When theology and history think together about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

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Abstract

This article explores the mutual co-production of theology and history within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, themselves co-produced religions. Theology, understood as constructive thinking about God, has consistently drawn on historical claims to refine religious self-understanding and meaning, while modern historical research has tended to deconstruct such claims. We argue, however, that history not only destabilizes theological narratives but also generates, and has always generated, constructive theological possibilities. By tracing how each tradition has continually re-interpreted its own past and that of the others, we show that history has always functioned as a shared theological resource across these religions. In this sense, these three religions can be understood as "historical religions."

Through examples such as the transmission of Josephus' *Jewish War* and its Christian, Muslim, and Jewish re-appropriations, we illustrate how interpretive struggles over the past have shaped competing and overlapping visions of revelation, authority, and hope. These dynamics reveal that the three religions cannot be adequately understood in isolation, as their self-definitions and theologies of history emerge through rivalry, borrowing, and mutual imagination. Recognizing this shared archive of "co-production" challenges narrow historical and theological approaches of development while opening new possibilities for engagement. We further argue that the category of "historical religions" itself points to the existential significance of time, in which past, present, and future are constantly reconfigured and co-produced in relation to the eternal, between and across all three religions.

By acknowledging their interdependence, theologians and historians can cultivate both critical care and constructive creativity. While this partnership cannot eliminate history's ambivalences nor its uses for polemic and exclusion, it can foster humility before the diversity of the historical archive, as well as hope for renewed theological reflection. Ultimately, we suggest that thinking about history and theology co-productively can help scholars of these religions both recognize their shared entanglement and imagine new directions in interreligious and historical thought today.

Introduction

Within a given tradition of the three religions that concern us here, theology—by which we mean all constructive thinking about God—is often pursued with the idea of improving that tradition or at least adapting it to present need. In such theology, engagements with the past ('history') can be simultaneously critical and constructive, aimed at unfolding the best a given tradition has to offer, or at purifying it of elements that the theologian considers not being part of the 'essence' of their own religion. The guiding paradigm of historical thinking within a specific religious tradition is in many cases development, genealogy, purification, or refinement through continuous engagement with the past.

Modern historical research, on the other hand, generally questions such narratives of development, pointing to the diverse and even contradictory nature of the many and varied forms of life and thought within a given religious tradition. Historical research in this sense has primarily served as an invaluable form of critique vis-à-vis historically formulated claims for the justification of normative theological thinking. In recent decades interest in interactions between Jews, Christians, and Muslims has provided yet another challenge to traditional narratives of development in which each tradition appears, after some initial "parting of the ways," to flow through time independently of the others, restoring instead a sense of their ongoing interdependence over the course of their entangled histories.[1]

But the constructive potentials of historical research for theology have rarely been articulated or pursued by modern academic historians. Even more rarely does anyone—whether academic historian or theologian—ask what potentials the shared and competing history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam can offer contemporary religious thought, not least at a time (modernity and post-modernity) when comprehensive conceptions of salvation history have become questionable within each religious tradition. There have certainly been numerous efforts toward interreligious understanding. But these often manifest a desire either to leave behind a past understood as conflict-laden, or to uncover a less-conflictual past that can be anointed as normative.[2] Both approaches, however well-intentioned, seem to us profoundly ahistorical.

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[1] On the debate about the "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity see James D.G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991; 2nd edition 2006); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). For an adaptation of this debate to early Islam, see Ikka Lindstedt, "Surah 5 of the Qurʾān: The Parting of the Ways?," *Journal of Late Antique, Islamic and Byzantine Studies* 3 (2024): 81-112.

[2] We see a desire to leave behind the past, for example, in comparative theology as presented in Marianne Moyaert, "An Introduction to Christian-Jewish Comparative Theology," in *A Companion to Comparative Theology*, ed. Tim Valkenberg (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2022), 111-131. Refering to Christian Anti-Judaism Moyaert writes: "Comparative theology resolves to break with this hegemonic past of Christianity but also makes this resolution concrete in how it brings different traditions together" (p. 121). We also recognize the hope to overcome the conflict-laden past in the intense reception of Martin Buber's dialogical philosophy among Christian and Jewish thinkers over the past decades, or in the more recent notion of a singular 'Abrahamic faith' among Muslim and Christian theologians. The desire to uncover the past as exemplary for interfaith relations, on the other hand, can be seen in the attempts to understand medieval Spain as a space of convivencia, as in María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2002), and many others.

We suggest here a simultaneously critical and constructive view of what history and theology can mutually offer each other when thinking together about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as co-produced religions. By "co-produced" religions we mean that these traditions, in all their sectarian variety, have always formed, reformed, and transformed themselves through interacting with, thinking about and imagining each other, and continue to do so.[3] This enduring co-dependence derives from two basic facts. The first is their shared reservoir and competing canon of prophetic claims, scriptures, and narratives. The second, more often forgotten, is that the historical as a mode of knowledge has itself proven fundamental to each of the three religions not only at their origins, but in every moment of their existence.

Historian as Theologian, Theologian as Historian

Among the modern academic historians who suggested that the proximity of history and theology could be a fruitful one was the Islamicist Marshall Hodgson, in his as yet unpublished lecture "The Historian as Theologian."[4] There he defined the historian as someone who "studies persons' responses to commitments in cultural traditions," and the theologian as one who "studies a particular tradition of commitment to ultimate life orientation ... so as to refine the tradition of life-orientation itself...." [5] In that essay Hodgson spoke of Islam, Christianity and Judaism as "the 'kerygmatic' life-orientational traditions – those that call for ultimate commitment on the plane of the historical." [6] By ultimate commitment he meant that in these traditions, what happens in a particular moment understood as historical—the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, the crucifixion of Jesus or the conquest of Jerusalem, the Battle of the Ditch or of Karbala, but potentially also every action by an individual—transforms the possibilities for the orientation of life in every present, and that every act or event or world image that is produced by or responds to such commitment in that present will be irreversibly relevant in the ultimate future of the Last Judgement. He called this dynamic the 'kerygmatic mode,' and offered as example "when, in response to a revelatory moment, the environment, particularly historical society as it is and is about to be, is seen as radically other than what it appears, and the individual is challenged to find fresh ways to respond to its reality."[7]

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[3] See Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg, "Co-produced religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam," *Harvard Theological Review* 118 (2025): 159-180.

[4] Marshall Hodgson, "The Historian as Theologian," transcript of a lecture given at a Wednesday evening seminar on religion in the intellectual life in Chicago, January 18th, 1967: Hodgson, Marshall G. S. Papers, Box 1, Folder 18, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. For a more extended treatment of this lecture see David Nirenberg, "The Historian as Theologian: A Conflict of the Faculties?," in *Claiming History in Religious Conflicts*, ed. Adrian Brändli and Katharina Heyden (Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana 39; Basel: Schwabe 2021), 335–351.

[5] These definitions appear in Hodgson, "The Historian as Theologian," 1–2. Compare 24–25: "The *theologian* studies a particular tradition of commitment to ultimate life-orientation (that is, normally, his own), so as to criticize in broader perspective any individual efforts that are made to express that tradition itself; and so he increases the self-awareness of that tradition." "The historian studies traditions of cultural commitment generally and so criticizes and refines our awareness of their implications; and so, in this respect, he contributes to the self-awareness not just of one tradition but of all the traditions that he is dealing with; or, collectively, the historians contribute to the self-awareness of all traditions. This is largely a collective work…."

[6] Hodgson, "The Historian as Theologian," 2.

[7] Hodgson, "The Historian as Theologian," 28. On the use of kerygma in the 1960s see Claude H. Thompson, *Theology of the Kerygma; A Study in Primitive Preaching* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 2, who defined it as a situation in which sacral and historical time are conflated and "the past is contemporized." Hodgson adopts the term in *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (3 vols.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, I974). He defined it as a piety "focused on history," and asserted that medieval

Hodgson held that it was the Israelites who had invented this sense of the historical, and that of these three religions in the Middle Ages, it was Islam that had most developed it. We are skeptical of these specific views, and we do not find helpful the (implicitly Christian) vocabulary of kerygma. But we sympathize with the central claim that "the study of history may turn out to be essential in helping us to work through, in this dimension of our spiritual life, to something more adequate than we have been able to discover so far."[8] We would go further: one need not possess a spiritual life or consider oneself a believer to recognize that the study of the past of these three faiths (history) has potential to shape present and future thinking about God in these faiths (theology). At its simplest, our argument is that, regardless of intentions, historical research creates constructive theological potentials as well as "de-constructive" critical ones, and that historians and theologians both should cultivate an awareness of those potentials.

Indeed among the things that such cultivation can teach us is that our most "critical" philosophies of history are not independent of theologies. For example, Hodgson himself insisted that one of the central attributes of the historical in these three religions was the replacement of cyclical notions of action in time with an irreversible directionality to history. "Once people say that human beings have one life apiece and are not reborn; … that there is one world history which has a beginning and an end…; [that] what happens at this [i.e. any particular given] moment is going to determine the ultimate future in the Last Judgement forever, and can never be erased again—you begin to get a feeling for the nature of your temporality, which… you can't really escape."[9] He understood this sense of the historical as having conquered the world, first with the rise of Christianity and Islam, and then with the spread of secularized philosophies of history, especially Marxism.

We agree with Hodgson (and many others) that modern and secular philosophies of history like those of Marx, as well as those of Hegel, Kant, and other "critical" Enlightenment thinkers upon which Marx drew, can and should be understood as themselves deeply nourished and shaped by earlier theologies of history. But rather than understanding the directionality and irreversibility of these theologies and philosophies of history as an Israelite invention that then conquered the world (as Hodgson and many others have done), we see this view of history as itself co-produced among these three religions.

To offer an obvious instance: after Nebuchadnezzar's conquests of Jerusalem in the sixth century BCE, the Israelite tradition developed an understanding of the history of Israel as a series of repeating cycles of transgression and repentance, stressing the ongoing potential for restoration. After the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE, an early Christian effort to deprive Judaism of any hopes of restoration rejected such an understanding. It offered instead a supersession, an irreversible rupture in the flow of prophetic time with the birth and the crucifixion of Jesus, made visible in the ruins of a Temple that could never be restored. From a

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"Islamic piety reflected a strong historical consciousness that was becoming rare then in non-Muslim traditions." (vol. 1, 362).

[8] Hodgson, "The Historian as Theologian," 34 (compare 3).

[9] Hodgson, "The Historian as Theologian," 31–32.

Christian point of view the Jews now stood—to put it in terms any present-day neo-Hegelian would understand—"on the wrong side of history." For their part, many Jewish writers continued to stress the ongoing power of repentance to reverse divine decrees, as is amply clear from numerous rabbinic traditions,[10] not to mention some present-day Zionist movements. But in worlds conquered first by Christian and later by Islamic histories, their voices were faint and minoritarian.

So we would not stress the "irreversibility" of history and assign to it a particular point of origin. Instead, we suggest that in these three religions and the cultures they have touched, the relationship between the interpretation of the past and what can be thought in the present and future is better and more fruitfully understood as an ever-present possibility of mutual transformation than as a relentlessly directional development. This is precisely why the historian and the theologian are so powerfully related and have much to learn from each other. Every present transforms the past through re-interpretation, and re-interpretation of the past transforms the possibilities of life in every present and future. Many revolutions in these faiths have presented themselves as the product of a "better" reading of divine teachings (theology) on historical or philological grounds. And each of these revolutions transformed the future possibilities for both theology and history.

Religious thinkers too have emphasized the constitutive importance of history for theological reflection in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In every period within these three faith traditions, the many normative efforts and claims of theologians to rediscover the "true," "original," or even "purified" meaning of revelation in the past and make it available to believers in their present have not only fostered religious diversity and differentiation, but also created tensions and conflicts within and between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. It is this constant re-formation and re-interpretation of the past and the re-evaluation of previous claims to revelation and its history that continuously transform the ways in which communities within these three religious traditions understand themselves and their relations to the others. The vast and even contradictory diversity of these self-understandings, each legitimated through an interpretation of a past understood as revelatory and authoritative, cannot be exaggerated. The struggle over different views of the nature of history and of the possibilities for God's intervention in history has always been in these three religions a sectarian one. Powerful ideas about the directionality and irreversibility of history are a dominant product of that sectarian

[10] Rabbinic thinkers often interpreted the destruction of Jerusalem as God's punishment for Israel's sins, but they also developed prayers for the Temple's restoration, as in the concluding blessing of Avodah, "Blessed are you Lord, who returns His Presence to Zion." They even speculated whether that restoration would occur in a righteous or unrighteous generation (b. Sanh. 98a). See generally Shaye J.D. Cohen, "The Destruction: From Scripture to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 2, no. 1 (1982): 18–39; and Robert Goldenberg, "The Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple: Its Meaning and its Consequences," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. IV: The Late Roman Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 191–205. For the Avodah blessing see Yitz Landes, *Studies in the Development of Birkat Ha-Avodah* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mandel Institute, 2018). For Jewish-Christian polemics about the destruction and its meaning see Adam Gregerman, *Building on the Ruins of the Temple: Apologetics and Polemics in Early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 165; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016). Questions of irreversibility and abrogation (for example, of Mosaic law) are also central to Muslim-Jewish polemic. See, for example, Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke, "A Jewish Refutation of Samawʾal al-Maghribī's Ifḥām al-Yahūd: An Annotated Translation," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 12 (2024): 1–44, section 2.1. The later example of *Yosippon* will be developed further below.

struggle, but far from the only one. Many other views can be found in the archives of the past, and in any event the struggle is ongoing. History has not come to an end.

What are Islam, Judaism, and Christianity? A Co-Produced Archive of Possibilities

For both historians and theologians, in their respective claims to the past, this factual diversity within each and across all these communities provokes the normative question: What is Christianity, what is Islam, what is Judaism? An example: in his book *What is Islam?*, the late Shahab Ahmed set out to demonstrate "the *prolific scale* of contradiction between the ideas, values, and practices that claim normative affiliation with 'Islam,' which poses the demanding problem of how to locate *the coherence of an internally-contradictory phenomenon*."[11] Problem posed, he sought to solve it, not by dismissing one pole of a contradiction as either peripheral to Islam or as downright "un-Islamic," but rather by formulating "a conceptualization of Islam as theoretical object that, by identifying the coherent dynamic of internal contradiction, enables us to comprehend the integrity and identity of the historical and human phenomenon at play."[12]

Ahmed's Islam cannot be located in any specific normative content – not law, not the five pillars, not even the Islamic "creed," or *shahada*. And yet he also insists that "out there in the world beyond the individual Muslim is something that this Muslim recognizes as Islam," and that the two—individual Muslim and Islam "out there"—are "*co-constitutive*."[13] Where then, if not in normative content, does this Islam reside? Ahmed's answer turns out to be profoundly historical: Islam is the sum of everything that has ever been lived or experienced as Islamic. It is the hugely diverse aggregate of all previous Islamic experiences. It is through this vast archive of Islam past that every possible Islamic engagement with revelation gains meaning in every moment in time, every present and every future. What we call "archive" Ahmed called the "Con-Text" within which the meaning of any possible Islam is produced: "*that whole field or complex or vocabulary of meanings of Revelation that have been produced in the course of human and historical hermeneutical engagement with Revelation*, and which are thus *already present as Islam*" in any given moment.[14]

We would add that the same is also true for Christianity and Judaism: they too are the totality-of everything that has ever been lived or thought or claimed to be Jewish or Christian. What Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are is defined by what any Christians, Jews, and Muslims have at any point experienced as or claimed to be Christian, Jewish, or Muslim. That might already strike some as a radical claim. And yet we are suggesting something even more radical. We argue that the history of these three faiths is a conjoint one, insofar as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have since their beginnings distinguished (and approximated) themselves from (and to) each other by making rival claims to what they understand to be a common prophetic origin and historical past.

[11] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 109 (emphasis his).
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ahmed, *What is Islam?,* 102.
[14] Ahmed, *What is Islam?,* 356 (emphasis his).

Such rival claims already manifest themselves in the canonical scriptures of the three traditions. The metaphor of the sealing of prophecy, for example, appears already in the biblical book of Daniel (9:24), with its proclamation of seventy weeks "to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy." The Gospels put this to the work of developing a new historical perspective with their claim that all prophecy ends with John the Baptist (Luke 16:16), and that Jesus has come to "fulfill the law and the prophets" (Matt 5:17). The first action of the resurrected Jesus, according to Luke, was to re-describe to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus all prophetic history, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets," so that they could understand that all of it was about himself (Luke 24:13–27). In this recapitulation of the prophetic past we might see the birth of Christian historical theology based on Scripture. Some decades later, the Christian writer Tertullian would turn this argument against Judaism in his "Adversus Judaeos" (8:11), interpreting Daniel 9:24 as referring prophetically to Jesus' nativity.[15]

The rabbis, for their part, understood prophecy to have ended during the early Second Temple period, before their own time and before that of Jesus. For them prophecy was a thing of the past, even if at times its distant echo could still be heard in a *bat kol*, or heavenly voice.[16] This was not the approach that would be taken in the Qur'an, which directly challenged the Christian claim to finality and fulfillment by calling Muhammad the seal of the prophets (*khātam al-nabiyyīn*; Q 33:40), and providing various lists of specific messengers who had preceeded him and who were fulfilled by him (Q 6:83–87; cf. 10:47).[17] These include Moses and Jesus, placing both, together with many other prophets, within a cycle of hope for the fulfillment of prophecy that is now presented as coming to a close with this new and final revelation to the Arabs' Prophet.

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[15] Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 8:11–15: "Therefore, since the prophecy was fulfilled through his advent, for that reason he said that 'vision and prophecy were sealed'; inasmuch as he is the signet of all prophets, fulfilling all things which in days bygone they had announced of him. For, after the advent of Christ and his passion, there is no longer 'vision or prophet' to announce him as to come. In short, if this is not so, let the Jews exhibit, subsequently to Christ, any volumes of prophets, visible miracles wrought by any angels, (such as those) which in bygone days the patriarchs saw until the advent of Christ, who is now come (…). Whence most firmly does he assert that His advent 'seals visions and prophecy.'" See, *The Writings of Tertullianus, vol. 3*, ed. Alexander Roberts and Sir James Donaldson, trans. Sydney Thelwall (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1870), 223.

[16] Bavli Sanh. 11a: "The Sages taught: After the last of the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, died, the Divine Spirit of prophetic revelation departed from the Jewish people. But nevertheless, they were still utilizing a Divine Voice [which they heard as kind of echo of prophecy] (*mishtamshin bevat kol*)." Cf. b. Sanh. 64a. We owe this reference to Shlomo Zuckier.

[17] The interpretation of this verse was debated among different traditions of Islam, and that debate continues among modern scholars. Compare the different conclusions of Waqar Akhbar Cheema, "Scholars on the Meaning of Khātam al-Nabiyyin," *Journal for Islamic Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2013): 1–6, who gathers Sunni quotations to prove that the prophet Muhammad is the "seal" of all prophethood; with the more ecumenical reading in Marco Demichelis, "The *Khatim an-Nabiyyin* (The Seal of the Prophets) and Its Inclusive Abrahamic Perspective: Muhammad and 'Isa ibn Maryam in Dialogue," *Religions* 12, no. 4 (2021) https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/rel12010004. The Manichean, Jewish, and Christian backgrounds of the seal-metaphor have themselves become an important subject of study: see Yohanan Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunni Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 178-215; Guy G. Stroumsa, "Seal of the Prophets: The Nature of A Manichaean Metaphor," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 61-74; and the critical evaluation of Friedmann by Uri Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy: On the Interpretation of the Quranic Surah al-Ahzab," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 164 (2014): 65-96. We thank Lea Schlenker for these references.

Islam was not ignorant of the Christian hope for a second coming of Christ and could even adopt this hope as its own. Many traditions, for example, predict Jesus' return during the turbulent end times that will immediately precede final judgement. A number even assign to him a specific function: to defeat the Antichrist and kill the Jews who are his followers. But these traditions make it clear that when Jesus comes, he comes as a follower of Muhammad and upholds God's revelations to that Prophet.[18] Of course these Islamic recapitulations of the prophetic past did not prevent later Christians (and Jews) from in turn subsuming the Prophet Muhammad into their own traditions. In the nineteenth century, for instance, Mormons would proclaim that "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, restored to His Church in our day" is the only way to earthly and eternal happiness, while effortlessly incorporating Muhammad into their historical account as one of "the great religious leaders of the world" who received "a portion of God's light."[19]

In short, across time Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have (sometimes) interacted with and (more often) imagined each other, while continuing to produce and transform themselves by thinking about their competing claims to the past. The entirety of that dynamic and ongoing process we call "co-production." It too constitutes an archive, one that has made historical hermeneutics not only a potent instrument of sectarian formation for communities *within* a given tradition, but also a powerful tool in polemic and apologetics *across* them. And just as it is true that *within* Islam, or Judaism, or Christianity, the archive of historical commitments constitutes an inexhaustible archive of possibilities that gives these religions the capacity for constant transformation of both past and present, the same should be true *across* them. The archive of all past historical commitments and imaginings through which these traditions in all their variety have co-produced each other—the vast majority of which have undoubtedly vanished without trace—constitutes an ocean to be explored not only by the historian who seeks to understand how Muslims, Christians, and Jews have thought about or experienced each other in the past, but also by the theologian "co-producing" Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the present and future.

Can historical theology take place within the combined archive of the three traditions? What impact could the exploration of the co-produced histories and hermeneutics have on theology within Islam, Christianity, and Judaism? At the very least, awareness of the historical co-production of these faiths should challenge segregated approaches to their histories and their hermeneutics, and suggest that within these three traditions theological thinking pursued without an awareness of the other two is partial and impoverished.

If it is true that Jews, Christians, and Muslims could scarcely think about God and revelation without also thinking about each other in the past, then this means that even in the present and the future, theology can scarcely be produced within one of these traditions without

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[18] Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, trans. Feras Hamza (Louisville, Kentucky: Fons Vitae, 2008). For the eschatological *hadith* (in which we may hear co-produced echoes of Revelation 6:16 and Hosea 10:8), see Georges Vajda, "Juifs et musulmans selon le hadit," *Journal Asiatique* 229 (1937): 57-127.

[19] First Presidency, "Statement of the First Presidency regarding God's Love for All Mankind" (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 15 February 1978).

an imagining of the others. We should want to cultivate an awareness of that imagining. In other words: to think historically within the three religions implies attention not only to the development of one's own tradition, but also to the permanent entanglement of the three. Within each of the religious traditions, theologians make use, willy nilly, of the shared historical and hermeneutic archive in their thinking about God, the relationship of humans to God, the nature and meaning of revelation, and of the historical.

We would go so far as to say that Jews, Muslims, and Christians cannot understand their own religious tradition without taking into account how it has been shaped by the other two, real or imagined, in the manifold moments of their co-produced history.[20] The many competing and often polemical adaptations and appropriations within and across Judaism, Islam, and Christianity can only be understood as such if historians and theologians become aware of what has been incorporated and transformed into a given religious tradition from others. And vice versa: what has been adopted and transformed in one tradition may also have provoked repercussions and re-appropriations in others.

An Example: Josephus-Yosippon and the destruction (and reconstruction) of Jerusalem

We have already touched upon an important example: the idea that the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans was a divine punishment for the sins of the Jews, an idea that very much shaped Christian and Islamic sacred histories. That shaping was in part based on Jewish voices, and here we mean not only on Israelite prophecies or utterances attributed to Jesus in the New Testament, but also the efforts of the Roman Jewish priest Flavius Josephus to make historical sense of his own experiences in the work he wrote after his own surrender in what he called *The Jewish War*. Josephus' work became a touchstone for Christian authors seeking to support the supersessionist claim that the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple provided historical proof of God's permanent punishment of the Jews for their rejection of Jesus as Messiah.[21]

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[20] Our approach may seem similar to the Comparative Theology developed primarily by Roman Catholic theologians after the Second Vatican Councils in the 1960s: "faith seeking understanding through engaging other religious traditions" (to offer Catherine Cornille's definition of comparative theology in "Resisting Religious Relativism in Comparative Theology," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Comparative Theology* , ed. Axel M. Oaks Takacs and Joseph L. Kimmel (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2024), 21-31, here 21; see also Marianne Moayert, "An Introduction to Christian-Jewish Comparative Theology," in *A Companion to Comparative Theology*, ed. Pim Valkenberg, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 111-31, at121. But to us the notion of "other" so important in Comparative Theology seems methodologically problematic in approaching Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, precisely because these three religions are co-produced, that is, because they are historically and hermeneutically in constant interdependence. Comparative theologians have themselves debated whether their methodology can serve scholars of religions other than Christianity, and suggested that while this seems relatively straightforward for scholars of Hindu religions and Buddhism, it seems to be particularly challenging with regard to Judaism and Islam. See the discussion between Klaus von Stosch and Marianne Moyaert in *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 24 (2014): 59-77; cf. parts 2-6 of *A Companion to Comparative Theology*. Among scholars who adapt Comparative Theology for Islam are Dağ E. Akay, "Can Comparative Theology Help Muslims to a Better Understanding of Religious Diversity?," in *New Methods in the Study of Islam*, ed. Abbas Aghdassi and Aaron W. Hughes (Edinburgh University Press: 2022), 199-220; Muhammad Legenhausen, "Comparative Theology in the Islamic Sciences," *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research* 25 (2023): 37-54.

[21] Josephus Flavius, *De bello Iudaico*, ed. Otto Michel and Otto Bauernfeind, *De bello Judaico – Der Jüdische Krieg*. Griechisch–Deutsch (wbg academic, Darmstadt 2013); trans. Henry St. John Thackeray and Ralph Marcus (The Loeb Classical Library, 1926).

In his early fourth century *Proof of the Gospel*, Eusebius of Caesarea—often considered the "father of Church history" in the Christian tradition—referred his readers to Josephus as a witness that all biblical prophecies against the Jews and Jerusalem had been fulfilled.[22] That witness was put to hard work. Particularly influential was the aptly titled *On the Destruction of Jerusalem*. That treatise, anonymously authored after the Emperor Julian's ("the Apostate") failed effort to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple in the 360s, offered a Christian revision and rewritten Latin translation of Josephus's *Jewish War* under the Latinized name Hegesippus.[23] In this and other Christian histories the Jews and Jerusalem provided the diagnostic hinge, establishing the legitimacy of the Christian claim to the Israelite record of God's actions in time.

Josephus' *Jewish War* offered an invaluable service to Christian historical theology, that of a Jew testifying against Judaism. But more than half a millennium after Eusebius and pseudo-Hegesippus, an anonymous Jew living in tenth century Southern Italy composed a Hebrew version of the Christianized Josephus. His *Book of Yosippon* reclaimed the Jewish historian from his hitherto Christian purveyors in order to offer a narrative in which God attends to his Jewish people throughout a continuous history of alternating highs and lows.[24] The loss of the Temple is lamented extensively in the *Sefer Yosippon*, but also integrated into a historical-theological scheme in which the triumph of the Romans (and thus of the Christians) is time-bound and temporary. Hence *Yosippon* concludes with the hopeful (for the Jews) promise that God will comfort his people in Jerusalem, and with a prayer for that restoration and the rapid rebuilding of the Temple. In this sense, *Sefer Yosippon* is not so much an effort to reverse history as it is an effort to reverse the Christian historico-theological appropriation of the Jewish past.

The Christian 'Josephus' spread widely in both Latin and Byzantine Christianity,[25] offering Christian theologians a 'historical' argument to justify the oppression of Jews. Similarly, and simultaneously, *Sefer Yosippon* became one of the most popular books among Jews in the Middle Ages, helping generations of Jews cope with oppression and persecution under Christian and Muslim domination. Our use of terms such as "cope" or "hope" is not meant to valorize the paths a history such as *Sefer Yosippon* could illuminate. Medieval Jews found justifications in that text for very different paths, ranging from *kiddush Hashem*—the sanctification of God's name through martyrdom and ritualized suicide—to emigration from

[22] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Dem. ev.* 3.16.

[23] (Ps-)Hegesippus, *De excidio Hierosolymitatis*, in Hegesippus, *Historiae libri V. Praefatio et Indices*, ed. Vincentius Ussani (CSEL 66/2, Turnhout: Brepols, 1960). See Carson Bay, *Biblical Heroes and Classical Culture in Christian Late Antiquity: The Historiography, Exemplarity, and Anti-Judaism of Pseudo-Hegesippus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); idem, "Writing the Jews out of History: Pseudo-Hegesippus, Classical Historiography, and the Codification of Christian Anti-Judaism in Late Antiquity," *Church History* 90, no. 2 (2021): 265–85.

[24] *The Book of Josippon*, ed. David Flusser (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1979-1981). English Translation: *Sepher Yosippon. A Tenth-Century History of Ancient Israel*, translated and introduced by Stephen B. Bowman, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2023). See Carson Bay, "The Jerusalem Temple and Jewish Identity between Pseudo-Hegesippus and Sefer Yosippon: The Discursive Aftermath of Josephus' Temple *Ekphrasis*," *EJJS* 16 (2022): 281–305.

[25] The vast and varied reception of Josephus and Sefer Yosippon is extensively covered by the recently published volume *From Josephus to Yosippon and Beyond: Text – Re-interpretations – Afterlives,* ed. Carson Bay, Michael Avioz, and Jan Willem van Henten (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 215; Leiden: Brill, 2024). The current project "The Christian Josephus," directed by Sabrina Iwlonocki (2022-2026), will provide more insights in the reception of Josephus in Byzantine Christianity.

lands of diaspora to the Holy Land (what we might anachronistically be called nationalist awakening).

Sefer Yosippon also found its way into Judeo-Arabic, Arabic, Coptic, and Ethiopic languages, providing Muslim[26] and Christian[27] communities in Africa with possibilities for interpretations of world history. When the Muslim historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun came to Egypt to collect sources for his universal history, the *Kitāb al-ʿIbar,* in the 1370s, he was especially pleased to have finally found a composition by the Jewish historian Yusuf ibn Kuryun concerning the history of the Temple and the "two kingdoms" that had elapsed between "its first destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and its second destruction under Titus, to him [Yusuf ibn Kuryun] the 'great *galūt*'" (a borrowing from the Hebrew word for the Exile).[28] Ibn Khaldun's presentation of the role of the Jews in world history is distinctive among Islamic (and also Christian) historians, and may well have been influenced by *Sefer Yosippon*'s stress on cycles of transgression, repentance, and restoration. In Ibn Khaldun's account, Jews are exemplary of the fate all conquered peoples suffer. Jewish history demonstrates, in Ibn Khaldun, how nations and groups that lose their autonomy, territory, and self-determination experience inner disruption and decline under foreign rule.

Unlike the tendency in Christian histories, in Ibn Khaldun's account the conquest of Jerusalem was the origin of the Jews' corruption, not its consequence: it marked the beginning and was the cause of their moral destruction in the diaspora. Note that despite his deliberate abstinence from theological reasoning about God's punishment of the Jews, the socio-political claims Ibn Khaldun takes from the past are potentially just as supersessionist as those Christians took from their sacred histories. According to Ibn Khaldun, the Jews (like many conquered peoples in his theory of history) lost their sense of group consciousness and social cohesion (*ʿaṣabiyya*) after the conquest of Jerusalem. They therefore became corrupted, a threat to society that needs to be suppressed and controlled.[29] Ibn Khaldun's anti-Judaism presents itself

[26] The Judeo-Arabic *Sefer Yosippon* served as the source for the Arabic *Kitāb Akhbār al-Yahūd* which originated in North Africa in the eleventh or twelfth century and was known and used by Muslim authors such as Ibn Khazm, Ibn Khaldūn and al-Maqrīzī. See Avraham Sela, *The Arabic Book of Yosef Ben Gorion: Texts in Arabic and Judeo-Arabic with a Hebrew Translation and Introduction* (in Hebrew, 2 vol.; Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2009). The Qur'an commentator al-Biqāʿī used Josephus to explain Sura 17:7, where the destruction of the Temple by the Romans is cited as punishment of the Israelites, on which see Philip I. Lieberman, "Jews as Producers and Consumers of History in the Medieval Islamicate World," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 16 (2021): 292–312, esp. 301–303.

[27] The Arabic *Yosippon* was translated into Coptic and Ethiopian and gained a quasi-canonical status as the third Maccabean book in the Christian communities of North Africa by the thirteenth century. Facing persecution from Muslim authorities, Christian readers identified with the Jewish heroes and assigned to their Muslim rulers the Romans' role in this 'Josephan' work. See Ronny Vollandt, "Ancient Jewish Historiography in Arabic Garb: Sefer Josippon between *Southern Italy* and Coptic Cairo," *Zutot* 11 (2014): 70–80; Yonatan Binyam, "Studies in Sefer Yosippon: The Reception of Sefer Yosippon in Medieval Hebrew, Arabic, and Ethiopic Literature" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2017); and Katja Vehlow, "Historiography," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 5: Jews in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. Philip I. Lieberman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 974–992.

[28] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, eds. Khalīl Shahāda and Suhayl Zakkār (8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), vol. 2, 134. For the use of *Sefer Yosippon*, see Walter J. Fischel, "Ibn Khaldun and Josippon," *Homenaje a Millas-Vallicrossa,* vol. I (Barcelona, 1954), 587–598; Martino Diez, "With Ibn Ḫaldūn in His Workshop: What He Read in Ibn al-ʿAmīd, What He Retained, and Why," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 16 (2021): 196–232.

[29] Ibn Khaldun, *Muqqadimah* 1,2,12. See Kalman Bland, "An Islamic Theory of Jewish History: The Case of Ibn Khaldun," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18, no. 3-4 (1983): 189–197.

more as historical sociology than historical theology but is itself drawn from Islamic readings of Jewish re-appropriations of a Christianized Josephus.

The influence of *Sefer Yosippon* did not end with Ibn Khaldun. Christian Europe absorbed it as well, with the translation of the Hebrew *Sefer Yosippon* into Latin in the bilingual edition provided by the reformed Hebraist Sebastian Münster in 1541 in Basel, and then also into different modern languages.[30] In 1718, it became the first book printed in British North America,[31] and towards the end of the nineteenth century *Yosippon* helped provide the Zionist movement with a historical past capable of reawakening hope for a national restoration among Jews.[32] In short, Josephus/*Yosippon* offers a dense example of how objects in a co-produced historical archive provide foundations for the ongoing creation of history and theology in each of the three religious traditions.

What is true of these today obscure texts is even truer of Jerusalem/Al-Quds itself. In appropriating, expropriating and re-appropriating narratives about the destruction of that city and its Temple, all three traditions have put history to the work of theology, and vice versa. In doing so they have repeatedly produced new opportunities not only for appropriation, expropriation and re-appropriation by the other two traditions, but also for creating socio-political realities, as they continue to do today.

The interplay between the historical-theological and the socio-political becomes manifest in the common and conflicting claims the three religions have been making about the Temple Mount.[33] "How can the Temple of God be built in that place?" was the rhetorical question raised by the Christian monk Athanasius of Sinai, who witnessed the first Muslim building projects of the Umayyads in 7th century Jerusalem. Athanasius railed "against those who believe and say that what is now being built in Jerusalem is the temple of God," and he objects: "The judgement still stands, which says to the Jews about it: 'Behold, this house is left a waste.' (cf. Matt 23:38 quoting Jer 22:5). Christ said 'is left,' which is to say it will remain a waste forever. For the 'last glory' of the house (cf. Haggai 2:9) was burned down in the times of Titus, and after the last, there is no other 'last' glory. Nothing is 'laster' than the last."[34] In

[30] See the two chapters by Nadia Zeldes and Andrea Schatz in *From Josephus to Yosippon*: Nadia Zeldes, "The Christian Reception of Sefer Yosippon in Western Europe," at 577–598, and Andrea Schatz, "Un-writing the End: Histories and Counter-histories in the Early Modern *Yosippon*," at 599–622.

[31] "The Wonderful and Most Deplorable History of the Later Times of the Jews with the Destruction of Jerusalem" attributed to "Josephus Ben-Goron, the Learned and Warlike Jew," 1718. The book's title page contained an explicit reference to "A Parallel of the Late Times, and Crimes in London, with those in Jerusalem." See E. Wolf, "The First Book of Jewish Authorship Printed in America," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1971): 229-34.

[32] Steven Bowman, "Yosippon and Jewish Nationalism," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 61 (1995): 23–51. In his 1898 short story *Be-Derekh Rehokah*, Micha Josef Berdyczewski describes his disturbance reading about the Jewish heroes and their fate in the *Sefer Yosippon*, and the immediate reawakening he felt of nationalist pride. Berdyscewski would publish under the name of the author of Yosippon, Ben-Gorion, collecting stories of Jewish heroes to support the *Aliyah* in his vast anthology *Mimekor Yisrael*.

[33] The remainder of this section overlaps in examples, language, and conclusions with David Nirenberg, *The Power of History and the Place of the Historian in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Lucas Prize Lecture; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2026) and *idem*, "The Powers of History in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam," Buber Lecture at the Israel Academy of Sciences, held on August 4, 2025.

[34] Athanasius Sinaites, *Narrationes Collection C*, ch. 3, edited by Stefan Heid, "Die C-Reihe erbaulicher Erzählungen des Anastasios vom Sinai im Codex Vaticanus Graecus 2592," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 74

other words, Athanasius is here deploying a collage of biblical prophecies both Jewish and Christian about Jerusalem, as well as historical knowledge as provided by Josephus-Hegesippusin order to attack the construction work of Caliph Umar and his Umayyad successors. They, for their part, built the mosques of Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock upon the site of the Temple Mount in an attempt to assert the truth claims of Islam by revitalizing worship at the place whose ruins had until then been regarded by Christians as historical proof of their own triumph in sacred history.

Muslims were not the only ones among "those who believe and say that what is now being built in Jerusalem is the House of God." Some near-contemporary Jews celebrated the same building projects Athanasius condemned. A "prophecy" about Muʿāwiyah, the first Umayyad Caliph (but presumably written in the late Umayyad or early Abassid period, after the building of of Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock) claimed that "At the instigation of God, he will rebuild the walls of the Temple."[35] From the point of view of the political theology of the Temple Mount today, it may seem surprising to find a Jewish prophecy arrayed alongside Islam andagainst Christianity on this score, but that too was a powerful potential within these traditions.

Indeed, only some decades after Athanasius' intervention against and the Jewish prophetic support for the construction projects on the Temple Mount, the Muslim scholar Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 767) commented on the Qur'anic verse Baqarah 2:114 ("And who does greater wrong than one who bars [entrance to] the mosques of God, lest His Name be remembered therein, and strives for their desctruction? They are those who should not enter them, save in fear"). The verse, in his view, "refers to the fact that the Romans vanquished the Jews, such that they killed them, enslaved them, destroyed Jerusalem and filled it with corpses and slaughtered pigs. Then a second time in the Roman period Titasar [Titus?] son of Sunabatus who was called Stephen [?] slaughtered them and laid waste Jerusalem. Then it remained uninhabited until the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab. So God says: 'They'—that is, the Romans—'are those who should not'—it is undesirable that they should—'enter them'—that is, the Holy Land since the sending of Muhammad—'save in fear'. Thus it is that today, no Roman enters Jerusalem but that he is fearful and wearing a disguise, for whoever seizes one of them punishes him."[36]

We might almost think we were reading a Late Antique Christian description of the banishment of the Jews from Jerusalem. Only here the banishment is of the Christians, for having banished the Jews. And lest we think this interpretation is marginal, we have but to turn to the most classical of authorities, Abū Jaʿfar ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), who expanded upon the theme by gathering the differing views of previous exegetes, adding his own interpretation,and concluding that the verse refers to "the Christians, inasmuch as they strove to destroy Bayt al-Maqdis (i.e. Jerusalem), and helped Nebuchadnezzar to do so, and forbade

(2008): 78-114, at 81–82. Heid provides the Greek text with a German translation. The English translation of the Greek and the cross-references to the biblical prophets are our own.

[35] The "prophecy" retrospectively describes (in guise of prophecy) the reign of each Umayyad Caliph. See Israel Lévi, "Une apocalypse judéo-arabe," *Revue des études juives* 67 (1914): 178–82.

[36] We thank David Gyllenhaal for bringing these passages to our attention and for his insights on their meaning and context.

the believers among the Children of Israel from praying there after Nebuchadnezzar turned them away from there unto his own country."

How intriguing, the anachronism by which the Christians are associated, not only with the Romans whose destruction of Jerusalem's Temple in 70 CE the Christians imagined as God's punishment of the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ, but with the destruction of the first Temple as well, centuries before the birth of Jesus or the rise of Christianity. In these three religions there are, at any moment, multiple competing claims clamoring to make sense of or influence the world.

The Historical as Co-incidence of Past, Present, Future, and Eternal

If Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are understood as co-produced at their core and if co-production is a never-ending dynamic in their shared history, then every moment of the past has the potential to be put to constructive theological work at some later moment within the three religions. By constructive theological work we mean the critical re-evaluation and normative reconfiguration of self-positionings within history, whether in the name of peace and love (to choose possibilities suggested by these religions themselves), or of conflict and violence. This last point is important. Enlarging the archives of (inter)religious history does not reduce the possibilities for conflict or contempt within and between the traditions. It may even expand them. Because adherents of the three religions, in all their competing variety, have often used the historical for polemical and apologetic purposes, these archives contain countless instances of opposition, supersession, separation, even extermination – many more, perhaps, than moments of appreciation, recognition, toleration, or merely indifference.[37] 'Gratitude' and 'guilt' are both proximate potentials within this shared archive, and difficult (perhaps impossible) for the historian or the theologian to separate from one another.

But again, these historical co-productions are not irreversible. The relationship between past, present, and future includes the possibility that the present might transform the past (re-interpretation), and that the re-interpretation of the past might transform the future. If that seems too strong, consider our earlier point that within these historical faiths, believers have been and are called upon to commit at least tacitly to some sense of how the historical, the lived present, and the eternal relate to each other. Those commitments have vastly varied not only over time, space, and sect, but also within the individual believer (even the faith of a saint is built upon sands of time and fissures of psyche). The totality of all these past commitments—the vast majority of which, we repeat, have undoubtedly vanished without trace—constitutes an archive of potentials not only for historians of religion, but for all who seek to relate time and the historical to the divine and eternal.

Hence we insist that historical religions contain within themselves, precisely insofar as they are historical, the capacity for constant transformation of both past and present. Within these religions norms are created in the name of the historical, and challenged, even shattered, in the same name. In other words, when historians discover new meaning in the past, they may

[37] For examples, see the collective volume *Claiming History in Religious Conflicts*, ed. Adrian Brändli and Katharina Heyden (Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana 39; Basel: Schwabe, 2021).

simultaneously be offering a powerful resource to future theologians. The echo with *ressourcement* is here deliberate. In the mid-twentieth century, French Catholic theologians whose faith had been shaken by the horrors of two world wars sought ancient and medieval resources for a "nouvelle théologie" capable of addressing the concerns of their present. For their part they sought succor largely in the sources of their own tradition. But we might ask today – shaken by our own horrors – what resources the co-produced archive might offer Islamic, Jewish, and Christian theologies. And we might wonder if such co-produced theologies could offer an increasingly globalized and entangled world new spiritual resources for the treatment of real or imagined others within and across the three religions.[38]

We have been elaborating an understanding of the historical within these three traditions as a co-incidence of the past, the present, the future, and the eternal. That understanding is not idiosyncratic: there have been thinkers at every stage in the histories of these three religions who have formulated the idea that the temporality of God's teaching cannot be grasped in a single moment of revelation in time, nor understood as a developing line that stretches from the past over the present to the future. We could dwell in the Middle Ages, with Ibn Arabi's (d. 1240 CE) commentary on the 29th verse of the Qur'an's 55th Sura, *Sūrat al-Raḥmān*: "Every day he reveals himself in a fresh state." This means, according to the famous mystic and philosopher, that "He—exalted be He—does not manifest Himself in a single way to multiple people, or indeed in a single way to the same person twice."[39] But we will conclude with modernity, and Franz Rosenzweig's formulation shortly after the first World War, in his *Star of Redemption*: "Revelation is in the present, and indeed it is the present par excellence. It looks back to the past in the moment where it would like to give its present actuality the form of the statement, but it sees this past only by shining into it the light of the present; it is only in this backward glance that the past reveals itself to be the foundation and portent of the presently lived experience housed in the I."[40]

We do not claim to fully grasp Rosenzweig's theology of history here, any more than we claim to fully grasp that of any other thinker touched upon in these pages. But we do see in this passage a rich expression of the sensibility toward revelation in time that Hodgson characterized more technically as "kerygmatic" and understood as shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Within modern Jewish thought, Rosenzweig was one of the deepest explorers of this sensibility.[41] But this does not mean, of course, that he was not enmeshed—as

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[38] On the French "ressourcement" theology in the 1930s-1950s and its engagement with history see Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "*Ressourcement* Theology, *Aggiornamento*, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Communio,* 18, no. 4 (1992): 530-55.

[39] Ibn ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, 4 vols. (Bulāq [Cairo]: n.p., 1911; reprint, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 4:212.

[40] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, translated Barbara E. Galli (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 200 = *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag 1921/1988), 207: "Die Offenbarung ist gegenwärtig, ja ist das Gegenwärtigsein selber. Die Vergangenheit, in die auch sie zurücksieht in dem Augenblick, wo sie ihrer Gegenwärtigkeit die Form der Aussage geben möchte, wird ihr nur sichtbar, indem sie mit dem Licht der Gegenwart in sie hineinleuchtet: erst in diesem Blick rückwärts erweist sich die Vergangenheit als Grund und Voraussage des gegenwärtigen, im Ich behausten Erlebens." Cf. Myriam Bienenstock, "Recalling the Past in Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*," *Modern Judaism*23, no. 3 (2003): 226–242.

[41] A great deal has been written on Rosenzweig's philosophy of history. For us, Paul Mendez–Flohr's 1991 essay "Franz Rosenzweig and the Crisis of Historicism," in: *idem*, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit, Mi: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 311–399, remains an instructive encounter.

Hodgson was, as are we all—in the ongoing co-production of history and theology between the three religions. In the same work we find Rosenzweig putting (his imagination of) Islam to work as a negative foil for his idea of Judaism and Christianity as historical religions:[42] "Mohammed found and took over the idea of Revelation as one picks up something found, that is to say without producing it from out of its presuppositions. The Koran is a 'Talmud' that is not based on a 'Scripture'; it is a 'New Testament' without the 'Old.' Islam has only Revelation, and not prophecy."[43] Islam is here separated from Judaism and Christianity as lacking the sense of the theological potential of history. Our discussion of Hodgson and Ahmed should make clear that we do not agree with this presentation of Islam. In fact, we see Rosenzweig's treatment of Islam as yet another example of co-production, in this case a strategy utilized in all three traditions that we call "the excluded third," in which similarities between two traditions are stressed in order to define and affine them against another.[44]

Conclusion: Hope and Humility

We have suggested that the existential significance of every moment in time, the potential coincidence of the historical and the eternal in every present, is central to an understanding of revelation in many strands of all three religions. From this, we would also derive an answer to the question of what theology and history can offer each other. Theology can remind historians that the people whose actions and thoughts historians seek to explore could themselves experience their own present, profane and contingent as it may seem to the historian, as pregnant with potential theological significance, participating in the co-production of the past, the future, and the eternal. History can reinforce theologians' sense that the development in time of ideas about God cannot be explained in terms of eternal or ineluctable necessity, but at best with a particular plausibility that flows from contemporary circumstances, power relations, restrictions or extensions of knowledge, and other contingent factors. And each offers the other a further awareness: that this historical contingency also has constructive potential, potential that the historian and theologian can realize together.

These possibilities of exchange hold true within any one of these traditions. But we are especially interested in the possibilities for theology and history to think together across the entangled and co-produced pasts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As we have seen, for believers in these three religions and for inhabitants of the secular cultures derived from them, participation in history is a form of ultimate commitment freighted with all the gravity of the irreversible. And yet, as we have attempted to argue throughout this essay, that same history has also been (and is still being) constantly transformed within and across these three religions by the power of historical interpretation. These two truths are not easy to maintain

[42] On Rosenzweig's critique of Islam see Matthias Lehmann, "Franz Rosenzweigs Kritik des Islam im 'Stern der Erlösung,'" *Jewish Studies Quarterly,* 1, no. 4 (1993): 340–361; Zohar Mihaely, "Rosenzweig's Critique of Islam and its Value Today," *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze,* no. 11 (2022): 5–34.

[43] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 127 = Der Stern der Erlösung, 129: "Muhamed hat den Gedanken der Offenbarung vorgefunden und übernommen, wie man ein Vorgefundenes zu erzeugen. Der Koran ist ein 'Talmud', ein 'Neues Testament', dem kein 'Altes' zugrunde liegt. Der Islam hat nur die Offenbarung, nicht die Weissagung." (Galli has "a find" instead of "something found" for "ein Vorgefundenes"; and "prediction" instead of "prophecy" for "Weissagung").

[44] For historical examples, we refer to the upcoming collective volume *The Excluded Third in the Co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. by Katharina Heyden and Davide Scotto (CORE 7), Turnhout: Brepols.

simultaneously, but both theologians and historians have much to gain by doing so. Not least among the benefits: the temperance of hope by humility.

After all, in all the examples we have offered, history has served theology as the foundation for a principle of hope. That hope has based itself on different models of history, to be sure. One we have encountered was the Eusebian-Hegelian trajectory of progress, which offers the hope that humanity's course is one of divinely guided improvement. Another, very different from the first, was the commitment to the possibility that divine power—perhaps moved by human repentance—might restore an earlier possibility or promise: the hope that within the temporality of divine history even ruins can be restored, and abrogation abrogated. Doubtless there are other models of history produced by the interaction of these religions as well, many offering their own principles of hope. Hope is, it seems, one of the most important offerings of the union of history and theology in these religions. But both the historian and the theologian should notice that this hope has often come with a price: that the others should be overcome, left behind, excluded, or even exterminated.

Here our effort to shift historical attention from discrete traditions to the co-produced archive has something to offer, since it exhorts us to remember that these three religious traditions have taken shape and continue to take shape in relation to and competition with each other. The historical recognition of that relation and competition may itself have theological consequences. It can, and often has, provoked anxiety of influence and violent efforts at distancing or purification. But it can also, and often has, stimulated a sense of common humanity, humbled by mortality and the unknowable vastness of divinity, and grateful for the revelation of hope-filled pathways toward eternity. Histories and theologies of co-production can help us to perceive both these potentials, and many more.

It may seem anachronistic to speak of competition, of the existence of many potentials for faith, or of gratitude for that diversity, as if we were simply re-articulating the relativistic historicizing methodologies of liberal modernity. But nothing we have written here seems to us alien to the histories of these faiths themselves. We have already seen how their revelations and teachings have long enjoined upon the believer an attention to history (hence the term "historical religions"). The same is true of competition between plural paths to eternity, and humility before the unknowable. "For each among you We have appointed a law and a way. And had God willed, He would have made you one community, but [He willed otherwise], that He might try you in that which He has given you. So vie with one another in good deeds. Unto God shall be your return all together, and He will inform you of that wherein you differ," as the Qur'an has it (Q Ma'idah 5:48). Similar tones can be perceived in Christian and Jewish voices. The "Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men," written by the Christian philosopher Ramon Llull first in Arabic, and then also in Catalan and Latin in the 1270s, ends with the Jew, the Muslim, and the Christian unanimously refusing the opportunity to learn which of their religions the neutral arbitrator in their debate considers to be true. "If, in front of us, you state which religion it is that you prefer, then we would not have such a good subject of discussion

nor such satisfaction in discovering the truth."[45] The sixteenth century Rabbi Shlomo Luria took what is arguably an even broader view, writing that "the words of the living God"[46] have many variant meanings, and "in a debate between true scholars, all positions articulated represent a form of truth."[47] Or in the words of Maimonides, himself deeply influenced by Islamic thought, "you should hear the truth whoever speaks it."[48]

Again, none of these examples is free of ambivalent potentials. Llull, for one, was himself a dogged missionary, and even his attempt to learn Arabic came at the cost of his Muslim teacher's life. We are not looking for univocal lessons or exemplary figures in the archives of the past. But we do find in those archives ample support for the conclusion that the hopes of Christians, Jews, and Muslims have always competed with and developed in relation to each other, and that they will continue to do so, because they are fundamentally co-produced. Many philosophers, divines, and historians have over the course of the past two millennia attempted to distill the diversity of commitments in these archives into progressive and largely exclusionary histories of "Abrahamic" hope. But as historians we prefer to explore how that long history of competition and relation has generated many potentials, and as theologians, to ask what resources those possibilities can offer theologies of hope in the present. We have suggested that within these historical religions, theologians and historians inevitably contribute to competitive relations. The question we are attempting to answer here in the affirmative is if they can do so in a simultaneously critical and constructive way.

One way to imagine that is as some kind of complementary collaboration between different "faculties" (as Kant put it), in which the historian's attention is reserved for the critical, and the theologian's for the constructive. We would, rather, think about how each can simultaneously integrate critical and constructive thinking in their engagement with the co-produced historical archive of the three religions.

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[45] Ramon Llull, *The Book* of *the Gentile and the Three Wise Men,* ed. and trans. Anthony Bonner, *Selected Works* of *Raymond Llull* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), vol. 1, 95–305, here 302.

[46] See, e.g., b. ʿErub. 13b.

[47] We say arguably, because Rabbi Luria might not have understood his words as applying so broadly. Shlomo Luria, *Yam Shel Shlomo on Tractate Hullin* (Offenbach: Seligman Ruiz, 1718), First Introduction, 1a. There are many statements about the polysemous nature of God's words in the classical rabbinic corpus, some gathered in Azzan Yadin, "The hammer on the rock: polysemy and the school of Rabbi Ishmael," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (2003): 1–17. We are grateful to Shlomo Zuckier for providing this example.

[48] This motto (appearing in the foreward to his "Eight Chapters"; see Moses Maimonides, "Eight Chapters" in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, ed. Raymond L. Weiss (New York, NY: NYU Press, 1975), 59-104, at 60) is similar to and perhaps influenced by that of Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Kindī (d. 873), a major patron of Graeco-Arabic translations, who stated in the introduction to his book on Metaphysics: "We ought not to be ashamed of appreciating the truth and of acquiring it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. For the seeker of truth nothing takes precedence over the truth, and there is no disparagement of the truth, nor belittling either of him who speaks it or of him who conveys it." See *Kitāb al-Kindī ilā al-Muʿtasim bi-Allah fī al-falsafa al-ūlā*, ed. Roshdi Rashed and Jean Jolivet, *Œuvres philosophiques et scientifiques d'al-Kindi, vol. 2, Métaphysique et cosmologie* (Leiden: Brill 1998), 13; translation Alfred L. Ivry, *Al-Kindī's Metaphysics: A Translation of Ya'qub ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī's Treatise "On First Philosophy"* (fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 58. See Lukas Muehletaler, "Hear the Truth Whoever Speaks It: Moses Maimonides and his Adjuration," in: *'Höre die Wahrheit, wer sie auch spricht'. Stationen des Werkes von Moses Maimonides vom islamischen Spanien bis ins moderne Berlin* (Berlin: Schriften des Jüdischen Museums, 2014), 13-20. On the reception of Maimonides among Muslim thinkers see Amir Mazor, "'Hear the Truth Whoever Speaks it: Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* in the Eyes of Medieval Muslims*," Chilufim* 31 (2024): 1-30.

What would it mean for historians to do their work on the co-produced archive in a simultaneously critical and constructive way? Perhaps it would be enough simply to cultivate an awareness that, regardless of the historian's intentions, research into the past of "historical religions" is not independent of those religions. It is not only that historical methodologies and philosophies have emerged from and been shaped by those religions, but also that historians' practices create constructive theological potentials for those religions, as well as "de-constructive," critical, relativizing or secularizing ones. That awareness might lessen historians' confidence about their ability to fully emancipate their methodologies and disciplinary assumptions from those of the competing religious traditions they study. But it might also increase the sense that their work has significance, in that the study of the entangled relations between past peoples offers possibilities for people to come. Every historical exploration of the interaction between the three religions, whether in action or thought, creates new possibilities for life and unexpected potentials for understanding for future generations, regardless of the historian's intentions.

Whether they wish to or not, theologians, too, make use of the shared historical and hermeneutic archive in their thinking about God, the relationship of humans to God, the nature and meaning of revelation, and of the historical. For them acknowledging the co-produced histories of their faiths could mean exploring and acknowledging ever more what their own tradition owes to the others, again in the positive and negative sense of owing. From this insight into their deeply ambivalent historical heritage, they might draw an intrinsic interest in the other traditions and recognize them as both competing with and complementing one another in their own attempts to respond to human contingency and the inexhaustibility of the divine.[49]

This might be our methodological desire from the perspective of our own hopes and fears in the present. Yet we have also tried to make clear-that we don't get to say—if we want to remain historical—that one way of putting to work the uncountable potentials of religious co-production is true to the archive and another is not. Any potential produced by interpreting the archive is in some sense true to it. Precisely for this reason it is our responsibility, both as historians and as theologians, to decide which of these many often-ambivalent potentials, co-produced in an infinite number of moments in the past, we wish to activate today in historical or theological writing, in teaching or in pastoral care. We must ask ourselves why we do so, with what disciplinary warrant, and to what end. But even as we do so we should recognize simultaneously that, within the study of these three "historical religions," such decisions are potentially fateful ones, and that no one can know with certainty what their consequences will

[49] We think here, for example, of Amir Dziri's critical-constructive re-assessment of "The Co-production of Alteration (*taḥrīf*) and Adherence (*tamassuk*). Muslim Attitudes toward the Qurʾān in Reaction to Accusations against Jews and Christians of Changing the 'Tawrāh' and 'Injīl';" and Reinhold Bernhardt offering "A Christology Sensitive to Jewish and Muslim Concerns" in which he describes "this kind of theology (…) as co-produced because it takes Jewish and Muslim perspectives seriously and incorporates them into its own reflections (…) not in a negative (apologetic or even polemical) but in a positive way by regarding them as dialogue-partners that help to clarify one's own Christology, to protect it against misunderstanding and to transform it so that it might be more convincing even for Christians" (p. 293). Both essays are published in *The Co-production of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Artefacts, Rituals, Communities, Narratives, Doctrines, Concepts*, ed. Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg (Turnhout: Brepols, 2025), 275-292 for Dziri and 293-311 for Bernhardt, here: 293).

be in the fulness of time. In that simultaneity lie both hope and humility, the two gifts that the co-produced archive offers the theologian and the historian of these three religions.

Holding these two gifts in one hand is not easy. Consider "Theology after Auschwitz," one of the most interesting attempts to find constructive theological responses to horrors that had themselves been partly nourished by theologies of history. Drawing on the philosopher Hans Jonas' rereading of kabbalistic traditions, that theology imagined the one and almighty God as deliberately powerless, a creator who subjects his own destiny to his creation, to the world, to history.[50] Christian theologians, particularly in Germany, gratefully took up this idea, finding in it new possibilities to (re)discover the dignity and beauty of kenotic motifs in their own intellectual tradition, even beyond confessional boundaries.[51] In the suffering Christ, they found a figure that enabled them to continue speaking of God after the Shoah. It also inspired historians and theologians to critically reevaluate the long history of Christian anti-Judaism. We could even say that it offered the 'historical religions,' to recall Hodgson once again, the possibility of incorporating the historical into the doctrine of God in the most consequent way. God no longer directs history from outside, nor does he intervene in it or reveal himself in historical events, as in the long tradition of Christian historical thinking we have discussed. Instead, God himself becomes historical in the deepest sense, as he surrenders himself to human history, thereby summoning mankind to responsibility not only for each other but also for (rather than *before*) God himself. Is that not an ingenious theological turn, a new alliance between humility and hope, a way of combining the historically critical and the theologically constructive?

And yet it is also true that even this best-intentioned and historically responsible theology is one more inscription in the long history of Christian appropriations and incorporations of Judaism. In fact, Jonas' "Gottesbegriff" proved more attractive to Christian theologians than to Jewish thinkers, an asymmetry that we should want to explore. We don't say this to dismiss or criticize Christian "Theology after Auschwitz," or any other Jewish, Christian, or Muslim attempt to put to work historical events for a 'better' theology. We only wish to emphasize that the deeply ambivalent co-productive dynamics never stop. There is a tragic potentiality in the co-production of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity as historical religions, and the danger of falling into the same traps of historico-theological reasoning time and again. It is precisely because these are not only historical but also kerygmatic religions, to quote Hodgson for the last time, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism not only share competing claims to the past, but also a call for individual responsibility in the present.

Hence the need for a strong and lasting partnership between critical and constructive thinking, a partnership that can reinforce the ability of theologians and historians to recognize and reflect upon the ongoing potentials of religious co-production in their own practice. We say

[50] Hans Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz: Eine jüdische Stimme* (Stuttgart: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984). An English version was also published by Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz*:* A Jewish Voice," *The Journal of Religion* 67, no. 1 (1987): 1-13.

[51] Christian theologians often denote this with the Greek term "kenotic," thereby christianizing the kabbalistic idea in what is itself a symptom of co-production; cf. the re-evaluation of kenotic theology in Bruce Lindley McCormack, *The Humility of the Eternal Son* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

"recognize," not "avoid." Within a world shaped by "historical religions," avoiding co-productions is impossible. But there is much to be learned simply from recognition and reflection. Among the most important and the easiest of those lessons: for both the historically alert theologian and the theologically attentive historian, their own present and their own work must not be seen as the end point of a historical development. They can never be other than a moment within the entangled and ongoing temporalities of the world.

To put it positively, co-production can recall historians and theologians to what we will call the virtue of eschatological humility. Compare the "epistemic humility" to which comparative theology summons dogmatic thinkers: "humble awareness of the limitation of one's own understanding and experience and of the possibility of change and growth."[52]
We share a sense of the value of epistemic humility, but our method seeks to develop as well an awareness of the degree to which our eschatological hopes and our historical tools (that is, the tools we draw on to determine what constitutes change and growth, what constitutes movement toward or away from our hopes and ideals) are themselves co-produced and inseparable. Hence the need for an eschatological humility that would have us cultivate scepticism toward claims that the kerygmatic can be legibly mapped onto the historical, while at the same time recognizing that the imperative to do so is a basic aspect of these religions, and of the many cultures of modernity they have deeply influenced.

Those who inhabit these religions and cultures will continue to compete over the correct interpretation of past events and their prophetic potentials, assigning each other places in rival histories of revelation and salvation. Given the complexity of the world, the nature of human knowledge, and the inescapably fragmentary limitations of the historical archive, that striving will not yield truths we should presume to call eternal. What it will articulate is a shared hope in the utility of history as a mode to address a future that beckons always beyond the reach of human knowledge.

[52] See Catherine Cornille, *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroads 2008), 388. This definition of epistemic humility is only one of many on offer, and it is perhaps already self-contradictory in expressing confidence that we can know what constitutes (positive) change and growth.