile, a bitter laugh. And so, 1884 years after world history began its new reckoning from an event in our midst, we are told that we must give an account of our faith, so that it may be "received."[2] If a speck of dust is left of you, singer of the Psalms, how it must stir when your spirit sees the thanks that Israel reaps, while all the churches resound with your songs and your great Hallelujah rings from lips that have nothing but curses and scorn for Zion's poor flock! We have been gagged and trodden on the mouth; but a gag is no argument, and a stopped mouth no refutation. Prudence is a commendable thing, and silence more blessed than speech. But whoever adds mockery to injury and demands of us that we should still explain what we actually believe must be given an answer. For even if not knowing what one does is enough to earn forgiveness,[3] it is still not enough to entitle one to talk big and — to make laws.

[p. 5] I maintain, first of all, that there is no religion that presses more for clarity and openness than the Jewish; indeed, in publicity lies its essence, its soul. Not without reason have our profoundest philosophers of religion found in the revelation before the whole people a distinguishing mark, the very hallmark of Judaism.[4] The word spoken by our teacher Moses — O that all the Lord's people were prophets![5] — ought to shine in golden letters over every house of God. We have no clerical and no lay element; in accordance with the spirit of its founder, the blessing of his teaching is poured out over everyone who will let it work upon him. We have no double doctrine for those inside and those outside, no mysteries. It is not in heaven, so the Torah says of itself (Deut. 30:12 ff.), not beyond the sea, but very near, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. We have no exoteric and no esoteric Judaism; like the words, so the concepts grew up on foreign soil. Judaism has staked its whole cause on communication, transmission, instruction. Moses is called our teacher; Torah means instruction. The names for the sources of our tradition and for its masters mirror this spirit. Mishnah means teaching, even if the word has sometimes been translated otherwise; Talmud means instruction. Soferim, Tannaim, Amoraim, Saboraim are only so many names for scribes, teachers, lecturers, expounders. We too had priests; but it is well known how already the ancient history of Israel is filled with the struggle of prophecy against this element, which perished with the destruction of the [p. 6] Temple and never revived. The rabbi is a teacher, an equal among equals, who must first show whose spirit's child he is; he stands in no *more* grace than the least member of his congregation. To every individual in Israel the commandment is addressed: This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, and you shall search in it day

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[2]Translator: "Recipirt" ("received") is a term of Hungarian public law: the "received" (*bevett*) religions were the fully recognized denominations, a status Judaism did not obtain in Hungary until 1895. Kaufmann writes in the aftermath of the antisemitic agitation led by Győző Istóczy, the Tiszaeszlár blood-libel trial (1882–83), and the rejection by the Hungarian Upper House (late 1883, again early 1884) of the bill permitting marriage between Christians and Jews; in these debates opponents of Jewish equality argued, among other things, that no one knew what the Jews believed. The closing "to make laws" points at the legislators.

[3]Translator: An allusion to Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

[4]Translator: Above all Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* I, 25 and 87, who grounds the certainty of the Sinai revelation in its having taken place before the entire people.

[5]Translator: Num. 11:29.

and night (Josh. 1:8). The Law itself excludes all secrecy; openness, participation by the broadest strata, is its supreme demand. Whereas elsewhere, distressingly enough, worship usually swallows up instruction, here all worship was absorbed into instruction. *To know God* — that is what it means in Hebrew to be religious.[6] Where the others speak of feeling and believing, here one speaks of learning and inquiring. The phrase about the people of students was once more than a witticism; indeed, even the house of God was called in common speech "the school."[7] The sermon, likewise a Semitic creation, was originally nothing but exposition of the Law. What we moderns have done away with as unseemly — the discussion of religious-legal themes in the house of God, the debate in which anyone in the congregation might dispute with the rabbi over his interpretation in questions of statute and tradition — this abolished practice flowed from the deepest sources, from that spirit of publicity through which Judaism breathes. Among us one speaks not of Fathers of the Church but of expounders of the Teaching. Where was an institution ever created that bore louder witness to this spirit than the public reading from Scripture, which has made the Law into a principal part of Jewish divine [p. 7] service! All, says Maimuni, are obliged to listen to this reading, even the most learned, who believes he has already fathomed the content of what is to be read.[8] Since each one hears the old, eternally young Law proclaimed ever anew, he is, as it were, called along to watch over it and to cherish it; even divine worship in Israel is instruction.

Let no one say that this holds only for the adherents and not for those outside. Religious instruction has never been refused by us to anyone of another faith when it was honestly sought. Since we do not make a person's salvation dependent on his confession, and according to Jewish teaching heaven stands open to every truly pious person,[9] we had no occasion to hawk our teaching, to force it on others, to concern ourselves with other people's beliefs, to haggle over people and to hunt souls, as Ezekiel 13:18 says. Just as the gentle Hillel (Shabbat fol. 31b)[10] gave the heathen who wished to learn Judaism while standing on one foot, in a different form, the sentence: Love your neighbour as yourself, so afterwards a great many readily offered those of other faiths information and clarity about Judaism. We too once had proselytes; indeed, one is no longer guilty of any scholarly heresy today in asserting that Christianity would never have made such rapid conquests in Rome had the ground not been prepared by Judaism in wide circles — wider, at any rate, than we can today surmise, let alone prove. Even then, it is true, we probably did not carry on missions, but [p. 8] neither did we hold back the instruction that was asked for. Somebody, after all, must have given all those Roman men and women their taste for Judaism; one does not attach oneself

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[6]Translator: Hebrew *da'at Elohim*, "knowledge of God" (e.g. Hos. 4:1; 6:6).

[7]Translator: German *Schule*, Yiddish *shul*, the common name for the synagogue.

[8]Translator: Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of the Festal Offering (Hagigah) 3:6, concerning the public reading of the Torah at the septennial assembly (*hakhel*): even great sages who know the whole Torah are obliged to listen with utmost attention.

[9]Translator: Cf. Tosefta Sanhedrin 13:2: "The righteous of the nations of the world have a share in the world to come."

[10]Translator: The story of the heathen who asked to be taught the whole Torah on one foot is in BT Shabbat 31a (not 31b). Hillel's answer there is the negative form, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow" — hence Kaufmann's "in a different form."

to what is wholly unknown. Later, to be sure, we lost all desire for anything that goes by the name of missionizing; we were made modest — they had the power to do it. But neither would the spiritual conquests of Judaism in broad regions of Arabia and later among the Khazars have come about of themselves, if it really were Jewish doctrine to make the deepest secret of its faith.

We are not, however, reduced to inferences; the facts themselves speak for the openness of Judaism, demonstrated at all times. There has never been a century in which Christians did not obtain knowledge of the sources of our religion with Jewish help. Whoever is more closely interested in the occupation of Christians with our literature I refer to the brilliant chapter with which Leopold Zunz in 1845 opened his wonderful book *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*.[11] Here, as it were in the roughest outline, let just a few features be singled out that contrast strangely with the assertion that our faith must be unknown. A Christian wrote the first scholarly rabbinic dictionary: Buxtorf. A Christian produced the first Latin translation of the Mishnah and of its most important commentaries: Surenhusius. A Christian laid down a great part of the ancient rabbinic literature in translation in a giant work of antediluvian dimensions, [p. 9] called *Thesaurus*: Ugolini. A Christian was the first to give an account of all Jewish authors and their achievements, in his so-called rabbinic library: Bartolocci. A Christian wrote the first more considerable Jewish history: Basnage. A Christian was the first to attempt to give extensive information about the whole of Jewish literature: the unforgettable J. Chr. Wolf. Christians led the way successfully in cataloguing Hebrew manuscripts — to mention, among others, a compatriot, Uri, who described the treasures of Oxford, and to name the most many-sided and one of the greatest: De Rossi.[12] A glance into the mighty Bible work of the Jesuit Cornelius a Lapide suffices to show to what extent rabbinic commentaries on Scripture are used even by the Church. All these achievements were brought about by Christian diligence and by Jewish guidance and instruction dispensed with full hands. A noble chapter in the history of tolerance, this unanimous collaboration of men from both camps — even if here too, as in everything human, there is no lack of shadow, of the poisonous blossoms of treacherous ingratitude and malicious tendencies.[13]

Even the Kabbalah — to speak of this outgrowth on the tree of Judaism as well — this so-called secret doctrine, was revealed to Christians by Jewish teachers with the greatest willingness. From Pico della Mirandola to Knorr von Rosenroth and Molitor, Christians have cherished and

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[11] Translator: Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), founder of the "Science of Judaism"; *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin, 1845) opens with a long survey of Christian scholarship on Jewish literature.

[12] Translator: Johannes Buxtorf the Elder (1564–1629), *Lexicon Chaldaicum, Talmudicum et Rabbinicum* (published 1639 by his son); Willem Surenhuis (Surenhusius, c. 1664–1729), *Mischna* with Latin translation and commentaries of Maimonides and Bertinoro (1698–1703); Blasius Ugolinus, *Thesaurus antiquitatum sacrarum* (34 vols., Venice 1744–69); Giulio Bartolocci (1613–1687), *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica*; Jacques Basnage (1653–1723), *Histoire des Juifs* (1706 ff.); Johann Christoph Wolf (1683–1739), *Bibliotheca Hebraea* (1715–33); Johannes Uri (1724–1796), Hungarian-born orientalist (hence "compatriot"), who catalogued the Bodleian's oriental manuscripts (1787); Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi (1742–1831) of Parma, collector and cataloguer of Hebrew manuscripts.

[13] Translator: Kaufmann evidently has in mind men like Johann Andreas Eisenmenger, whose hostile *Entdecktes Judenthum* ("Judaism Unmasked," 1700) was built on years of study with Jewish teachers, and its modern epigone August Rohling (see below).

cultivated this pseudo-doctrine, translated and reworked it;[14] from Christian mouths the word passed into the household [p. 10] vocabulary of the civilized nations; Christianity may fairly claim: Nothing Jewish have I left undiscovered.[15]

And am I now to speak of the present! The Talmud and the oldest rabbinic literature are already treated at several universities as the subject of regular lectures; I name only Leipzig and Strasbourg, Paris and Cambridge. The Talmud, this primeval forest into which all the vagabonds who wanted to waylay Judaism liked to withdraw,[16] will soon be cleared and generally accessible. The Jerusalem Talmud has by now been almost completely translated into French by Schwab. The Babylonian Talmud has, as to its contents, been brought closer to general understanding through the French works of Rabbinowicz, and it is also being taken in hand in literal translations from the most various quarters, among them by rabbis in office. Only recently two tractates have been added, one shortly after the other, in German rendering to those translated long ago. There is even an attempt at a translation into Hungarian. Another part of the ancient rabbinic literature, the Midrash, will soon stand wide open to everyone curious through Wünsche's German version.[17] Our days have even seen a still more remarkable phenomenon. W. H. Lowe in Cambridge has added to the fame he won as a Christian scholar through his excellent edition of a Talmud fragment from manuscript by publishing, in exemplary fashion and in one volume, the whole Mishnah according to a valuable Cambridge manuscript.[18] To say nothing of Franz Delitzsch's world- [p. 11] famous rabbinic learning, Christianity today possesses in the Abbate Pietro Perreau, director of the Royal Library in Parma, a scholar who only recently displayed his astonishing erudition in Jewish literature in a work in which he sets before those seeking help some six thousand solutions of Hebrew abbreviations.[19]

The examples have been chosen here by leaps and as if at random, to throw light on the fable of the concealment in which the violet Judaism supposedly wishes to bloom. None of these Christian scholars ever betrayed any uncertainty about what we actually believe. A great many of the men I have named here would speak soothingly to many a one who cries loudest about our great obscurity: My son, do not get heated; it is emptiness that sounds out of you; go and inform yourself;

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[14]Translator: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), founder of Christian Kabbalah; Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–1689), *Kabbala denudata* (1677–84); Franz Joseph Molitor (1779–1860), *Philosophie der Geschichte oder über die Tradition* (1827–53).

[15]Translator: A barb at the title of Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthum* ("Judaism Discovered/Unmasked").

[16]Translator: Above all August Rohling (1839–1931), Catholic professor in Prague, whose *Der Talmudjude* (1871) was the arsenal of the antisemitic agitation and who in 1883 offered to testify on Jewish "ritual murder" in connection with the Tiszaeszlár affair; Franz Delitzsch and others exposed his ignorance of the sources.

[17]Translator: Moïse Schwab (1839–1918), *Le Talmud de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1871–90); Israel Michel Rabbinowicz (1818–1893), French digests of the legislation of the Talmud (*Législation civile du Thalmud*, *Législation criminelle du Thalmud*, etc., 1876–80); August Wünsche (1838–1912), *Bibliotheca Rabbinica*, a German translation of the Midrashim (1880–85).

[18]Translator: William Henry Lowe, *The Fragment of Talmud Babli Pesachim* (1879) and *The Mishnah on which the Palestinian Talmud rests* (1883), from Cambridge University Library MS Add. 470.1.

[19]Translator: Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890), Lutheran Hebraist in Leipzig and a prominent opponent of Rohling. Pietro Perreau (1827–1911), librarian of the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, author of *Oceano delle abbreviature e sigle* (1883).

do not say that *one* does not know, where you alone are ignorant; and if you do not believe the Jews, then come to us, knock the dust off our books and be astonished — provided, that is, you are still able to read Latin. But if you shun the trouble, then read the numerous works on the Science of Judaism, which today already speaks in every tongue, and confess that it was not your will that was evil, but rather only your strength that was small. The Jews teach that no man sins unless the spirit of folly or of ignorance has entered into him.[20]

But whoever would infer from this openness of Judaism a fondness for a sharply outlined — I might say handy and palatable — confession of faith would go very far astray. [p. 12] Judaism by its very nature knows no creed and no confession; it is a *way* of life; and if it has been said, frivolously enough, that faith means not-knowing, Judaism regards itself above all as knowledge. The revelation of religious genius in our Middle Ages, Judah Halevi, showed his accustomed depth of insight also in this: that he did not, like the Karaites and Jewish philosophers of religion as well, regard the verse of Chronicles, 1 Chron. 28:9, as a scriptural proof for the demand of a deepened knowledge of God, but saw in it an emanation of that spirit which sees the teaching of Israel comprised in knowledge of God.[21] Know the God of your father, says the dying David here to his son Solomon, laying bare, as it were, the heart of Judaism with the GOD OF THE FATHER and the KNOWN GOD. In the whole of the older rabbinic literature one will not meet the word *Emunah* in the sense of faith; it took on this foreign sense only in the Spanish-Arabic epoch. Judaism was an upbringing: father and mother were the teachers, the parental home the school, the community its nursery. Just as we live not according to a handbook of physiology but according to the law of nature at work within us, so the Jews practised their Judaism unconsciously — it is not too strong to say instinctively. Not conceptually but concretely its content entered the child's soul; with every new word of the holy tongue, in the teaching of the Torah, one piece of Judaism after another, as it were, revealed itself to receptive youth. And as religion itself met the child not in abstract schemata but as a living whole, so the [p. 13] Torah was a whole, of equal value in all its parts, with all its components one spiritual soil, out of which only afterwards, according to the different individualities, the flower of faith sprang up in manifold forms. Since a magnificent system of customs and institutions had sufficiently provided for uniformity in the conduct of life, minds did not need to be put into uniform; the direction of souls could confidently be left to the individual. Definitions, rules of faith, abstracted doctrinal propositions, confessions were not to the taste of Judaism. It was not like an ornamental garden ruled by the shears, but like the blossoming vegetation in God's free nature, where many a wild shoot grows out of line, but everything bears witness to life full of sap and vigour. Judaism knows no battles over the catechism and over symbolic books. As a herbarium compared with living plant growth, as specimens in spirits compared with living organisms, or — to borrow an image from another field — as the prose

[20] Translator: BT Sotah 3a: "A person does not commit a transgression unless a spirit of folly has entered into him."

[21] Translator: The philosophers include Bahya ibn Paquda, who in *Duties of the Heart* (Gate of Unity, ch. 3) cites "Know the God of your father" (1 Chron. 28:9) as a proof of the duty of rational inquiry into God.

retelling of a poem compared with the poem itself, so arid, so dry did the lip-work of confession appear to Judaism beside its sap-filled doctrinal content. We have only one creed (*Symbolum*), short, vivid, penetrating the senses: Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One. When the prophet Jonah was asked on the ship what people he belonged to, he gave the answer (1:8):[22] I am a Hebrew, and I fear the God of heaven. That was always our answer when, in the surging waves of the ages, men wanted to throw the Jews overboard into the raging sea like ballast, and first asked them about their — catechism.

[p. 14] I will not go into the question here whether Judaism has dogmas — a question somewhat reminiscent of whether a fish has bones.[23] But the fact that it could be seriously disputed proves that dogmas in the ecclesiastical sense must be foreign to Judaism. And in truth history shows that attempts to set up rules of faith were received with displeasure. The tiresome dispute over words that is inseparable from all formulas may have produced the aversion to these spiritual petrifactions, which the current of living religious feeling has always dissolved again. Even the mighty Maimuni's attempt to fix the truly binding core of Judaism seemed to many as if he had smashed it into 13 pieces, and, as is well known, there can be no question of any canonicity of his articles of faith. Just as the Talmud, in a profound passage, expresses the view that the prophets reduced the obligations of the Jewish confession to an ever narrower and higher formula,[24] so in this purely academic dispute over the articles of faith, too, there appears the endeavour to grasp the essence, the generic concept of Judaism, ever more sharply, ever more concisely.

As, then, in the strictly Jewish sense the word "religious doctrine" says the same thing twice, since in Judaism religion means teaching, so alongside the Torah there was no further catechism either, since such a thing could only say again, or say differently — that is, worse — what the Torah says. Just as in every Jewish house of God the scrolls of the Law alone are kept in the holy Ark [p. 15] and no other book or object is deemed worthy of the distinction of forming, as it were, the apple of the sanctuary's eye, so too in the life of the Jewish community the Torah alone has counted as the source from which the old spirit of revelation flows to us, and no man's word was allowed to come forward with the claim of conveying better than it what is the most essential teaching of Judaism. One may be of very different opinions about this; one may wish to judge it quite sharply from another standpoint; but scholarly discipline demands above all that every phenomenon be understood and judged from within itself, and not that one demand, in thoughtless impetuosity, that all trees have one bark.

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[22] Translator: The question is asked in Jonah 1:8; the answer quoted is Jonah 1:9.

[23] Translator: The question had been much debated since Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* (1783), which denied that Judaism imposes dogmas; Kaufmann alludes to the controversy that continued through the nineteenth century.

[24] Translator: BT Makkot 23b–24a: the 613 commandments were reduced by David to eleven (Ps. 15), by Isaiah to six (Isa. 33:15) and then two (Isa. 56:1), by Micah to three (Mic. 6:8), and by Habakkuk to one: "the righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).

I have sent this discussion on ahead because, after what I really ought to have said first of all, it would not have been tolerated any longer. We have a religion of openness — that was my first proposition; we need no catechism — that was my second; we have one already, two, three, a hundred, hundreds and more — that shall be my third. I utter it very shyly and timidly, although I ought to deliver it with the strongest emphasis, since, given the taste of our age for numbers, it seems to contain the strongest, the most striking refutation of the charge raised against us, as ever, boldly and light-heartedly. For just as it is usually the most barren periods in the history of poetry in which the best works on aesthetics appear, so in my view the number of catechisms stands in inverse proportion to the strength of the prevailing religiosity.

[p. 16] Yet today the catechism may really have become a necessary evil. Ever since an excessive tenderness toward the dear little ones broke out in Israel too, ever since Jewish parents seem to believe that the Hebrew language really exists for the sake of university professors and not for the sake of the Jews, there can no longer be any talk of a living penetration of the Torah in our educated schools. And so the Jewish catechisms flourish; along with the foreign thing some have even taken over the foreign name, and among a part of Jewry the Torah, together with the holy tongue, lies, as the ancients said, in a corner.[25] But every thing, as the Sayings of the Fathers remark, has its hour.[26] How could the Jewish catechism have suspected that one day it would be called upon to save Judaism! The catechism that you miss among us — we have it, we have it a hundredfold. The Judaism you wish to get to know is offered in every bookshop "for two groschen in current coin." You even have a choice: small ones and large, thin ones and thick, catechisms in one, two and more parts, by the famous and the obscure, by rabbis and by teachers — a rich, large stock. And they truly did not spring up overnight in order to soothe the anxiety of overzealous souls about the secrets of Jewish doctrine. I do not feel disposed to write the history of the Jewish catechism, but I can certainly demonstrate for it a respectable age, and especially in the lands in which the morning of tolerance dawned earliest for the Jews. As early as the year [p. 17] 1844 Leopold Zunz wrote in his *Kurze Antworten auf Kultusfragen* [Short Answers to Questions of Worship] (Ges. Schriften III, 214):[27] "For some forty-odd years, gradually, in Germany, Austria, Denmark, Holland, France, England, as far as Pest, Vilna, Philadelphia and other places, religious instruction has become an important part of domestic as well as public education, sometimes more, sometimes less under the supervision of the state; and one effect of this is the textbooks and catechisms that have appeared during the past 35 years in the German, French, English, Dutch, Danish and Italian languages by Arnheim, B. H. Auerbach, P. Beer, Al. Behr, Bensev, Büdinger, Chorin, S. Cohn, Francolm, S. Heinemann, Herxheimer, Homberg, Johlson, Kley, Lambert, J. Maier, H. Miro, Neumann,

[25]Translator: Cf. BT Kiddushin 66a: "The Torah is wrapped up and lying in a corner; whoever wishes to learn, let him come and learn."

[26]Translator: Mishnah Avot 4:3: "there is no thing that does not have its hour."

[27]Translator: Zunz's "Kurze Antworten auf Kultusfragen" (1844), reprinted in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1875–76).

Plessner, Saalschütz, Skrainka, H. Stern, W. Wessely, Ab. Wolf and others."[28] Since Zunz tossed off this short compilation, the material in the various parts of the world, countries and languages has grown almost beyond view. But what numbers an exhaustive survey of this literature would bring to light is shown by a feeble attempt at an overview that appeared in Steinschneider's *Hebräische Bibliographie* (XVII, 90 ff., and p. VII; X, p. 102 f.)[29] and lists far more than a hundred catechisms, while whole groups of countries have remained almost unconsidered and editions and printings are left entirely out of account. The library of our Seminary here, which has so far been unable to give any attention at all to this branch of literature, nevertheless possesses, by rough count, nearly half a hundred such products from various [p. 18] countries and in the most diverse languages. In Hungary itself there is scarcely a more prominent Jewish community from whose midst a special Jewish religion textbook has not come forth. These so manifold textbooks differ, of course, only in form, in division and arrangement, according to the methodological views by which the authors let themselves be guided in composing them. With some good will any outsider can sketch for himself from these books a picture of Judaism, insofar as one is able to imagine the living content of a religion from dry propositions. But he will also find in them the resolution of the apparent contradiction between the last two propositions I defended: the Jews can have catechisms, but — no catechism.

It is only another side of the same matter when it is commonly said that we have no hierarchy, that among us today no person and no body has, as it were, taken the true meaning of the religious documents on hereditary lease, and that therefore no one could formulate a confession of faith for us in such a way that it would have to take on an authoritative, binding significance for all. It may have its difficulties for someone of another faith to imagine such a state of affairs as possible and beneficial; but no fair-minded person will demand that, for the sake of his more ponderous powers of comprehension, the spirit of a religion venerable through its very antiquity should turn itself around and change the character from which all its institutions are to be explained. We ask not admiration but tolerance. As the Pope at the [p. 19] gates of the Roman ghetto, in the face of the Torah carried out toward him, used to say,[30] so let people say to us too, no more than this: We permit what is yours, but we do not approve it. Medieval artists used to portray Church and Synagogue as two female figures, the former with upright, victorious lance, the latter with a broken, splintered spear. Let us be regarded as beaten, defeated, without hope; only let nothing be

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[28] Translator: The names are authors of early nineteenth-century Jewish religious textbooks and catechisms, e.g. Herz Homberg (*Bne Zion*, 1812), Peter Beer, Judah Leib Ben-Zeev ("Bensev"), Aaron Chorin, Samuel Cohn, Isaac Asher Francolm, Jeremias Heinemann, Salomon Herxheimer, Joseph Johlson, Eduard Kley, Joseph Maier, Salomon Plessner, Joseph Levin Saalschütz and Abraham Wolf.

[29] Translator: Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907) edited the *Hebräische Bibliographie* (1858–82); the reference is reproduced as printed.

[30] Translator: At the papal coronation procession (*possesso*) the Roman Jewish community presented the new pope with a Torah scroll, to which he replied with a formula honouring the Law while rejecting its Jewish interpretation.

put into our hands that we cannot use, and let nothing be demanded of us that we have not got to offer. Toward religions, too, modesty is a fair virtue.

When I set my feeble word, with its slight prospect of circulation, beside the weighty place from which the accusations against us are hurled, an old image rises before my mind. Whoever was born in a Jewish country community will remember from his childhood the *Schulklopfer* [synagogue knocker], how he went from house to house in the Jews' lane to call the faithful to divine service with his hammer. At times the mighty pealing of the bell would come booming through the air at the same moment from the nearby church tower. Both faithfully called their worshippers, the bell of the church and the hammer of the synagogue knocker; but the former is stronger and with its rolling waves drowns out the weak vibrations of the hammer-blow in the air — though not in the ear of those who want to listen to it. Whoever conducts our defence must resign himself from the outset. Our opponents swing the great bell; we must knock from door to door. And yet the time must come when the bell, too, will ring for the divine service of reconciliation.