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**Frankism and Frankfurtism: Historical Heresies for a Metaphysics
of our Most Human Experiences**

Judaism contains utopian aspects that have not yet been revealed.

Gershom Scholem

Nothing of theological content will persist without being transformed, every content will have to put itself to the test of migrating into the realm of the secular, the profane.

Theodor W. Adorno

“Capitalism as Religion,” an unpublished fragment written by Walter Benjamin in 1921, is one of the earliest attempts to understand secularization as a theological process.¹ It proposes a reversal of the view of capitalism as having destroyed the sacred, for example by making each and every day a workday. What capitalism has done, rather, is transform each and every day, each thing or place, each person or relationship, into an object of cultic commodification. Capitalism is not merely conditioned by a religious ethos that it slowly erodes, as Weber argued, but is itself a potent, perverse religion, “perhaps the most extreme that ever existed.” Even if it is “a cult that creates guilt, not atonement,” and “offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction,” capitalism is nevertheless a pervasively religious system in which every possible object is guaranteed a place in the cult of the commodity and its rites of exchange. It is a religion of “the permanence of the cult” where “each day commands the utter fealty of each worshiper”. And because this religion has “no specific body of dogma, no theology,” its vain word can be evangelized to every corner of the earth, winning converts to its promise of material salvation and inscribing people in an economy of redemption without needing to wring confessions of faith. It thereby promises to bring the original economic meaning of redemption (the biblical *p.d.h.*) to fulfillment precisely by defaulting on salvation, since to participate in capitalism’s redemptive project is to buy in to the systemic regulation of inequity and disenfranchisement. Its gospel

that material anxieties and insecurities can be defeated by free markets and industrious individuals has in fact globalized disparity and despair. Capitalism institutionalizes exponential inequality and naturalizes it as if by a law reigning over the entire world. Rather than eliminating formations of power it consecrates them behind a rhetorical veil of liberty and mobility.²

We cannot escape, we can only negotiate the ubiquity and permanence of the capitalist religion in which we are gripped. Philip Goodchild's account of a critical piety that redirects our *attention* provides one way of negotiating capitalism. This amounts to viewing capitalism as globalized idolatry, thus recognizing its sacred sway but not surrendering to it, subordinating its power to that which matters and is worthy of attention.³ Giorgio Agamben, explicitly extending Benjamin's position, suggests another way of loosening the stranglehold of the religion of capitalism. He distinguishes two ways of contesting religious power, that of secularization and that of profanation.

Secularization is a form of repression. It leaves intact the forces it deals with by simply moving them from one place to another. Thus the political secularization of theological concepts (the transcendence of god as a paradigm of sovereign power) does nothing but displace the heavenly monarchy onto an earthly monarchy, leaving its power intact.

Profanation, however, neutralizes what it profanes. Once profaned, that which was unavailable and separate loses its aura and is returned to use. Both are political operations: the first guarantees the exercise of power by carrying it back to a sacred model; the second deactivates the apparatuses of power and returns to common use the spaces that power had seized.⁴

Secularization transfers a power relation from one sphere to another without modifying its structure, while profanation involves a liberation that neither repeats nor reinscribes the power relation. Benjamin can be read as having suggested that the omnipotent power of capitalism and the immense threat it poses consists of secularizing religion without leaving any room for its profanation. It does so by sustaining its promises and cultic power structures while eradicating the capacity for profanation, since it reigns over every item, act and relationship. Nothing in all creation is hidden from capitalism. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Heb. 4:13; cf. Job 28:24). Finally attaining to its etymological destiny, capitalism is at the head of the world, as though on a heavenly throne, eyeing all, testing each (Ps. 11:4). Sovereign over presidents, monarchs, prime ministers, tribal chiefs and bureaucrats;

reigning across nation states, forests, oceans and subterranean minerals; maker of war and peace, creator of death and sustainer of life – who could doubt that capitalism is the unrivaled king of kings? But if it secularizes religion by fashioning the world as a global economy where redemption is inequitably distributed, capitalism forgoes the possibility of salvation. Rather than glorify the secular religion of capitalism, then, as the bureaucratic angelology of liberal governments do, Agamben proposes profanations that might deactivate or suspend, if only for the blink of an eye, the otherwise omnipotent reign of capitalism. Unlike secularizations, which merely shift hierarchical powers from one region to another where they are quickly absorbed into absolute reign of capital, profanations suspend the hierarchical relations and economic determinations that give value to value as such. But profanations are not nihilistic devaluations of what matters; on the contrary, suspending a thing's redemptive value, which is what enables it to be exchanged as a commodity in the great chain of capital roped around the globe, reveals its inoperative possibility for being itself.⁵

“Dear Teddie,” Benjamin wrote to Theodor W. Adorno on June 19, 1938, “I feel all the shabbier for being unable to answer Felizitas’s question as to whether Scholem is a Frankist.”⁶ Some months earlier, Scholem wrote “a candid word” to the publisher Salman Z. Schocken concerning his “true intentions in studying Kabbalah.”⁷ Scholem’s interest, he confides, is not primarily in “the history of Kabbalah, but rather its metaphysics,” which “lie on the narrow boundary between religion and nihilism”. The Kabbalah satisfied a twofold “compelling need for a critique of history and for historical criticism”. Although the prospect of becoming a Kabbalist or subscribing to its “distorted” myths was out of the question, no doubt in part for reasons made plain by historical criticism, research into the Kabbalah was nevertheless not exhausted by a *Wissenschaft* whose highest purpose was to give Judaism ‘a decent burial’. For Scholem, Kabbalah is not merely the object of historical criticism but also a source for critiquing historicism. Unlike the rationalist theological approach to metaphysics which, like much contemporary naturalism, thinks we can access the essence of things without the detours of historical investigation, Scholem was of the view, fundamental to post-*Aufklärung* German thought and especially to the project of Critical Theory, that one needed

the tools of “philology,” as he called it, “to penetrate beyond the symbolic plane and to break through the wall of history.” Refining and deploying these tools, Scholem sought not only positive knowledge of an unexplored tract of the historical record of Judaism but also a “metaphysics” of “our most human experiences,” as he put it to Schocken. Scholem’s historical investigations of the Kabbalah were thus motivated by a heresy against historicism, namely metaphysics, construed in an intriguingly intimate sense. The thought seems to go back to his precocious reflections, still shy of his eighteenth birthday, from November 15, 1914:

What is the philosophy of history? It is the attempt to capture the flow of life in an iron box ... As a Jew I should be closer to the philosophy of history than anyone else. But we have been dragging too much history around with us. ... Here’s to life! ... One doesn’t need historical materialism to justify socialism: personal experience suffices ... Phooey on the historical mode of observation!⁸

Scholem’s “candid word” to Schocken reiterates this will to profane the regnant discourse of historicism, whose Jewish variant is the fêted “faith of fallen Jews”.⁹ His research aimed not merely to apply secular-historical reason to sacred sources but also to profane the absolutization which secular reason makes of itself when history is regarded as the ultimate source of meaning. We know all too well how secularism arrogates ultimacy. In the form of capitalism or communism, nationalism or scientism, *le culte de la Raison* or “we, the people,” secularism arrogates the sacred for new purposes.¹⁰ Zionism, to take the example which preoccupied Scholem, secularizes Judaism by resacralizing its history in the name of the sovereignty of Jews. *Mi yimalel gevurot yisrael...* Indeed Scholem understood better than most how secular Jewish nationalism drinks from the waters of theology, and although he personally continued to savour the subtle aftertaste of the history of theology, he regarded those waters as an incorrigibly bitter source of the contamination of contemporary political life. This led him to insist repeatedly that Zionism is not Messianism, even as he keenly appreciated the extreme difficulty of disentangling the two in the context of a return of the Jewish people to political self-determination: “the remedy of Zionism is itself the rub. The stirring new discovery that the nation has a reality and the rediscovered link between the individual and his world, namely, his people, have as it were drawn onto themselves all the problematics [of mysticism].”¹¹ In contrast to the secularizing arrogation of sacred authority which merely transplants it from the religious to the

secular domain of the historical nation, Scholem sought a profanation of Jewish history that would release its emancipatory potential, as this diary entry from January 20, 1915 indicates:

Our guiding principle is revolution! Revolution everywhere! We don't want reform or reeducation but revolution or renewal. We desire to absorb revolution into our innermost souls. There are external and internal revolutions, the former mainly aimed at family and home. ... Above all, we want to revolutionize Judaism. We want to revolutionize Zionism and to preach anarchism and freedom from all authority. ... We wish to rip away the formalistic façade from Zionism. ... We don't want a state. We want a free society, and Herzl's *Old-New Land* hasn't a thing to do with this. We as Jews know more than enough about the hideous idol called the state than to bow down and offer up prayers to it once again, nor will we deliver up our progeny to be willing sacrifices to its insatiable greed for possession and power. We Jews are not a people of the state, nor are people from the other nations. We do not wish to go to Palestine to found a state, thereby forging new chains out of the old. O you miserable little philistines! We want to go to Palestine for freedom and longing for the future. The future belongs to the Orient.¹²

Like his anarchic Zionism, Scholem's interest in the Kabbalah was motivated by his conviction that freedom demands profanation, not just secularization. The eighteen year old Scholem understood what Agamben, Schmitt and others would make explicit, namely that history and politics, historicism and nationalism, can readily be conscripted to sanctify secular authority. Where kings, priests and scribes have been removed there enter politicians and professors, bureaucrats and scientists, leaving authority fundamentally intact.

But if Scholem turned to the Kabbalah in order to profane historicism and nationalism, of what does the resulting "metaphysics" of "our most human experiences" consist? In the course of time Scholem vacillated between two answers to this question: religious anarchism and nihilism. David Biale has recently proposed that Scholem was "not a nihilist, that is, someone who rejects all authority," but a "religious anarchist" for whom "tradition still has authority, even if it does not speak with one voice and even if the modern Jew need not obey the laws the tradition attributes to divine revelation."¹³ Pawel Maciejko, on the other hand, argues that Scholem was a nihilist because "*every* form of Jewish religious practice is, in the last analysis, unsatisfactory and only provisional; that *every* interpretation of Revelation is ultimately a misreading; or that *any* attempt to create a successful structure of Jewish life is futile."¹⁴ Eric Jacobson has shown that Scholem never entirely resolved the matter, oscillating between

several competing variants.¹⁵ I think we should conclude that for Scholem anarchism was associated with Zionism, while nihilism resulted from the realization that anarchist Judaism was not viable in the form of Zionism as it developed from, say, the early 1930's. In other words, Scholem was a religious anarchist in principle and became, in light of historical developments, a theological nihilist in practice, falling on his own metaphysical sword in the face of the theocratic secular nationalisms that emerged around him. A self-described "sworn and implacable foe of Europe and a follower of the New Orient (which will carry a new Judah on its mighty shoulders)," Scholem's religious anarchism was meant "to bring us together with other creative peoples of the Orient."¹⁶ But when history didn't quite work out that way, his theology resorted to an absolutely solitary "metaphysics," having no social, political or historical significance, stripping "our most human experiences" of its intrinsic sociality. What is more, in fleeing anarchism for nihilism he found – or, rather, placed – himself in the footsteps of the Messiah, for like "the 'believers' [in Sabbatai Zevi], those who remained loyal to their inward experience, were compelled to find an answer to the simple question: what could be the value of historical reality that had proved to be so bitterly disappointing [– as Zionism had become for him –], and how might it be related to the hopes it had betrayed."¹⁷

Scholem's answer to the question of what comes after history was nihilism, and it was confirmed by the almost syllogistic simplicity of his interpretation of Sabbatianism. On the basis of plausible historico-phenomenological claims regarding Sabbatianism, he argued (a) that for "the believers" who followed Sabbatai Zevi, revelation and redemption were historically fulfilled by his advent as Messiah; (b) that history remained (and remains) fundamentally unaltered after the messianic advent; and therefore that (c) *history becomes entirely devoid of messianic significance*. The conclusion Scholem reached is that revelation withdraws to, or remains, only in the realm of *Innerlichkeit*, inwardness, a realm void of historical significance. In Maciejko's words, Scholem thought that Sabbatianism brings about "the radical depreciation of the world of history: if the Messiah is already here, if Revelation has reached its fulfillment, there is nothing more men should (or can) do. Consequently, it leads to 'mystical nihilism'."¹⁸ Having become fulfilled and yet unaltered, the *history* of Sabbatianism brings about a complete *dehistoricization* of Revelation and Redemption. In this way Scholem's own research satisfies both the "compelling need for a critique of history and for historical criticism". Does

it “lie on the narrow boundary between religion and nihilism”? Scholem thought so, but this can be doubted. For “religion” remains socially and historically oriented, whereas that is precisely what Scholem negates by virtue of the bitterly disappointing revelations of historical redemption, first in Sabbatianism and then in Zionism. If Scholem remained on the narrow boundary between religion and nihilism, he leaned toward nihilism. It was Franz Rosenzweig who first diagnosed this:

His Judaism is for him [Scholem] only a monastery. In there he practises his spiritual exercises and essentially does not – despite occasional remarks – care for people. Accordingly, he becomes *speechless*. He has only the gesture of affirmation or rejection, in reality only the *gesture* and *this* gesture. [...] I have never encountered anything like that among Western Jews. Possibly, he is the only one who has really returned home. But he has returned home *alone*.¹⁹

Maciejko calls this “the most profound critique of Scholem ever formulated” of Scholem’s “mystical nihilism”, and I agree. Scholem’s critique of historicism for a “metaphysics” of “our most human experiences” renders those very experiences speechless and solitary; pure revelation becomes devoid of social, political and historical significance. For most of his life Scholem stood on the wooden bridge between religion and nihilism, between the village (of Judaism) and the (mystical) Castle, gazing into the apparent emptiness. His metaphysical achievement involves the negation of worldliness. In contrast, Rosenzweig argues that the inwardness of pure revelation:

is no longer content to be merely inner immediate presence; it asserts itself as presence in the world [...] Individually experienced belief had already found within itself the highest bliss destined for it. Now it also finds the highest certainty possible for it, but only in this its historicity, its ‘positivity’. This certainty does not precede that bliss; it must, however, follow it.²⁰

Rosenzweig agrees that revelation breaks with historicism in the inwardness of its “highest bliss,” but unlike Scholem argues that this “inner immediate presence” (*innere unmittelbare Gegenwart*) is destined for “historicity” (*Geschichtlichkeit*). Revelation thereby *becomes* “not only internal but something visibly real”.²¹ Scholem’s aspiration for Zionism as religious anarchism had a version of this historicity in view, but history itself defeated his vision. This is not to say that Scholem had no rejoinder to Rosenzweig, whom he saw as obsessively enamoured by “the German-Jewish synthesis” and therefore misguidedly wanting to

establish “Judaism as a kind of pietistic Protestant church”.²² In contrast to Rosenzweig’s “ecclesiastical” construal of Judaism in “church form,” he preferred the risk of “Zion,” where the forces of “degeneration for the purpose of regeneration” were more likely to “manifest anything Jewish [...] of enduring value.”²³

Scholem’s anarchical Zionism and Rosenzweig’s ecclesiastical Diasporism lead in opposing historical directions. Each resisted historicism for the sake of revelation, but they settled on antithetical resolutions that could be reconciled only from a messianic point of view. Both understood this, though in different ways. For Scholem, in modern times, when the traditional dogma of “Torah in Heaven” is overwhelmed by historical reason, the verification of the revealed truths of Judaism can only take place anarchically.²⁴ But Rosenzweig had a completely different understanding of what is at stake in a messianic theory of knowledge. He argued that the Jewish calendar temporalizes the messianic future in its weekly and annual cycles. Messianic epistemology was neither an Idea regulating our supposed progress to truth on “the long highway of time” nor a merely ephemeral *Augenblick* flashing erratically in and out of existence; it is, rather, knowledge temporalized in the home, the community and the people where God dwells concretely through the liturgical cycle.²⁵

Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch also viewed history from a messianic point of view and, like Scholem, understood the messianic as a non-linear interruption into historical time. More than Scholem, they insist that such a bond *retains* a foothold in history, even if they concede, against Marxist dogma, that the footprints of the Messiah do not so much point to an imminent future as lie scattered in the past. Benjamin adopts the pessimistic view of this unorthodox Marxism; for him the messianic can be no more than a spark from the past igniting the present momentarily. Bloch is more hopeful. On his view, the “not-yet-conscious” and the “not-yet-being” of which we are already conscious, manifest in “stages”.²⁶ Scholem’s view is closer to Benjamin’s. For him, the incredible myths of the Kabbalah, and in particular their elaboration in the forms of messianic antinomianism, “possess some substance [...] expressed there in a distorted way.”²⁷ Scholem was a messianic epistemologist, blasting Jewish antinomianism out of the course of history with the aim of illuminating redemptive pos-

sibilities for the bonds between human beings. For Scholem, Benjamin and Bloch, anachronism is among the messianic epistemologist's most treasured tools. The distorted substance of the past enters into our vision of a redeemed world. As the anachronistic light of the past passes through the tiny redemptive apertures of the present, Frankism assumes several forms of Frankfurtism.

As an effective imaginary, Frankism can serve Jewish political theology the way Thomas Müntzer inspired Engels and Bloch, or the Paris Commune stirs anarchists to this day. Frank's charlatany attests not only to his debauched, manipulative mind. It is rather as a *concrete fable* that we should approach Frankism, as a historical gateway to a metaphysics of our most human, Jewish experiences. "That the content of the fable must be abandoned leaves as its remainder the form of these conditions and, in particular, the ruin of every attempt to assign the discourse of truth to preconstituted historical aggregates."²⁸ The truth which Frankism institutes, the sparks it let fly, can be sharply distinguished from its historicity. Frankism is not for us an historical assemblage of bizarre rites and incredible myths but a form of Jewishness which, when articulated through a messianic theory of knowledge, calls for contemporary verification and fidelity. The method resembles the similar approaches of early Benjamin and early Bloch, as Richard Wolin notes: "The elements of the end condition are not present as formless tendencies of progress, but instead are embedded in every present as endangered, condemned, and ridiculed creations and ideas. The historical task is to give absolute form in a genuine way to the immanent condition of fulfillment, to make it visible and predominant in the present. However, it is only comprehensible in its metaphysical structure, like the Messianic realm or the idea of the French Revolution."²⁹ Frankism is precisely a case of a condemned and ridiculed idea calling for fulfillment in the present, where it assumes distorted but emancipated form. The singularity of Frankism, moreover, can be enlivened by determining its continuity, across the messianic interruptions of history, with Frankfurtism, for like-minded emancipatory vectors, at once antinomian, messianic and Jewish, cross them both. The task then, as Adorno famously put it, is to approach Frankism as it presents itself "from the standpoint of redemption," for "all else is reconstruction, mere technique." Perspectives on Frankism "must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light."³⁰

In fact the history of Frankism is nothing if not fantastic and fabulous. Its singular *form*, established by virtue of its contribution to a messianic theory of knowledge, articulates into four aspects: gender roles which, in Judaism, have been arbitrarily hierarchized and thus more or less compromised since Eden; territorial autonomy, in particular as concerns the false binary of exilic subjugation and colonial appropriation; economic relations, insofar as these remain constitutive of the emancipatory bonds among human beings; and the politics of “Jewish identity” which attests to the singularity of historical collectivities while running the risk of alienation and exclusion.

In the festival of the Joy of the Torah (*Simhat Torah*) which concludes the annual cycle of the traditional reading of the Five Books of Moses, the scrolls of the Torah are brought out of the ark and paraded about the synagogue, surrounded by rings of dancing men. A special honour is reserved for the *hatan torah*, the groom of the Torah, who completes the final lection. For Kabbalists, the festival constitutes a symbolic reenactment of the marriage between Israel and the Torah, for example by dancing seven times around the Torah as a bride does for her groom in the marriage ceremony. In 1648, Sabbatai Zvi erected a bridal canopy, invited prominent rabbis to a banquet, had a Torah scroll brought in, and performed a marriage ceremony between himself and the Torah. Not content with being a token representative of the people, the messianic advent of Sabbatai Zvi sought to fulfill the typological position of groom in relation to the Torah of God. While these “strange deeds” (*ma’asim zarim*; cf. Isa. 28:21) provoked the consternation of the rabbis, among later Sabbatians they stimulated more radical transvaluations (*Umwertungen*) of Jewish symbols. In 1756, on the night of 27th of January in the small town of Lanckoronie near the Moldavian border, a group of Sabbatian Jews led by Jacob Frank were discovered conducting such a ritual. A report of the incident by Rabbi Jacob Emden, one of the most important rabbinic authorities of the 18th century, depicts the strange deeds performed:

And they took the wife of the local rabbi (who also belonged to the sect), a woman beautiful but lacking discretion, they undressed her naked and placed the Crown of the Torah on her head, sat her under the canopy like a bride, and danced a dance around her. They

celebrated with bread and wine of the condemned, and they pleased their hearts with music like King David [...] and in dance they fell upon her kissing her, and called her ‘mezuzah,’ as if they were kissing a mezuzah.³¹

The Lanckoronie affair precipitated rabbinic attacks against the invigorated Sabbatians led by Jacob Frank. In the course of the controversy, which included public disputes, convened and adjudicated by Catholic authorities, between the messianic antinomians and the “Talmudists,” the Frankists adopted theological views that completely rejected rabbinic law and authority while incorporating quasi-Trinitarian dogma. In the ensuing months and years, rabbinic leaders responded by actively advocating, for the first time in Jewish history, the mass conversion of these heretical Jews, soliciting Catholic authorities either to incorporate the Sabbatian Jews among them or execute them for heresy. The Frankists, however, managed to mobilize Catholic anti-Judaism for their own purposes and secured a brief reprieve during which they gained royal authority to practice their religion without yet having to convert to Catholicism. During these months, beginning in June 1758, many of “the believers,” as they called themselves, gathered in Iwanie (west Ukraine), where Frank revealed himself as the successor to Sabbatai Zevi who was paving the final stretch of the road to God. This road, Frank taught, began with Judaism and passed into Islam when Sabbatai converted; it was now time to pass through Christianity, Esau or Edom in the rabbinic lexicon.

In this context, Esau or Edom symbolizes the unbridled flow of life which liberates man because its force and power and not subject to any law. The patriarch Jacob promised (Gen. 33:14) to visit his brother Esau in Seir, but Scripture does not mention that he fulfilled his promise, because the way was too difficult for him. Now the time had come to set out on this way, which leads to the “true life,” a central idea which in Frank’s system carries with it the specific connotation of freedom and licentiousness. This path was the road to consistent religious anarchy: “The place to which we are going is not subject to any law, because all that is on the side of death; but we are going to life.”³²

Transvaluating the rabbinic identification of Esau as Israel’s heinous Christian brother, “the way to Esau” now become the penultimate station on the way to the anarchical vitalism of redemption.³³ The religious-anarchist collective at Iwanie lasted till the spring of 1759. Its economic substructure was based on “a common fund, apparently in emulation of the New Testament account of the early Christian community.”³⁴ Throughout this

period, and indeed following their conversion, “Frank’s followers had no thought of assimilating or of mixing with true Christians, but sought to gain for themselves a special recognized position [...] under the protection of Church and State. It is obvious that they looked upon themselves as a new type of Jew and had no intention of renouncing national Jewish identity.”³⁵ Finally, toward the end of 1759, when pressure from the Catholic authorities could no longer be averted, several thousand Jews of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth converted to Roman Catholicism in the city of Lwów. Even then, Frank wielded considerable bargaining power in his dealings with the Catholic Church – the prospect of a mass conversion of Jews was immensely attractive to Catholic and Polish authorities; Jewish converts were proof of the truth of the Roman Church, a value that bore a premium in the face of external threats from Russian Orthodoxy and internal threats from Protestant Polish dissidents; they would also fill significant labour vacuums – and accordingly Frank was able to stipulate conditions for their conversion. They obtained permission not to shave their beards and sidelocks, to continue to wear Jewish clothes, to retain Jewish names in addition to their new Christian names, to be allowed to marry only between themselves, to rest on Sunday but also on the Sabbath, to be permitted to continue to study the Zohar and other books of Kabbalah, and to not be compelled to eat pork.³⁶ Once converted, Frank sought to secure additional privileges in order to preserve this novel form of Jewish-Christian life. He successfully petitioned to establish a military garrison on autonomous territory and created a Sabbatian-Christian colony within Poland. The allure of an independent community on autonomous territory, separated from both Jewish and Catholic clerical rule, spurred the growth of the movement among Sabbatians throughout the Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire.

The popularity of Frankism peaked for a few brief months at the end of 1759 in the form of a semi-Jewish, semi-Christian, semi-redeemed existence in Warsaw. Thousands of Sabbatian Jews, spurred by Frank’s impressive accomplishments, joined the semi-autonomous colony. By the beginning of 1760, however, Christian authorities had discovered the insincerity of Frank’s conversion and banished him to Czestochowa, thereby cutting down the mass appeal of the movement drastically. In time, most of the converts assimilated into the Catholic majority. As Frank’s popular appeal waned, however, his fable waxed. He was imprisoned in the fortress of Jasna Góra (“Bright Mount”) in the precinct of the church housing the famous Black Madonna, protectress of Poland and the most auspicious

pilgrimage shrine in the region. For thirteen years of lax confinement – in 1762 his wife moved in with him, and soon after they were joined by the remnant of “the believers” – faithful Frankists partook of Catholic rites in full view of the impressive Marian cult involving hundreds of thousands of pilgrims attending the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. It was here that Frankism intensified the theological dimension of its social program. Inspired by the reverence accorded to the Maiden of the Bright Mount, Frank identified her with the *Shekhinah*, imprisoned, according to a famous Zoharic myth (*Zohar* 3:249a-b), as a doe encircled by a serpent on the Mount of Light (*tura de-nehora*), and now “hidden in the portrait” of the Black Madonna. The icon of Czestochowa became, for Frank, the very site of the *Shekhinah*, literally the divine indwelling.³⁷ But for Frank the divine feminine manifest in the iconic form of a Maiden surpassed the image depicted in a painting. Her full revelation was incarnated in flesh. The messianic role was invested in Frank’s daughter Eva, the Mother of All Life *redivivus*. It is the first time a woman was designated Messiah in Jewish history.

In 1756 the great sage Rabbi Jacob Emden, whose report on the Frankists’ public profanation at Lanckoronie we encountered a moment ago, was solicited by the Council of Four Lands, the administrative authority of Polish-Lithuanian Jewry, for his views on the legitimacy of petitioning Christian authorities to burn Frankists at the stake. The incident at Lanckoronie resulted in the deliverance of the Frankists into the hands of Polish authorities, who in turn passed the matter on to Catholic bishops. The rabbis sought to use the canons of Catholic law to put an end to Frankism, since according to canon law the Catholic Church had power to punish not only Christian heretics but also Jews who deviated from Mosaic Law and pagans who deviated from natural law. The Frankists tried to turn their vulnerability into an advantage by denouncing the rabbis to Church officials. They attacked the Talmud and confessed major tenets of Catholic faith.³⁸ In other words, while the Frankists sought to curry favour with Christian authorities by embracing a form of Sabbatian Christianity, Rabbi Jacob Emden composed a lengthy letter proposing that the Church, by its own lights, should burn these Jews for heresy.

Emden’s remarkable letter offers a sustained defense of Christianity in Jewish terms.³⁹ The main argument is that Jesus came not to abolish Jewish

law but to disseminate a version of it to the gentiles, the so-called Noahide laws, which Emden, like others after him, finds in chapter 15 of the *Acts of the Apostles*. The Apostle Paul, Emden argues, preached one way to the true God for gentiles while acknowledging the validity of rabbinic Law as the eternal way for the Jews. Ample use of the New Testament are adduced by the great rabbi, who notes that Jesus did not abandon the law and that many of his followers continued to keep it until some time after his death (Acts 10; Acts 15), or that Paul sat at the feet of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder (Acts 22:3) and insisted on circumcising Timothy, a believer in Christ who was nevertheless “the son of a Jewish woman” (Acts 16:1-3). Emden’s extraordinary letter is, I believe, the first Jewish defense of the *Sonderweg* view of the New Testament as preaching a “special path” of salvation for Christians that complements, without superseding, the Jewish way. “In truth,” he writes,

even according to the Gospels no Jew is permitted to abandon his Torah, for Paul said in his letter to the Galatians, in the following words, ‘I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, the Messiah will be of no value to you at all. And I declare to every man who is circumcised that he is obligated to obey all the commandments of the Torah (Gal. 5:2-3),’ and for this reason in 1 Corinthians he warned that the circumcised should not make himself uncircumcised and the uncircumcised should not be circumcised (7:18).⁴⁰

Emden goes to lengths to praise the good faith preached by Christianity which, if only Christians would live up to it, would bring great fortune and merit to Jews and Christians alike.

It is hardly surprising that Emden’s letter has been seized by contemporary exponents of the *Sonderweg* who have portrayed the furious rabbi as a “remarkably liberal” “orthodox champion of religious tolerance,” an “enlightened traditionalist interested in comparative religion”.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the real purpose of Emden’s legitimization of Christian and Jewish Orthodoxy is to delegitimize everything that might claim to occupy a middle position. We have here an early modern case of what Daniel Boyarin called the “partitioning of Judaeo-Christianity” by means of a common heresy, a process that in Boyarin’s view constitutes the respective traditions as two distinct religions.⁴² The hyphen of Judaeo-Christianity marks a common heresy which authorities on both sides agree upon. The Frankists feign “to say to the nations that they believe in the Christian Messiah, and to the Jews they say, ‘Behold, we are with you, friends.’”⁴³ Whereas, as Emden shows, even according to the Evangelists “no Jew is permitted to

abandon the Torah,” for the circumcised are obliged in the whole of the Torah, as Paul says in Galatians 5:3.⁴⁴ The Frankists blur boundaries that Christians themselves insist upon, de-partitioning Judaism and Christianity. They therefore constitute (or, if Boyarin is right, reconstitute) the heresy of the hyphen. Emden sets out to refortify the distinction between the two religions on firm theological and exegetical ground.

The Nazarene and his apostles did not come to abrogate the Torah, heaven forbid, for as it says in Mathew (ch. 10) that the Nazarene says ‘do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah; I have not come but to fulfill it. Even if heaven and earth will be abolished, nevertheless even one letter or jot from the Torah will not be abolished but will abide. Accordingly anyone who abolishes even one of the least of the commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whereas whoever observes the commandments and teaches others to do so will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.’⁴⁵

Emden’s orthodox ecumenicism is designed with the heresiological intent of denouncing, on pain of death, the heterodoxy of Judaeo-Christians like Frank and his followers. His argument for the dignity and independence of Judaism and Christianity seeks to confirm rigid practical and theological boundaries between their respective orthodoxies.⁴⁶ The title accorded to this seemingly ecumenical letter is “A Bridle for the Deceiver,” alluding to James 1:26, “If any think they are religious and yet do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.” What some have taken as a defense of religious toleration or pluralism is really the construction of heresy as a deviation from established clerical authority.

Was Scholem a Frankist? The question which left Benjamin so shabby for being unable to answer it can now be addressed. On the one hand, Scholem embraced Frank as a counter-historical revolutionary who sought to liberate the “anarchic promiscuity of all living beings” by contesting the religious authority of the Rabbis as much as that of Catholic Polish authorities:

What interests us here is the way in which the mystical experience of man’s contact with the primal source of life could find its expression in a symbol implying the negation of all authority. An illumination concerning Messianic freedom in redemption crystallizes around the symbol of Life. In his mystical experience the mystic encounters Life. This ‘Life,’ however, is not the harmonious life of all things in bond with God, a world ordered by divine law and submissive to His authority, but something very different. Utterly free,

fettered by no law or authority, this 'Life' never ceases to produce forms and to destroy what it has produced. It is the anarchic promiscuity of all living things. Into this bubbling cauldron, this continuum of destruction, the mystic plunges. To him it is the ultimate human experience. For Frank, anarchic destruction represented all the Luciferian radiance, all the positive tones and overtones, of the word 'Life'.⁴⁷

The *élan vital* of Frankism consisted of crossing back through the flaming swords of history to an edenic time of pure life. Frankism (if not Frank himself) here signals a breakthrough from history to the metaphysics of our most human experiences. In his last major reflection on the topic, his 1974 Eranos lecture on "Nihilism as a Religious Phenomenon," Scholem depicts Frank as a type of kabbalistic Che Guevara, combining "the freedom of the anarchic life as an ideal and the discipline of the soldiers as a path."⁴⁸ The Frankists are associated with anarchists who "struggle for individual freedom against tyrannical and hypocritical institutions and in favor of free association of communities helping each other."⁴⁹ Scholem evidently recognized his youthful call for "Revolution everywhere!" ordained by Frank's "mystical theory of revolution."⁵⁰ His revolutionary, anarchistic aspirations for Zion were anticipated by Frank, who likewise sought to cut the chord binding exile, affliction and spiritual alienation.

Yet on the other hand, Scholem called Frank "the most hideous and uncanny figure in the whole history of Jewish Messianism," "one of the most frightening phenomena in the whole of Jewish history [...] a truly corrupt and degenerate individual," combining the qualities of a "despotic ruler, popular prophet, and cunning imposture" or "an adventurer motivated by a blend of religious impulses and a lust for power."⁵¹ In a 1980 interview with Irving Howe he even concedes that there are salient similarities between the "ethics" of Frank and Stalin.⁵²

Even so, one should not assume that for Scholem degenerate qualities like those counted entirely against Frank. If Frank "boasted continually of his own lack of culture," Scholem too, in his youthful enthusiasm, proposed that "we must ram our heads against the wall [of exile in Europe], and that the wall, not our heads will split," for "a people can remain alive only to the degree that it knows nothing of culture. Decadence and culture are synonyms."⁵³ Like his friends in the Frankfurt School, Scholem thought civilization was inseparable from barbarism. Frank's capacity to "weave a complete myth of religious nihilism" was not the problem then, since Scholem tended to agree: "Our task is to leave European culture behind, in its repellent sense, and to create over there, where our hearts are, a true

nation free of lies and deception.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, despite Frank’s vulgarity he remained for Scholem “a figure of tremendous if satanic power,” “gifted at the creation of new images and symbols,” a “Jacobin” who “yearned for the overthrow of the existing regime.”⁵⁵ Scholem’s pronouncements of Frank’s degeneracy do not then amount to a denunciation. On the contrary, Frank’s “anarchist rebellion [...] within the world of Law” was, in many respects, just what Judaism needed.⁵⁶

Faced with the choice between Emden’s Orthodox ecumenicism and Frank’s heterodox syncretism, Ernst Bloch would no doubt have said that “the best thing about religion is that it makes for heretics.” Utopian truth could only be envisaged through a robustly theological imagination, he thought, but this vision outstrips all religious institutions, dogmas and identities. Even if, among Bloch’s prodigious erudition, we find no mention, as far as I know, of Frank or Frankism, we feel the messianic anarchism pulsing from the very outset. Martin Buber’s celebrated *Three Speeches on Judaism*, delivered in Prague – where, as it happens, Enlightenment Frankists flourished in the preceding generations – “reawakened the pride of being Jewish” in Bloch.⁵⁷ In this essay, called “Symbol: The Jews,” which Bloch included in the 1918 version of *Spirit of Utopia* but republished elsewhere in later years, it is precisely the messianic idea in Judaism that inspired pride.⁵⁸ As Michael Lowy writes, “Jewish messianism occupies a special place” in Bloch’s thought, even as this thought is “strangely ‘syncretistic’, simultaneously Jewish and Christian.”⁵⁹ Following the harrowing years of the First World War and the Revolution of 1917, Bloch hoped to find “the spirit of genuine utopia” concealed “behind the thin, crackling wall” of history. The “innermost name” of this spirit, he declared, was “Princess Sabbath.”⁶⁰ Like Jacob Frank, Bloch eventually concluded that the messianic promise of Judaism had passed into Christian hope for “the new aeon of heaven and earth [...] a new world, coming with power to establish itself in the ruins of the old.”⁶¹ And like Frank, he thought that this passing of Jewish messianism into Christian form would, in the age of God, abolish religion altogether. The messianic promise of Judaism would eventually crystallize, he argued, in the social form of emancipated atheism, for “the ideologies and illusions, the mythologies and theocracies of ecclesiastical Christianity should by now have run their

day,” leaving the human bond free from alienation, a “brotherliness for its own sake,” “almost *free from the need for a transcendent Father God*.”⁶² The seeds of Judaeo-Christianity would flourish in unrecognizable form, like the oak to the acorn. But the historical efficacy of the revolutionary imagination demanded concrete images of the Good, and this only religion could provide. “Atheism-with-concrete-Utopia is at one and the same time the annihilation of religion and the realization of its heretical hope, now set on human feet [...] These ideas belong to the frontiers of Messianism but, rightly understood, they imply the drive to surpass itself and achieve totality which is immanent in the work of human liberation.”⁶³

Scholem’s response to Bloch involves fits of appreciation curbed by a wag of the professorial finger at Bloch’s “heretical rhetoric” which identifies the telos of mystical monotheism with utopian atheism. Scholem should have seen, however, that Bloch’s mystical atheism is hardly so different from his own mystical nihilism, just as he and Bloch were united in their unhistorical disdain for historicism. Perhaps for this reason, though without saying as much, in the end Scholem confirms a secret alliance between his profaning of the Kabbalah and Bloch’s scholarship, for both seek “metaphysical approaches to reality, which at times broke through their fetters.”⁶⁴ What seems to have bothered Scholem most, however, is Bloch’s syncretistic approach to a form of Jewishness “that Bloch has invented [but] does not exist.”⁶⁵ This would be entirely understandable, were it not for the fact that it was Scholem himself who argued for an anti-essentialist view of Jewishness and Judaism, refusing the category of heresy for a syncretist such as Frank, and *for that reason* viewed secular Enlightenment and Reform as outgrowths of a determinately *Jewish* messianic antinomianism. This can be explained by Scholem’s acquiescence to “self-definition”. Sabbatians and Frankists *saw themselves* as involved in Jewish forms of antinomianism, whereas Bloch was not interested in the Jewish acorn of his utopian oak. Or was he?

Approximately half way through his colossal work, *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch pauses to acknowledge that there are groups which “appear on their own and peel themselves [...] out of the whole in order to seek and picture ahead what is *specifically* best for them.”⁶⁶ These groups cut across class distinctions to form independent collectives. Bloch specifies “young people, the female sex, and especially the Jews” who lay claim to forms of oppression that they endure by virtue of distinguishing characteristics that are not grounded in class. Bloch’s colour-blindness should be

noted as symptomatic of his time; racism cuts across liberal and Marxist emancipatory programs no less than ageism, sexism and anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, the point is that Bloch's utopian vision seeks to take into consideration particular historical injustices endured by specific groups by virtue of which they reasonably doubt the prospect of a global reform of society that does not first rectify their specific oppression, as fascism, capitalism or liberalism propose. Such groups therefore strive for their own "specialized utopias," they are "honest exceptions" to the desire for universal emancipation, having time and again found themselves resubjugated in successive new social orders.⁶⁷ Bloch argues that these "partial utopias" are ultimately unsatisfying, but regards them as indispensable stages in the broadest emancipatory program and vital corrections to the "totally bogus character" of the pseudo-reforms promised by the bourgeoisie.

"A time to act for God – violate his Torah!" This cultivated misreading of Ps. 116:126 expresses in nuce an awareness that in times of crisis (or perceived crises), religious fidelity can manifest as an heretical imperative to break with established norms precisely in the name of new theological exigencies. Maimonides, for example, thought it necessary, on account of the crises brought about by philosophical perplexity over the literal meaning of Scripture, to reveal the secrets of the Torah through tiny apertures in the text. A generation later, his student Samuel ibn Tibon decided the apertures needed to be widened, for the crisis brought about by the dissemination of Greek wisdom had itself widened.⁶⁸ An analogous heretical imperative to violate the Torah for the sake of God drives the epistemology of messianic antinomianism, even if the theological pressure exerted on the latter is radically different from the crisis that Aristotelianism precipitated among medieval Jewish thinkers.

Beginning with Sabbatai Zevi and intensifying in Frankism, Kabbalistic accounts of the bisexuality of God envisaged "a veritable gender revolution" in Jewish society, as a remarkable recent study by Ada Rapaport-Albert shows.⁶⁹ This should not be confused with the mistaken but still common view that the classical Kabbalah itself endorsed such a revolution. On the contrary, theological bisexuality in the Kabbalah invariably reinforced gender inequality and indeed placed it on firmer dogmatic footing. Elliot Wolfson has shown how the notional inclusion of the feminine in Kabbala-

listic symbolism in fact serves an exclusively masculinized conception of divine desire and reality, and Talya Fishman confirmed the conservative halakhic implications of this theological development.⁷⁰ But if the Kabbalistic dogma of divine bisexuality was for the most part used to reinforce gender inequality and exclusion, in messianic utopian circles it motivated an egalitarian agenda driven by these very theological considerations. Since God was conceived as intrinsically female, violation of the law for God's sake amounted to a program for the emancipation of women from the theologically false determinations of existing law and custom. Frank's groundbreaking contribution to the development of the symbolism of the Shekhina during his confinement in the monastery of Jasna Góra played a decisive role in redeploying the gendered theosophy of the Kabbalah to egalitarian ends. Moreover, the heretical egalitarian imperative should not be understood as grounded merely on late, degenerate and implausible theological beliefs about God's bisexual nature. Compared to the austere metaphysical theology of Maimonideanism, which develops out of medieval neo-Aristotelianism, the theology of divine bisexuality can trace its roots to biblical account of the dual gendered nature of the divine image of Adam, of Adonai and his Ashera, and of El Shaddai, the God who issues "blessings of breasts [*shadayim*] and womb [*rehem*]" (Gen. 49:25).⁷¹

Of course it would be exorbitantly anachronistic to call Jacob Frank a feminist. Jacob Frank was a feminist. Messianic epistemology demands we accede to this distorted anachronism. The fable of Frankism as feminism necessitates verification. But if a full verification remains for a time to come, fragments lie behind us. Like their contemporaries, Bektashi Sufis of the Ottoman empire and Radical Reformers in Europe, Sabbatians and Frankists viewed some women as especially endowed with the freely flowing spirit of God, fulfilling the words of the prophet Joel (2:28), "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."⁷² The heresies of Sabbatianism and Frankism in no small part involved a deviation from the monogendered conception of God and religion adopted by preceding and contemporary Kabbalists. For the first time in Jewish history, women's theomorphic agency is granted a social role with redemptive purpose. Animated by Zoharic symbolism of the Shekhina, Frank proposed that the divine female presence, dwelling in the Black Madonna, was no longer trampled and subjugated under exile but rising into her true power and glory. He accordingly instituted rites in which men and women were carefully orchestrated in equal measure and proportion.

Even if we ascribe little emancipatory value to the specific practices entertained by the Frankists, one can hardly doubt that female sexuality was a crucial component of its vision of the breaking in of the messianic age. Frank's "feminism" may be a pure fable, but this does not imply that it is bereft of messianic value that calls for verification. This is exactly what happened, by "believers" (*ma'aminim*) who abandoned the movement after Frank died in 1791. Disappointed with the charismatic leader's uncharismatic heirs, many *ma'aminim* carried the shattered remains of their Jewish messianic faith into the Age of Reason. Scholem often argued for a "dialectical view of Jewish history" according to which the rationalist movements of Reform and Enlightenment were precipitated out of the fog of messianic antinomianism.⁷³ "In the minds of those who took part in this revolutionary destruction of old values a special susceptibility to new ideas inevitably came to exist."⁷⁴ In his view, the Sabbatian and Frankist heresies played a crucial role, directly resulting from their destructive traditionalism, in the creation of "a new type of Jew". "Even while still 'believers' – in fact, precisely because they were still 'believers' – they had been drawing closer to the spirit of the Haskalah all along, so that when the flame of their faith finally flickered out they soon reappeared as leaders of Reform Judaism, secular intellectuals, or simply complete and indifferent skeptics."⁷⁵

A remarkable example is the case of Arie Löw Enoch Hönig Edler von Hönigsberg, the grandson of the first Hungarian Jew to be ennobled and the son-in-law of Jonas Wehle, mystic and leader of the Frankists of Prague. Writing between 1800 and 1805, von Hönigsberg fuses the gender revolution at work in Jewish messianic antinomianism with the values of Haskalah and Romanticism. His pamphlet, titled "Something for the female sex [*weibliche Geschlecht*], who hope for what God will do, and, more specifically, what concerns His sacred help!" opens with a citation from Jeremiah (31:22): "How long will you veil and hide yourself, O you suffering daughter? God has created something new in the world: the female shall encompass the male."⁷⁶ Using extensive citations and allusions to biblical, rabbinic, Kabbalistic and Frankist literature, von Hönigsberg explains that this new creation of which Jeremiah prophesied is the revealing of the restorative powers of women's sensuality [*Reizbarkeit der Frau*], a common Romantic trope for depicting women. In an unpublished late lecture entitled "Frankism and Enlightenment," Scholem wondered if the Jewish author had read "the earliest writings of an anarchist character"

such as Mary Wollstencraft, whose seminal *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792, but concluded that he shows “no use of this source, but proceeds entirely within a Jewish and Frankist framework and terminology.”⁷⁷ Nevertheless, von Höningsberg’s advocating for the emancipation of female sexuality from subjugation to the husband’s will and the shackles of law, such as those concerning modesty and divorce, expresses similar egalitarian aspirations. Scholem calls it “an extraordinary document in the history of women’s ‘liberation’,” which radicalizes Sabbatai Zevi’s proclamation, in the synagogue of Ismir in December 1665, of “the forthcoming of liberation of women from masculine domination and its burdens and sufferings.”⁷⁸ Von Hönigsberg emphasises the restoration of the bisexuality of the holy spirit through the restitution of female sexual desire which, he is convinced, has been suppressed and stigmatized by patriarchal law: “so long as the female character is not open [...] to exhibit outwardly her desire for a man, all true male powers and true life remain hidden.”⁷⁹ Although admittedly ‘heteronormative’ and ‘essentialist,’ as one says today, there is no doubt that the author aims for the emancipation of female sexuality as an autonomous socio-theological force. In this he breaks decisively from the Kabbalistic authors from whom he draws so extensively, as of course from contemporary halakhah and custom, which he vociferously criticises. Moreover, von Hönigsberg makes it clear that, like Jacob Frank, he regards Christianity as a necessary passage on the road to the emancipation of women’s desire. Although he does not link Jeremiah’s announcement that something new has been created on earth to Paul’s proclamation of the “new creation” in Christ (Gal. 6:15, 2 Cor. 5:17), as he might have done, he regards women’s status in the Christian lands of central Europe as something which Judaism and Islam should embrace: “only in Edom can one exalt her, since, behold, woman is confined everywhere; especially in the Asiatic and Turkish lands she is a slave. How, then, can one exalt her there (and how is it possible there to deliver the world from the curse)? [...] the H[oly] Virgin, is the head of the world, the head of all powers [as Frank, drawing on Kabbalistic motifs, taught]. There, in Turkey, the head [of a woman] is concealed, and amongst the Jews one may not go about frivolously, but here, in Edom, one goes about bareheaded.”⁸⁰

Von Hönigsberg’s petition for the liberation of female sexuality from the shackles of Jewish law is undoubtedly motivated by theological dogma and therefore provides a clear case of theology as heresy. It is the theological significance of the female body, illuminated by Frankism and Enlightenment,

that inspires his appeal, which is construed as a restoration of sexuality to its edenic condition, prior to the fall into religion and law. A similar view of theology as heresy emerges in the thought of Ernst Bloch, who likewise applies it to the “struggle for the new woman”. Like the Frankist from Prague, Bloch begins with a characterization of the oppression of women through confinement to a subordinate, domestic role: “Woman lies at the bottom, she has long been trained to do so. She is always available, always serviceable, she is the weaker sex and tied to the home. Serving and the obligation to please are related in female life, since pleasing also makes for servitude.”⁸¹ Von Höningsberg had made the same observations about the embitterment of woman’s tenderness by the “strenuous and menial labours in the first years of childhood” and the “domestic chores which numb her sensations and to which she is confined.” “Golden shackles are still shackles,” he argued, because women’s agency remains excluded from the “perfection” (*shelemuth*) that is *theologically* revealed.⁸² Bloch too noted how conceptual developments call for novel forms of emancipation, for “happy brooding on the nest was no longer the goal” for most women.⁸³ Like the Frankist who preceded him by 150 years, Bloch insisted that the temporalization of utopia does not overcome sexual difference but restores its glory. “Sexual difference disappears so little that female nature can only become clear in socialism. Enough of it remains in any case to refurbish it in its content, to have it as Eve in search of her form.” Nothing could express the Frankist sentiments of von Höningsberg as pithily as “Eve in search of her form.” The theological impulse of feminism involves an “exodus,” as Bloch liked to call the work of emancipation, from enslavement to a masculine image of God and the regulation of female sexuality by men. And in this respect, on the theological, political and sexual front, Jewish feminists and critical theorists have been working in the wake of the “heretical imperative” which Frank first risked. Even if Bloch did not know it, his vision of “the archaic utopia of woman as a ruler” in which female sexuality is to be “recollected in non-capitalist terms and further determined in social utopian terms,” introducing “a past and never realized island of the great mother into the patriarchy” is as much Frankist as it is Bachofenian. Bloch, like Frank, or like Scholem’s Frank and real Frankists like von Höningsberg, regarded a restored feminine religiosity as key to the utopian discovery of the “anarchic promiscuity of all living things”.

The final form that Frankism presents to us in the guise of a concrete historical fable presaging Frankfurtism involves the establishment of an autonomous territorial Jewish colony, called Edom, in the heart of Poland. The boldness of this accomplishment is as impressive as it was inevitably fleeting, destined more for utopian fidelities and verifications than the actualization of a third Jewish commonwealth. Maciejko reiterates Scholem's view of the emancipatory appeal of this "semi-independent Sabbatian colony in the Diaspora" which "rejected the idea of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem" while cultivating territorial and economic liberties for disenfranchised Jews:

The Frankists originated from mainly from the lowest stratum of Jewish society; they were people from villages and small towns, the poorest of the poor, 'Jewish *Lumpenproletariat*,' whose only dream was the liberation from the oppressive power of the rabbinate [... and] like any true proletariat, they had nothing to lose but their chains: despite the odium attached to it within the Jewish community, conversion to Catholicism promised social advancement, and the 'territorialist program' offered a special bonus and carried a promise of genuine emancipation [...]. It is indeed likely that many of those who converted had felt oppressed by the Jewish oligarchic establishment and that promised of a better life and permanent settlement would hold special appeal for them.⁸⁴

In addition to the astute political activism that brought this semi-autonomous colony into being and the material liberties it produced and promised, a crucial role was played by theological reasoning. The theological transvaluation of the symbol of Edom was a precondition for its plausibility among the Jewish masses. The vision of territorial ownership, military autonomy and materialist emancipation was theologically driven by Sabbatian traditions depicting the Jewish colony stationed in Edom, the land of Esau, Jacob's brother, and thus the place of rapprochement with Christianity, before the final redemption. The symbol of Edom, exegetically generated, provided the benefits of leaving the old rabbinic world while preserving the erotic and ethnic bonds of Jewishness in a semi-autonomous territory among their traditional Euro-Christian neighbours. A sensible idea if ever there was one, at least compared to the displacements that soon enough overwhelmed the Jewish and Palestinian people. Scholem was evidently sympathetic to what he called Frank's "particularly impressive ... territorialist program," which, "besides revealing his lust for power ... expressed in a bizarre yet unmistakable manner the desire of his followers for a reconstruction of Jewish national and even economic existence; ... for

all the negativism of his teachings, they nonetheless contained a genuine creed of life.”⁸⁵

And yet Scholem’s depiction of Frankism is characteristically ambivalent. If Frank was “satanic” and “bizarre,” the “territorialist” ambitions of “his followers” expressed a “genuine creed of life.” It is difficult *not* to see Scholem as counting himself among such “followers,” or at least his anarchist vision of Zionism as partaking in this Frankist creed of life. One supposes Scholem doubted, no doubt rightly, the capacity of “Edom” to fire the imagination of twentieth-century Jews. Perhaps in the end this is all that separates him from Benjamin and Bloch. Benjamin Lazier suggests that “whatever his discomfort with Frank, Scholem commended his followers and all the radical Sabbatians for their disdainful rejection of exile.”⁸⁶ The difficulty with this view is that neither Frank nor his followers rejected exile. Earlier Sabbatians did, but the Frankist did not envisage redemption of the Jews as involving an ingathering of the exiles and return to the ancestral land. If Sabbatai, in Scholem’s view, instituted “a new type of Jew [...] for whom the world of exile and Diaspora Judaism was partly or wholly abolished,” Frank went even beyond the pale of antinomian Zionism.⁸⁷ His “territorialist program” did not involve a return of the exiles *to Zion* but “a reconstruction of Jewish national and even economic existence” *in Poland*.⁸⁸ This marks one of the most startling and imaginative of Frank’s heresies, indeed one that even Scholem could not endorse, despite his rejection of the very category of “heresy,” which he surrounds with scare-quotes so as to alert us to its deceptive allure.⁸⁹ The crux of Scholem’s residual discomfort with Frankism has nothing to do with Frank’s revolutionary, destructive religious anarchism but with his separation of redemption from return to *Zion*. It was never the *religious heresies* of messianic antinomianism that troubled Scholem as much as their *political heresies*. These include the Frankists’ indifference or even opposition to the role of *Zion* in the messianic scheme of things, their syncretistic or symbiotic sociological approach to relations with European Christians, and their privileging of the struggle for economic liberation over religious identity.

Ernst Bloch, for this part, entertains the “special utopia” of *Zion* in the very terms Scholem rejected. *The Principle of Hope* contains a chapter on “Old New land, programme of Zionism,” which elaborates on the messianic vision of Judaism he tentatively advanced in the 1918 chapter of *Spirit of Utopia* on “the symbol of the Jew”.⁹⁰ His most determinately *Jewish*

articulation of the messianic utopia of Marxism appears in a discussion of the utopian significance of Zionism. In this respect he is close to the young Scholem, and indeed they jointly deny that the utopian Zionism deserving of Jewish fidelity is that proposed by Herzl. But unlike Scholem, Bloch viewed the Zionism of Moses Hess as deserving the fidelity of the modern Jewish messianist. Hess was “one of the first to apply Judaism, as he knew it from the works of the prophets, to the cause of the revolutionary proletariat.” His Zionism activated the “committed love,” the “revolutionary love which the prophets preached.” It was just this “social radicalism of the prophets” which Herzl abandoned when he interpreted the Dreyfus affair not as an abuse of the citizen but as an indictment of the Gentiles. In place of a genuine utopia, Herzl advocated for “a utopia of the immediately available, with a capitalist-democratic background” suited to “the specific idealism of the Jewish businessman.” Later in the essay, Bloch shows how readily Herzl’s vision became “a card in the game of British imperialism.” Herzl’s Zionism envisaged a “bourgeois land of progress,” a promised land where Jews could carry their fleshpots into Palestine on their exodus from the Gentiles, setting up their own tent, beneath their own vine, “at home as before, so to speak, in Europe, but now by oneself.” It was an anti-prophetic vision, bearing “few Jewish elements, almost none, which would have differed from the business of western civilization other than through the admittedly invaluable secularity with which this business was to be continued.” In political Zionism, Bloch observes, “pride, not a sense of mission was the substance of Jewish national consciousness,” for its true mission, the prophetic-messianic mission, was substituted for a capitalist utopia.

Such, in the end, is also the problem with Scholem’s messianism. For if Scholem supported the bi-national proposal of Brit Shalom, this was because he was preoccupied more with the cultural problem of Judaism than with political or emancipatory questions.⁹¹ He firmly rejected Revisionist Zionism, which he regarded as a secularized form of nationalism. But he also rejected socialist Zionism, which he thought was also messianic in its utopian ambition (a “specialized utopia”, to use Bloch’s phrase). His espousal of Ahad Ha’am’s cultural Zionism is entirely consistent with his negation of the historical significance of messianism. That was the enduring lesson he learned from Sabbatianism: “for the first time a contradiction appeared between the two levels of the drama of redemption, that of the subjective experience of the individual on the one hand, and that of the

objective historical facts on the other [...]. One had to choose: either one heard the voice of God in the decree of history, or else one heard it in the newly revealed reality within.”⁹² Scholem’s cultural Zionism defaults to the choice of “inward certainty”. But as we saw, this resort to the inwardness of redemption amounts to a form of religious and political nihilism. The critique that Bloch and Benjamin might have waged is even more biting than the one Rosenzweig leveled. For if capitalism really has “evangelized to every corner of the earth,” as Benjamin said, then constricting redemption to “inward experience,” as Scholem proposed, is to capitulate to “capitalism as religion”. Scholem’s cultural Zionism, they might have said, is an anarchic free-loader riding on the back of political Zionism; if, by virtue of its negation of the historicity of messianism, Scholem’s religious anarchism in fact amounts to religious nihilism, as Rosenzweig argued, then it is also politically nihilistic. Messianism cannot be privatized. Bloch laments the preference given to political Zionism over the “very old, frequently submerged faith” of “the old Messianism”. Admittedly, without political Zionism “there would not be any professors of the cabbala there [in Israel-Palestine], but cabbalists,” he writes, in what can only be a veiled snub of Scholem. But such is the fate of messianism under the reign of capital, if the utopian vision of history is entirely negated. “Zionism flows out into socialism, or it does not flow out at all.” Had Frankism succeeded – but never, never could that have happened – it might have produced a genuinely liberating profanation of Judaism, and not the furiously secularized nationalist incarnation we currently enjoy.

Unless among invisible, undercover believers, Frankism did succeed. Late in life Max Horkheimer described Frankfurtism as “Judaism undercover,” and if so this can only be the Judaism which Jacob Frank loosed upon the world, a fleeting fable of the metaphysics of our most human experiences that continues to call for messianic verification. Under such cover, Benjamin’s hunchbacked dwarf is concealed beneath the table on which the materialist history of the world is played out. His name is Jacob Frank – the famous portrait of him even looks like a puppet in Turkish attire – the hunchbacked dwarf of Jewish messianic theology who must be kept out of sight.

Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin noted that Scholem “dismissed Benjamin’s Marxism as merely a disguise for the theological dimension of his thought

and argued that Benjamin was in essence a Jewish *heretikon* like the early modern messianic figures Scholem himself examined in some of his seminal studies and essays.⁹³ The same could be said about Scholem's attitude to Bloch, except that Scholem was not often as generous with Bloch as he was with Benjamin. This is perhaps because Bloch, more so than Benjamin, took "the messianic idea in Judaism" with utter political seriousness. Like Benjamin, but even more like Jacob Frank, he was "not afraid to push to the very end, to take the final step into the abyss," to exodus from patriarchy to the *Mutterrecht*, the utopia of a Zion Bloch envisaged "everywhere" that exploitation is destroyed and alienation comes to an end, be it in Palestine, Israel or Edom.⁹⁴ Frank, said Scholem, was "a man who was not afraid to push on to the very end, to take the final step into the abyss, to drain the cup of desolation and destruction to the lees until the last bit of holiness had been made into a mockery."⁹⁵ It is in similar terms that he described Bloch, as "a striking phenomenon [...] a fearless pioneer who, without fear of the baroque, stormed into the realm of the apocalypse," an "anarchist-mystic" for whom "the divine image of man shone" luminously, despite the many "distortions" he made of historical phenomena.⁹⁶

Scholem was not a Frankist; he was a Sabbatian driven from the disappointments of history to the nihilism of a purely inward faith. The true Frankists, the last of the great "believers," were in Frankfurt. Arie von Hönigsberg explains the true significance of Frankist faith in his "Frankist Letter on the History of the Faith," another remarkable document composed by the same author of the Kabbalistic pamphlet calling for the emancipation of female sexuality shortly after the year 1800.⁹⁷ It opens with an account of God's gifting Israel with the Law of Life – "free from death and foreign domination and suffering and tribulation" – which, through the cumulative events of history, degenerates into an ever more ubiquitous Law of domination, suffering and alienation. Strikingly Kafkaesque – and composed in Prague too – it describes the detour (*Umweg*) the Torah takes through history as a series of ever-more disastrous disappointments, through Egypt and exile all the way to the shameful conversion of Sabbatai and the outrageous acts of Jacob and Eva Frank. Nevertheless, faced with the disillusionments of history, true believers do not resort to inwardness, for all its catastrophes are but tests of faith. Scholem marveled at this "Frankist Letter on the History of the Faith," but did not note the remarkable way that its messianic epistemology accords quite precisely with that expounded

in Frankfurt. In his lecture on “Frankism and Enlightenment” he describes the letter as a “most extraordinary document, tending to show that it is the nature of true faith to be disappointed or refuted by historical experience. ‘What is visible can never be the object of true faith,’ [writes von Hönigsberg] and tends to prove its futility. The whole history of Judaism and the several messianic expectations were seen by the writer as a continuous test whether Israel could withstand the temptations and failures of the outward, external history.”⁹⁸ Could there be a better description of Ernst Bloch’s “principle of hope”? Is not Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History a Frankist in exactly the way that von Hönigsberg describes Jewish history? Like the Frankist *ma’aminim* (“believers”), his face is turned toward the continuous catastrophe of the past – the ruin of history, successive messianic charlatans – while his wings are caught in a storm blowing from Paradise that drives him irresistibly into the future. If the storm is what we mistake for progress, as Benjamin said, Paradise is what we make of messianic hope. And though this is not a Paradise that can be actualized in history, its invisibility is nevertheless not experienced inwardly, as Scholem thought, but in the fractures of social history where the metaphysics of our most humane experiences are glimpsed. To believe in the face of what Scholem called “the temptations and failures of the outward, external history” – this is the faith of Frankism and Frankfurtism. Frank’s *ma’animim* had their *bnei ma’aminim* in Frankfurt.

Notes

- 1 Walter Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion,” in *Selected Writings. Volume 1, 1913-1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 288–90.
- 2 The most recent analysis of this, generating much deserved attention, is Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
- 3 Phillip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety* (London: Routledge, 2002).
- 4 Giorgio Agamben, “In Praise of Profanation,” in *Profanations* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2007), 77.
- 5 Agamben elaborates on the critical dimension of this project in *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).
- 6 Gretel Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *Correspondence 1930-1940*, eds. Henri Lonitz and Christoph Gödde, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008),

- 224; my thanks to Andrew Benjamin for this reference. Felizitas is Gretel Karplus, a friend of Benjamin, Ernst Bloch and Herbert Marcuse from the 1920's, who married Theodor Adorno in September 1937.
- 7 Citations in this paragraph are all from Gershom Scholem, "A Candid Letter About My True Intentions in Studying Kabbalah (1937)," in *On the Possibility of a Jewish Mysticism in Our Time and Other Essays*, ed. Avraham Shapira, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 3–5.
 - 8 Gershom Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth: The Diaries of Gershom Scholem: 1913–1919*, ed. and trans. Anthony David Skinner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 32.
 - 9 The latter term was famously coined by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (University of Washington Press, 1982).
 - 10 For an overview and assessment of some recent work in the field see Michael Fagenblat, "Liturgy, Sovereignty, or Idolatry: On Recent Work in Political Theology," in *Political Theology* 15: 3 (May, 2014), 270–278.
 - 11 Gershom Scholem, "Franz Rosenzweig and His Book *The Star of Redemption*," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time*, 205
 - 12 Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, 47f.
 - 13 David Biale, "Gershom Scholem on nihilism and anarchism," in *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* (23 July 2014), 1–11, at 9.
 - 14 Pawel Maciejko, "Gershom Scholem's Dialectic of Jewish History," in *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3:2 (2007), 207–220, at 217. Maciejko is here summarizing Hans-Joachim Schoep's view of Scholem, but it is clear that he too, like Franz Rosenzweig, regards Scholem as a nihilist.
 - 15 Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). I am indebted to Jacobson, Maciejko and Biale, for their illuminating work (see previous notes and also Biale's pioneering *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Conuter-History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), as too Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2008).
 - 16 *Lamentations of Youth*, respectively, 93 (Jan. 4, 1916), 49 (Jan. 27, 1915).
 - 17 Scholem, "Redemption Through Sin [1937]," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and other essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 88. In 1969 Scholem noted: "Throughout my life I was tossed hither and yon by expectations and disappointments; expectations from the Jewish people in general and, in particular, from us who were at work in the land of Israel. I have come to know many phases of this process, from highest expectation to deepest disappointment, indeed despair; and I have gone through them myself"; "Israel and Diaspora," in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012), 244.
 - 18 Maciejko, "Gershom Scholem's Dialectic of Jewish History," 216f.
 - 19 Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1935), 399; cited by Maciejko, "Gershom Scholem's Dialectic of Jewish History," 216f.
 - 20 Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Universitätsbibliothek, 2002), 204; *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 183.

- 21 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 204/183; trans. slightly mod.
- 22 Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, 20.
- 23 Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, 22.
- 24 On this see Scholem, "Reflections on the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time (1963)," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time and Other Essays*, 6–19.
- 25 Robert Gibbs explores several ways of construing messianic epistemology by modern Jewish thinkers; see his interesting papers, "Lines, Circles, Points: Messianic Epistemology in Cohen, Rosenzweig and Benjamin," in *Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, eds. Peter Schäfer and Mark Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 365–384; idem, "Messianic Epistemology" in *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments*, eds. Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart (New York: Routledge, 2005), 119–129. Gibbs does not discuss Scholem, but I think that for Scholem, as for Benjamin, messianism comes as "points" that interrupt history, not as a line of progress (Cohen) or a circle of redemptive existence in history (Rosenzweig).
- 26 See Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986), Volume One, Part Two.
- 27 Scholem, "A Candid Letter," in *On the Possibility*, 4. Scholem is here referring broadly to the Kabbalah and does not specifically mention Sabbatianism and Frankism; but clearly he held this view about them too.
- 28 Alian Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 6. The indicative comparison between Frank and Paul is not merely formal, as Jacob Taubes noted in "The Price of Messianism," in his *From Cult to Culture: Fragments toward a Critique of Historical Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3–9.
- 29 Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetics of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 49, cited by Anson Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism," in *New German Critique* 34 (Winter 1985), 101.
- 30 Theodor W. Adorno, *Mimima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 247.
- 31 Cited by Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 23; see *passim* 21–28. In addition to Scholem, I have relied on Maciejko's superb account throughout this section.
- 32 Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Dorset Press, 1974), 293f.
- 33 On the evolution of the identification of Esau as Christianity see Gerson D. Cohen, „Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought,“ in idem, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 243–269, and for a particularly relevant and insightful elucidation of the Kabbalistic extension and Sabbatian transvaluation of this symbol, which forms the immediate exegetical background to Frank's view, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Othering the Other: Eschatological Effacing of Ontic Boundaries," in his *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 2.
- 34 Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 295.
- 35 Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 296.

- 36 Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*, 128–56; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 298 and *passim*.
- 37 Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*, 167–79.
- 38 Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*, 29.
- 39 The title of recent book illustrates the temptation of Emden’s ecumenical approach to heresy: *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, eds. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, David Novak, Michael Signer and David Sandmel (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000). Emden’s letter, published once in 1757 and again in a different version in 1758, has been published with annotations and introduction by Lior Gottlieb, “‘A Bridle for the Deceiver’ by Rabbi Jacob Emden: First and Second Editions” [Hebrew], in *In the Ways of Peace: Explorations in Jewish Studies for Shalom Rosenberg*, ed. Benjamin Ish Shalom (Jerusalem: Beit Morashah, 2003), 295–321; my thanks to Jay Pomrenze for providing me with this critical edition, which I have used for my translations. A partial translation is available at <http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/falk1a.html>.
- 40 Lior Gottlieb, “‘A Bridle for the Deceiver’ by Rabbi Jacob Emden,” 303; translating from Emden’s slightly inaccurate citation of Galatians.
- 41 Respectively, Gilbert S. Rosenthal, “Salvation Jewish Style,” in *Dialogue and Terror: Judaism, Christianity and Islam after 9/11*, ed. Alan I. Berger (Eugen, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 30; Blu Greenberg, “Rabbi Jacob Emden: The Views of an Enlightened Traditionalist on Christianity,” in *Judaism 27:3* (1978), 351–363; cf. Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*, 59–61. For a thorough discussion that places this letter in the context of Emden’s overall perspective on Christianity see Jacob J. Schacter, “Rabbi Jacob Emden, Sabbatianism, and Frankism: Attitudes toward Christianity in the Eighteenth Century,” in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations*, eds. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 359–396.
- 42 Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
- 43 Gottlieb, “‘A Bridle for the Deceiver’ by Rabbi Jacob Emden,” 302.
- 44 Gottlieb, “‘A Bridle for the Deceiver’ by Rabbi Jacob Emden,” 303.
- 45 Gottlieb, “‘A Bridle for the Deceiver’ by Rabbi Jacob Emden,” 303; Emden is of course not quoting from the tenth chapter of Mathew but from Mat. 5:17-19; here too there are slight misquotations that I have followed.
- 46 Emden is among the first and most ardent champions of Orthodox Judaism.
- 47 Scholem, “Religious Authority and Mysticism,” in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Richard Manheim (New York: Schocken, 1969), 28.
- 48 Scholem, “Der Nihilismus als religiöses Phänomen,” in *Eranos Jahrbuch 43* (1974), 43; rather than Che Guavara, Scholem more likely has Jacobins in mind, since he marvels at Frank’s appearance in Eastern Europe, “a generation before the French Revolution” (43).
- 49 Scholem, “Der Nihilismus als religiöses Phänomen,” 3.
- 50 Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, 48; “Redemption through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 138. Benjamin Lazier makes a similar observation in *God Interrupted*, 178.
- 51 Scholem, respectively, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 308; “Redemption Through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 127; *Kabbalah*, 295, 308.
- 52 Irving Howe interviews Gershom Scholem: “The only thing in my life I never doubted is the existence of God,” in *Present Tense 8:1* (1980), 53–57.

- 53 Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, 41.
- 54 Scholem, respectively, “Redemption Through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 128; *Lamentations of Youth*, 41.
- 55 Scholem, “Redemption Through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 127f., 140.
- 56 Scholem, *Major Trends*, 318.
- 57 Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie* (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1918), 319. The suggestion that Buber ignited Bloch’s pride comes from Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 89f.
- 58 The chapter on “The Jew” and its place in Bloch’s “Jewishness without Judaism” is discussed by Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism”.
- 59 Michael Löwy, “Ernst Bloch’s *Prinzip Hoffnung* and Hans Jonas’s *Prinzip Verantwortung*,” in *The Legacy of Hans Jonas: Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life*, eds. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Christian Wiese (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 150.
- 60 Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1921), 296.
- 61 Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, trans. J. T. Swann (New York: Verso, 2009), 120.
- 62 Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity*, 256, 126, 215.
- 63 Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity*, 225.
- 64 Scholem, “Does God Dwell in the Heart of an Atheist?” (1975), in *On the Very Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time*, 222.
- 65 Scholem, letter to Walter Benjamin, 5 February 1920, in Scholem, *The Story of a Friendship*, 88, cited by Rabinbach, 113.
- 66 Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 2, 583.
- 67 Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 2, 584.
- 68 James T. Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes: The Book of the Soul of Man* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 178–182; Carlos Fraenkel, “Beyond the Faithful Disciple: Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s Criticism of Maimonides,” in *Maimonides After 800 Years: Essays on Maimonides and his Influence*, ed. Jay Michael Harris (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 33–63.
- 69 Ada Rapaport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi: 1666-1816*, trans. Deborah Greniman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011), 13. The ensuing summary relies on Rapaport-Albert’s book.
- 70 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany: SUNY, 1995) and idem, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), especially chapter 2; Talya Fishman, “A Kabbalistic Perspective on Gender-Specific Commandments: On the Interplay of Symbols and Society,” in *AJS Review* 17:2 (1992), 199–245.
- 71 For an analysis see (not fortuitously) David Biale, “The God with Breasts: El Shaddai in the Bible,” in *History of Religions* 21:3 (1982), 240–256. See also Israel Knohl, *The Bible’s Genetic Code* [Hebrew] (Or Yehuda: Kinneret, 2008), 92–101, 132–51; Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992). Knohl, 138f.,

proposes that El Shaddai, who appears prominently in Genesis, combines the divine male (*el*) and the divine female (*shaddai*) and was de-feminized in a later “Mosaic” period. For a compatible contemporary account of egalitarianism as a heretical imperative see Shaul Magid, “Is Egalitarianism Heresy? Rethinking Gender on the Margins of Judaism,” in *NASHIM: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues* (2004), 189–229. The compatibility consists of Magid’s defense of egalitarianism as a theological heretical imperative on the basis of its status as a modern dogma (in the non-pejorative sense), just like Aristotelianism was for Maimonides and Ibn Tibon. This makes egalitarianism, like neo-Aristotelian anti-anthropomorphism, a hypernormian rather than an antinomian exigency.

- 72 Rapaport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi*, chs 1 and 2.
- 73 Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676*, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowski (London: Routledge, 1973), x.
- 74 Gershom Scholem, “Redemption through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and other essays on Jewish spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 126.
- 75 “Redemption through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 140. This is of course analogous to the role of Christian sectarians in Europe generally. See also *Major Trends*, 299–304, 319–20; *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 137, 140f. For a discussion of this see Ada Rapaport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi: 1666-1816*, trans. Deborah Greniman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011), 299–323.
- 76 The pamphlet was composed in Judaeo-German in Hebrew script. For an annotated translation and valuable introduction, see Rapaport-Albert, *Messianic Women*, 297–345.
- 77 Scholem, “Frankism and Enlightenment,” 8a-8b. Rapaport-Albert discusses Scholem’s unpublished letter in *Messianic Women* 304ff.; my citations and discussion is based on the lecture itself, “Frankism and Enlightenment,” Gerschom Scholem Archive 4^o 1599/156, Jewish and National Library, Jerusalem.
- 78 Scholem, “Frankism and Enlightenment,” 8b.
- 79 “Something for the female sex,” in Rapaport-Albert, *Messianic Women*, 334.
- 80 “Something for the female sex,” in Rapaport-Albert, *Messianic Women*, 335. In “Frankism and Enlightenment,” Scholem glosses: “The writer sees a progression from the seclusion under which women are held in Islam to their state in the religion of *Edom*, Christianity, where the cult of the virgin, even though in a distorted [sic.] way, anticipates the true doctrine of the future revelation of the Frankist Virgin, which is known among the *ma’aminim* [“believers”]. This doctrine is alluded to in the famous chapter 31 of Proverbs which speaks of the woman of valor (opposed by the Proverbs to the whoring women; the adulteress) and the whole book of Esther proves that in biblical time the true redemptive nature of womanhood [sic.] could not yet being revealed, but now the Virgin will be the entry to God and the divine treasures, and the secrets regarding her are one of the main tenets of Frankist revelation, which is called the Holy Gnosis [*da’at*] of Edom. With the eschatological revelation of the Virgin who will reign supreme and show the way to God, the suppression of women, the period of sexual degradation will be over. That the standard bearer of the coming messianic utopia will be a woman, was one of the main new doctrines propagated in the secret

- sayings of Jacob Frank. What in biblical time was considered exceptional [sic.], like Tamar's behavior towards Juda or Ruth's behaviour with Boaz – episodes which were much on the minds of the kabbalists because of their obvious break with conventional morals – all this will now in the utopian state of perfection become “natural” and the greatest “pleasure” (9a-9b). Frank himself had made a similar point in *The Words of the Lord*, ed., trans. and ann. Harris Lenowitz (n.p., 2004, at <https://archive.org/stream/TheCollectionOfTheWordsOfTheLordJacobFrank#page/n0/mode/2up>) para. 1194 and 1306.
- 81 *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 2, 589.
- 82 “Something for the female sex,” in Rapaport-Albert, *Messianic Women*, respectively, 331, 338.
- 83 *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 2, 589.
- 84 Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*, 160f.; citing various remarks by Scholem in his text.
- 85 Scholem, “Redemption through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 127.
- 86 Lazier, *God Interrupted*, 179.
- 87 Scholem, “Redemption through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 91.
- 88 Scholem, “Redemption through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 127.
- 89 For example, “Redemption Through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 88.
- 90 Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 2. 598–611; all subsequent citations from Bloch in this section are from this chapter of *The Principle of Hope*. The role of Judaism in Bloch's other writings is more cryptic. In *Atheism in Christianity*, for example, one detects a subtle gesture in the subtitle, *The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, whereby Judaism stands for exodus and Christianity for kingdom, both of which are fulfilled but also superseded in atheistic Marxism.
- 91 David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 182.
- 92 Scholem, “Redemption Through Sin [1937],” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 88.
- 93 Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “On the Right Side of the Barricades”: Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, and Zionism,” in *Comparative Literature* 65:3 (2013), 363–381, at 366.
- 94 Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 2, 604.
- 95 Scholem, “Redemption through Sin,” in *The Messianic Idea*, 127.
- 96 Scholem, “Does God Dwell in the Heart of an Atheist?” (1975), in *On the Very Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time*, 217f. On this see Agata Bielik-Robson's *Jewish Cryptotheologies of Late Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2014), 182ff., which came to me too late to address in detail.
- 97 *Der Text des Briefes, nach ms.* Jerusalem 8^o 2921, fol. 46v-49v.
- 98 Scholem, “Frankism and Enlightenment,” 5a.