

# Theologies of Self and Other in American Jewish Liturgies

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Because one of the most comprehensive and authoritative (but not systematic) statements of Jewish theology is embedded in the *siddur*, one productive avenue for understanding the Jewish understanding of “self” and “other” is to examine its presentation(s) in the liturgy. After a brief introduction to the context in which this theological statement resides, this paper will address two specific elements. First, it will identify and present as systematically as possible the statement about the religious “other” embedded in the received traditional prayer book, focusing on the Ashkenazi rite (and limiting this to the liturgies printed in the *siddur* and not the more elaborate holiday liturgies of the *maḥzor*). Second, it will study the presentation of the religious other in the most important contemporary American Jewish liturgies. This second study is significant for several reasons. Even in a community that prays only with the halakhically mandated received Hebrew texts, English translations are fully flexible and thus can represent the interpretative moves and sensitivities (or lack thereof) of the contemporary community. Indeed, in such a community, the translations are present for the benefit of the newcomer, the less educated, and the visitor who may or may not be Jewish. In contrast, in more liberal Jewish communities, these translations are frequently the active texts of prayer. As new texts, and particularly as vernacular texts, they are subject to theological scrutiny to a degree essentially unprecedented in post-talmudic Jewish liturgical history. Their statements about the religious other, while perhaps still somewhat apologetic in nature, are also positive statements of contemporary theology.

In both these cases, it would be inappropriate to look only at the portrayal of Christians in Jewish liturgy, for at no time have Christians been globally the only significant religious other for Jews.

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Jewish theology about the religious other develops from the biblical period, when the “other” was the pagan idolater. Although it is certainly shaped by the encounter with Christianity, it is equally shaped by its encounter with Islam, and one should probably minimally add to this various Persian religions and Gnostic philosophies. Therefore, the narrative that undergirds Jewish liturgy, with few exceptions,<sup>1</sup> presents a nonspecific understanding of the religious other. Rather, the “we” of the liturgy is unmistakably the people Israel.<sup>2</sup> There is an “other,” but it is most frequently defined by “not Israel” unless memorializing some specific historical event, such as at Passover, Hanukkah, Purim, or one or another tragedy. The generic “others” are the descendents of the biblical nations of the world, the *goyei ha'arazot*, or more colloquially, *goyim*. They do not have distinct religious identity just as they do not have distinct national identity. They are simply outside the community of Jewish worshipers—open to interpretation according to the worshipers’ personal experience. In addition, in most cases, the national or religious identity of the specifically named “other” designates a people no longer extant, like Pharaoh’s Egyptians, the Persians, Assyrians, Hellenistic Greeks, or Romans. Tragedies perpetrated by Christians (and Muslims, but there were fewer) present the exception, creating the potential for Jews to identify contemporary Christians with the historical oppressors, not just in Holocaust memorials, but in remembering almost a millennium’s worth of persecutions, expulsions, and worse.

With the exception of the Reconstructionist liturgists, there is little evidence that any contemporary American Jewish group has thought systematically or deeply about the theological statement that its liturgy makes about the surrounding gentile world. The rather extensive highlighting of the issues that follows is a necessary prerequisite to an informed consideration of the questions.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Religious Other in Traditional Hebrew Liturgy**

A perusal of traditional Jewish liturgies from the last millennium<sup>4</sup> will uncover almost no overt references to Christianity, a very few veiled references, but a wealth of prayers that portray non-Jews, either in general or in specific historical contexts, as in error, evil, or simply outside the community with which the worshiper is expected to identify.<sup>5</sup> As James Carroll has pointed out, there is a continuum from the positive act of defining group identity, to fear

of the outsider, to full demonization of the outsider, with very fine lines distinguishing one from the other.<sup>6</sup> One also finds no neutral acknowledgments of the Christian or Muslim “other” in traditional Jewish liturgies and certainly no celebration of them as neighbors, fellow monotheists, or any other plausible positive category. Thus, after an examination of those texts that can be read as direct references to Christians, I will also examine the recurrent themes of the liturgy that shape a more general Jewish identity vis-à-vis the religious other.

#### A. Overt References to Christians

A handful of statutory prayer texts may well include references to Christians, either as they were composed, as the texts evolved, or as they have been commonly read. The earliest is the (in)famous *birkat haminin*, the malediction against the sectarians or heretics.<sup>7</sup> The Talmud records that in the late first century, Rabban Gamliel’s academy added this text to the daily *tefillah*, the eighteen benedictions corresponding to and filling the covenantal role of Temple sacrifices. The Talmud suggests that, at least by the early third century, the *birkat haminin* functioned to exclude certain undesirable people from leading communal prayer.<sup>8</sup> Scholars have erroneously conflated this with the Gospel of John’s references to the exclusion of Christians from the synagogue.<sup>9</sup> There is little to support the suggestion that Christians—as opposed to others who resisted rabbinic leadership—were the original object of this malediction, or that this prayer and its larger context found quick acceptance in the pre-existent synagogue.<sup>10</sup> We have no “original” text of the prayer, and like all Jewish liturgy, the earliest textual witnesses date from approximately a millennium later.

These earliest manuscripts exhibit significant variety in their precise listing of categories of undesirable people; however, they do indeed include terminology that might be understood to refer to Christians. The two most common versions found in the *geniza* read:<sup>11</sup>

RUTH LANGER

	<i>Version A</i>	<i>Version B</i>	<i>Diaspora Ashkenaz Today</i>
A	<p>MydmwCml hwqt yht Ia</p> <p>For the apostates may there be no hope</p>	<p>yht Ia MydmCml wbwCy al Ma hwqt Ktrwtl</p> <p>For the apostates may there be no hope if they do not return to Your Torah;</p>	<p>MynyCl mlw hwqt yht Ia</p> <p>For the informers may there be no hope</p>
B	<p>hrhm Nwdz tukl mw rbCtw rgot wnymyb oynktw</p> <p>and may the arro- gant kingdom speed- ily be uprooted, smashed, and brought low in our day;</p>		
C	<p>Mynymhw Myrxwnhw wdbay ogrk</p> <p>and may the <i>Nozrim</i> [?Christians, Naza- renes] and the <i>minim</i> [sectarians] immedi- ately be lost;</p>	<p>Mynymhw Myrxnh wdbay ogrk</p> <p>And may the <i>Nozrim</i> and the <i>minim</i> imme- diately be lost,</p>	<p>hoCrh l kw dbat ogrk</p> <p>And may all the evil immediately be lost;</p>
D	<p>Kmo ybywa l kw Mhyrrwxw wtrky hrhm</p> <p>and all the enemies of Your people and their oppressors be speedily cut off;</p>		<p>Kybywa l kw wtrky hrhm</p> <p>And may all Your enemies all be speed- ily cut off;</p>
E	<p>Myygh l wo rwbCw wnytrix lom</p> <p>and break the yoke of the gentiles from our necks.</p>		

THEOLOGIES OF SELF AND OTHER

F		<p>Mow Myyj rpsm wj my wbtky la Myqydx</p> <p>Blot them out from the Book of Life; do not inscribe them with the righteous.</p>	
G			<p>rqot hrhm Mydzhw oynktw rgmtw rbCtw wnymyb hrhmb</p> <p>And may the arro- gant speedily be uprooted, smashed, cast down and brought low, speed- ily and in our days.</p>
H	<p>MyoCr rbwC y"ab Mydz oynkmw</p> <p>Blessed are You, who breaks the evildoers and brings low the arrogant.</p>	<p>Mydz oynkm y"ab</p> <p>Blessed are You, who brings low the arro- gant.</p>	<p>Mybywa rbwC y"ab Mydz oynkmw</p> <p>Blessed are You, Eternal, who breaks the enemies and brings low the arro- gant.</p>

Version A probably represents a rite of Jews who followed Babylonian geonic rites, whereas version B is probably Palestinian. While Palestinian rites likely took form in the Byzantine period, making it not surprising that they embed a response to Christianity, it is difficult to know to what extent Christianity was a real issue to Babylonian Jews. The geniza texts themselves date from a world where Islam was the dominant other. From at least the fourth century, though, Church fathers were aware that Jews were cursing Christians in their synagogues. This became an element of medieval Christian polemics against Judaism, resulting eventually in some Jewish self-censorship and then official Church-imposed censorship of this prayer from the sixteenth century. Explicit reference to Christians never appears in preserved European prayer books. Censorship forces various omissions: "apostates" is replaced by "informers"—also traitors from the Jewish perspective; Israel's enemies become God's enemies; the arrogant empire becomes simply "arrogant." The resulting Ashkenazi malediction no longer

curse specific socio-political or religious groups, but refers to categories of people defined by universal moral categories.

Also ancient in its composition and also subject to Christian censorship is the *‘aleynu* prayer:

It is incumbent upon us to praise the Lord of all ... who did not make us like the nations of the world ... For they bow down to nothingness and emptiness and pray to a God who does not save while we bend our knee and prostrate ourselves and give thanks before the King, the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He ...

This prayer is one of the earliest exemplars of liturgical poetry from the rabbinic period, used as the elaborate introduction to the recitation of biblical verses about God’s sovereignty in the Rosh Hashanah *musaf* (additional) service into which the rabbis integrated the shofar blasts.<sup>13</sup> At some point, it was added to the Yom Kippur *musaf* too, and, beginning in the late twelfth century, it was introduced into the daily liturgy, becoming, by the fourteenth century, a virtually obligatory and universal closing prayer to every service.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the prayer’s language probably originated in a world in which Christianity was becoming an important religious force, but it may equally well refer to pagan idolaters in a continuation of a more biblical theology. One could certainly, in contrast, cite exemplars of Hebrew liturgical poetry from the Byzantine world, and later, whose explicit slurs against Christianity leave nothing to interpretation.

Nonetheless, in medieval Europe, the obvious “they” were Christians. In a world that loved to find hidden meanings in the numerical values of Hebrew letters, Jews noticed that the letters of QYRW (and emptiness) and WCY (Jesus) both equal 316.<sup>15</sup> They could thus read the prayer as a contrast between authentic Jewish worship and Christian idolatry. However, Christian intolerance for any Jewish “blasphemy” resulted in the censorship of this line, thus reinforcing its anti-Christian interpretation. It is hard to know how quickly actual recitation of the line in question disappeared. It is not difficult to find medieval manuscripts in which the line has simply been blacked out—a vivid reminder of what is missing. After censorship began, many scribes simply left the space blank—an only slightly less vivid reminder. Gradually the space closed and the line dropped from public consciousness.<sup>16</sup> However, once recovered by modern scholarship, this verse has joined the ranks of recovered

texts, and the line in question appears in the American Orthodox prayer books printed by ArtScroll as well as in Israeli *siddurim* like those of *Rinat Yisra'el* and *Qoren* produced with scholarly guidance. For the generation to which this line was restored, its meaning cannot help but recall the reasons for its censorship. Rabbi Robert Klapper (modern Orthodox) suggests that we do not, in this case, try to reintroduce the original text, but instead that we should consider the censorship an “act of God” and be grateful that this line was removed from our prayers.<sup>17</sup>

Another prayer in this category is a genuine latecomer, the Aramaic *berikh shemei demarei 'alma* (Blessed is the name of the master of the world), recited while the Torah is being removed from the ark prior to its reading, in accordance with Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai's directive in the *Zohar*.<sup>18</sup> This text, “discovered” by Moshe de Leon (and contemporary scholarship suggests, “written”) in late-thirteenth-century in Spain, is the earliest source for the prayer; its inclusion in prayer books is common only from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the popularization of kabbalah.<sup>19</sup> Embedded in the prayer, after an effusive praise of and discussion of human reliance on God, is the passage:

I am the servant of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and I bow down at all times before Him and before the glory of His Torah. I do not place my trust in a human being, nor do I rely on a *bar 'elahin*, but rather on the God of heaven, for He is the God of truth ...

What is *bar 'elahin*? Literally, the term translates as “son of God,” and in the Christian contexts of this prayer's composition and liturgical use not relying on a “son of God” refers to rejection of Jesus. However, the term itself is a biblical allusion to Daniel 3:25, naming the being who joined Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Ḥananiah, Misha'el and 'Azariah) in the fiery furnace. Subsequently, in 3:28, he is referred to explicitly as God's angel. This angel joined these men in their trial because of their refusal to “serve or worship any god but their own God” (Dan 3:28 end), precisely the message of this prayer. Therefore, it is difficult to claim that this passage necessarily makes negative reference to Jesus, although those who want to interpret it this way certainly have done so.<sup>20</sup>

A serious methodological question needs to be addressed in this context. To what extent are texts that might be interpreted as anti-Christian, either in their composition or in their subsequent usage,

really anti-Christian? Certain scholarly schools try to interpret any liturgical statement or action as a reaction to a specific external factor, allowing them to pinpoint the prayer's putative origins. In general, in Jewish liturgical studies, such methods have been discredited as overly simplistic. They not only presume a single composition of prayers and rituals that more likely emerged organically over time, but they also mistakenly assume precise textual transmission in the rabbinic world and later.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, they presume that the original impetus for recitation of a specific text remained the intention of worshipers of later generations. However, in certain circles, particularly when influences of Christianity can be suggested, these methods reign supreme today.<sup>22</sup>

When Jewish polemics against others are couched in vague language, to whom do they refer? Was Christianity sufficiently influential in Palestine in the formative stages of rabbinic liturgical practice to have generated such responses and more responses than any other group? Might some of the veiled polemics really be against people defined by something other than Christianity? Even in medieval Europe, where Christianity definitely posed challenges for Jews, do *veiled* criticisms of other religious possibilities necessarily refer to Christianity? Were Jewish texts always deliberately subversive in this way?<sup>23</sup> Even if this was sometimes true, is every instance where we might read in an anti-Christian statement necessarily meant that way? And, perhaps most importantly, is any presumption of there being a single true meaning of a Jewish liturgical text a gross injustice to that text's poetic and midrashic basis? Even the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, while fixing the wording of prayers most strictly, offered long lists of layers of sometimes incompatible meanings for those words. The meanings of Jewish prayers lie in the interpretations of the worshiper, not fully in the language of the texts themselves.

*Bar 'elahin* may indeed be intended as a veiled reference to Jesus, but other prayers address Christian theology more overtly. Medieval liturgical poetic restatements of Jewish creed exclude certain understandings, those of Christians and Muslims, from Jewish theology. The best known, although not necessarily the best understood, of these hymns, are *'adon 'olam* and *yigdal*,<sup>24</sup> the latter explicitly based on Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith.<sup>25</sup> In *'adon 'olam* we find the lines:



THEOLOGIES OF SELF AND OTHER

And after everything has been completed, He, the Awed One, will  
reign alone ...  
He is one, and He has no second who may be compared to Him or  
joined to Him.

In *yigdal*, even more explicitly:

He, the Hidden, is one, and there is no unity like His unity, and  
there is also no end to His oneness.  
He has no bodily form and no body ...  
There will never arise another prophet like Moses ...  
God gave a Torah of truth to His people through His prophet, the  
faithful one of His house [Moses].  
God will never ever change or take away his teaching ...  
At the end of days He will send his Messiah to redeem those who  
await His salvation at the end.

The need to exclude the beliefs of others determines the contents of most creeds. Judaism's positive statements of faith in the Middle Ages include explicit refutations of: the Trinity, especially any incarnation of God; the claim that the New Testament and its covenant supersede the Old; divine revelation through Jesus (and Muhammed); and that the Messiah has come.

It would be fallacious to suggest that every time that Jews reflect on Divine Unity, this is an anti-trinitarian statement. The *shema*<sup>c</sup> itself emphasizes God's unity, but this prayer likely characterized at least private Jewish piety long before the advent of Christianity. The rabbis presume its recitation twice a day, based on the contents of the biblical text itself, and recount no plausibly historical account of its institution. Similarly, then, it is questionable whether liturgical references to Israel as those who "unify God's name" are meant to distinguish "unitarians" specifically from "trinitarians."<sup>26</sup> The obvious exception to this are the lines toward the end of *avinu malkeinu*, recited during the High Holy Days and on fast days:

Our Father our King, act for the sake of those who were killed for  
the sake of Your Holy Name.  
Our Father our King, act for the sake of those who were slaugh-  
tered for Your unity.  
Our Father our King, act for the sake of those who went into fire  
or water for the sanctification of Your Name.  
Our Father our King, avenge before our eyes the spilled blood of  
Your servants.

and the similar sentiments voiced almost every Sabbath in the prayer *av haraḥamim* following the Torah reading. In his *siddur* commentary, Seligman Baer notes that these lines are found only in the Ashkenazi rite; he surmises that they were added in response to the first Crusade.<sup>27</sup> With this, then, Jews created ritualized memories of Christian persecutions and specifically of persecutions that led Jews to martyr themselves (literally, “sanctify God’s name”) for God’s “unity.” These painful memories, evoking the prayer’s call for God to avenge the martyrs’ blood, create an image of the Christian as a horrific life-threatening “other.” This prayer is not unique, but this concept finds its expression most frequently in non-statutory liturgy, especially in liturgical poetry.<sup>28</sup>

#### *B. Positive Statements of Jewish Identity*

If we exclude liturgical poetry, we are left with few unambiguous references to Christianity in the received traditional Jewish liturgy. On the other hand, there are many recurrent tropes and theological themes central to the liturgy that do place Jews and Judaism in contrast to a nonspecific gentile world. Jews quite naturally read such prayers over and against their current reality and their historical consciousness.

How a liturgy defines its own community also communicates an implicit teaching about those lying outside that community. How exclusive is our relationship to God, and what are the implications of that relationship? For whom do we pray, and in what way? What is our attitude to outsiders? Although none (or few?) of the themes that arise from these questions derives specifically from the relationship between Christians and Jews, modern Jews seeking to live as part of western society naturally struggle with them in terms of this reality. In this section, we will lay out the themes themselves as the traditional liturgy presents them; in the following section, we will discuss the modern negotiations with them.

Without doubt, the traditional liturgy portrays its community, Israel, as distinctive among human communities. The liturgy calls for daily, explicit acknowledgment of this fact, with the early morning blessing, “Praised are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has not made me a gentile.”<sup>29</sup> The prayers constantly identify Israel as “His people” or “Your people,” and refer explicitly throughout to God’s choice of Israel from among the nations. For example, we find:

- Chosenness expressed through the act of revelation of Torah: "... who has chosen us from among all the nations and given us the Torah of truth ..." (daily blessing for Torah study; blessing before liturgical reading of Torah).<sup>30</sup>
- Chosenness expressed by the Sabbath: "Eternal our God, You did not give [the Sabbath] to the nations of the world, nor did You, our Sovereign, make it the heritage of those who worship idols, nor shall the uncircumcised<sup>31</sup> dwell in its rest. But rather You gave it lovingly to Israel Your people, to the seed of Jacob whom You have chosen." (Sabbath morning *amidah*, sanctification of the day)<sup>32</sup>
- Chosenness expressed by the festival: "You have chosen us from among all the nations, You have loved us and been pleased by us; and you exalted us among all the tongues and sanctified us by Your commandments. And You have drawn us near, our Sovereign, to Your worship, and You proclaimed Your great and holy name upon us. And You have lovingly given us the festivals ..." (*amidah* sanctification of the day, all services at all festivals).

Israel's distinctiveness lies in a number of factors that devolve from this chosen status. Israel is distinct from the nations in her observance and study of Torah and its laws, in her calendar, and the blessings that arise from adherence to it. Today's people of Israel can continue to make these claims because it is their heritage, ultimately from their biblical ancestors, particularly the patriarchs (and matriarchs, though to a lesser degree in traditional Judaism).

This very personal historical consciousness is an important element in defining the "we" of Jewish liturgy. Technically, this is an element of the rabbinic concept of *zekhut avot*, the merits of the ancestors, which suggests that even though we might personally not be fully worthy of God's attention, the patriarchs and matriarchs, and all pious, good Jews since (including the martyrs discussed above) established a storehouse of "merits" that stand to the benefit of their descendents.<sup>33</sup> Hence, we find such prayers as:

- ... our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, supreme God ... who remembers the pious deeds of the ancestors and lovingly brings redemption to their descendents for the sake of His name ... (*avot*, opening blessing of every *amidah*)<sup>34</sup>

- ... for the sake of our ancestors who trusted in You and You taught them the statutes of life, so too be gracious to us and teach us ... (*ahavah rabbah*, blessing for Torah preceding the *shema*<sup>c</sup>).
- Our Father our King, if righteousness and good deeds cannot be accounted for us, remember for us the patriarchal covenant ... (*hapoteah yad*, in the supplicatory prayers of *tahanun*).
- Remember for us the patriarchal covenant and redeem us for the sake of Your Name (*vehu<sup>2</sup> rahum*).

Obviously, these benefits of descent are particular to Israel and exclude the other nations.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the determinative memories that drive Jewish liturgical experience, the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of Torah at Sinai, the destruction of the Temples, exile from the land are all particular.<sup>36</sup>

To the extent that outsiders appear in Jewish liturgy, they are usually oppositional in one way or another. Historical non-Jews, like Egyptians at the time of the Exodus, Amalekites, Haman, Assyrians, and Greeks, receive specific mention.<sup>37</sup> The presumption that Jews live surrounded by enemies is common in the liturgy too, although it is conceivable that these enemies might be Jews. For instance, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's prayer, recorded in Berakhot 16b, and included in the daily morning preliminary prayers, asks God to save the worshiper "today and every day" from a long list of types of evil people and behaviors, concluding "whether he is a member of the covenant or whether he is not a member of the covenant." However, most would assume that a prayer to God to save "us" from "Your people's enemies" refers to external enemies. But we also find gentiles personified simply as errant, as in the *aleynu* prayer's, "... for He has not made us like the peoples of the [other] lands, nor has He placed us like the families of the earth. For He has not made our portion like theirs, nor our fate like that of their multitudes," followed by the specific reference to gentile idolatry discussed in the previous section.<sup>38</sup>

Consequent to this, positive prayers traditionally tend to be only for Jews. This includes prayers for:

- redemption (God as the One "who redeems Israel" or "gathers in the dispersed of His people Israel"—both from the weekday *amidah*). However, there are exceptions (see below);

- healing, both in the *amidah* where God is the “healer of the sick of Your people Israel” and in the *mi sheberakh* prayers for healing in the presence of the Torah scroll (“Bless ... among the rest of the ill of Israel”);
- peace, generally “for us and for Israel Your people.”

It is possible that this Israel-centeredness derives from an understanding that it is only out of the covenantal context that we formally, as a community, worship God. Therefore, perhaps, our petitions are effective only for those who stand within this context?

Yet, there are places where a more universal outlook does enter the prayers. God is the Creator of all, “who mercifully sheds light on the earth and on those who dwell on it” (*yozer* blessing before *shema*<sup>c</sup>); He hears the prayers of “every mouth” (*tahanun*: *’ana’ melekh*); all living things respond in gratitude to God and praise His name (*modim* in the *amidah*). While the apparent universality of these prayers might be explained to refer just to Israel—after all, when the rabbis say *kulei ’alma*, “all the world,” they frequently mean only those few who agree with them—others unambiguously include the nations of the world, particularly in the messianic redemption, when all will come to recognize God. The concluding section of *aleynu* states:

Therefore, we place our hope in You, Eternal our God, to see speedily the glory of Your Might, to remove idols from the earth and false gods will be utterly cut off, to repair the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty. All flesh will call on Your Name, causing all the evil ones of the earth to turn to You. All who dwell on earth shall recognize and know that to You should every knee bend and every tongue swear oaths. Before You, Eternal our God, they will kneel and fall down and give honor to the Glory of Your Name. All of them will accept the yoke of Your Sovereignty, and You will reign over them forever ...<sup>39</sup>

Yet, it probably should be argued that this universalism is still Israel-centered in that this is a messianic end that will be brought about for the sake of Israel and, in some eschatologies, in response to Israel’s deeds.

In the traditional liturgy, then, the rest of the world—of whatever stripe—exists only as the outsider to the well-defined community of Israel. The liturgy does not acknowledge the categories of righteous gentile, Noahide, God-fearer, or resident alien, to name some of the

pre-rabbinic and rabbinic categories on which contemporary Jews build positive theologies of the religious other. Why? A partial answer certainly points to the degree to which the early rabbis reinforced communal boundaries by building social walls against interaction with any non-Jews. The community of interest and theological importance, the community of prayer, was solely Israel, and there was no need to define the boundaries of this community by comparison with the outside world. In addition, the authoritative, conservative system described above received much of its form early, before the development of other monotheistic religions that might have required deeper response. Even if elements of response to these religions shaped the ultimate language of the statutory prayers, these responses of a minority community tended to be subtly embedded in allusive language. Obvious responses to Christianity and Islam entered the traditional liturgy primarily on its margins, in its optional poetry.<sup>40</sup>

### Contemporary Reinterpretations

Needless to say, this image of “self” and “other” challenged Jews as they entered modernity. Most responded eagerly to the opportunity to be citizens and full members of western society, a consequence of which was more intensive and positive interactions with their Christian neighbors. But identity *with* western society conflicts directly with the theology of the traditional liturgy. One could not simultaneously say to that world, “We belong,” and look different, sound different, or even smell different—let alone profess that differentness. Along with abandonment of the external forms that made the synagogue markedly other from the (Protestant) church,<sup>41</sup> then, modernized Jews found ways to create liturgical texts that reflected their integration into the western world—or the integration that they believed should be inculcated into their communities.<sup>42</sup>

However, the process of theological revision from the early nineteenth century through today has been anything but simple. Much of it centered on questions such as the nature of Jewish messianism and its concomitant doctrines such as resurrection of the dead, return to Zion, and restoration of sacrificial worship that seemed to contradict rational belief and identity with the western nation-state. While these doctrines did not explicitly touch the questions of identity that we address here, first Zionism and then the Holocaust and

the birth of Israel forced modern Jews to struggle directly with the issue. This issue remains not fully resolved, creating continuing confusion in the theological understandings of “self” and hence of “other” for many Jews.

In addition, the different movements of contemporary Judaism have adopted differing halakhic stances that shape their options for liturgical reform. In general, Orthodox Jews allow no change to the Hebrew text of the prayers, except, perhaps, in some elements of liturgical poetry. Translations, though, may be interpretative, as they are not authoritative and are almost never used as prayer texts communally (and are present only for the benefit of the uneducated—women, non-Orthodox Jews, guests). The Conservative movement, historically, allowed only exceedingly minor changes to the statutory Hebrew liturgy, but the most recent prayer books have added more, sometimes as alternative readings. Depending on the synagogue, the English translations may be used publicly. Reform Judaism incorporated significant liturgical change from its beginnings, including even the Hebrew texts of the prayers. However, the primary language of prayer in Reform synagogues is the vernacular, and this has been the focus of most changes. Reconstructionist liturgy also, from the beginning, incorporated theologically/ideologically driven changes in the Hebrew texts that remained often the primary language of prayer.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, there is an entire spectrum of presentations of our Christian neighbors in prayer books in current use in the American Jewish world.<sup>44</sup>

#### A. Orthodox

The contemporary Orthodox world defines itself by adherence to traditional *halakhah*, including the received liturgical text, and by varying degrees of opposition to the outside world. Therefore, its core Hebrew and Aramaic prayer texts are nonnegotiable. At the most liberal end of the spectrum, modern Orthodoxy seeks cultural accommodation within the bounds of *halakhah*, which still creates a community that sees itself as religiously rigorously separate. Accommodation to modernity occurs in the esthetic presentation of the liturgy, in the printed translations or commentaries, and sometimes in the choices of *piyyutim* or other non-halakhic elements of the service. However, examination of two common Orthodox *siddurim*, Philip Birnbaum’s *Daily Prayer Book: Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem*<sup>45</sup> and *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur*,<sup>46</sup> reveals no critique of the traditional theology of the religious other. Translations are essentially literal

and give no evidence of being conscious of the presence of the “other.” Granted, *bar ’elahin* is translated by both as “angel,” but this is legitimate, as we saw above.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, the *ArtScroll Siddur* reintroduces not only the censored line “for they bow down to emptiness and nothingness” from *’aleynu*,<sup>48</sup> but also includes a traditional prayer that Birnbaum saw fit to omit from the introduction to the bedtime *shema*.<sup>c</sup> This prayer opens with a global statement of forgiveness for anyone who has harmed or sinned against the worshiper in any way, in this life or another life, and then it narrows this forgiveness so that it applies only *lekhoh bar yisra’el*, “to every son of Israel” (*ArtScroll* translates as “Jew”).<sup>49</sup> As this prayer book series shows itself eminently ready to translate figuratively when it deems it necessary (see, for example, its figurative “translation” of the Song of Songs in the Passover *maḥzor*), it is reasonable to suggest that the editor simply was not concerned either with non-Jewish reaction to its contents or with any acknowledgment of participation in the larger human community.

Outside the Orthodox world, most American Jewish congregations affiliate with one of the three more liberal movements, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or Reform, usually adopting their movement’s official prayer books.<sup>50</sup> Not one of these prayer books shows this utter lack of concern about the presentation of the religious other. Still, even in the margins of these prayer books, one only exceedingly rarely finds explicit reference to Christians or Muslims or their teachings. Those outside the Jewish world still find their place in relationship to the “we” of the praying community—which sometimes includes them. All these liturgies, with differing results, reflect a tension between the desire to maintain a particularistic sense of Jewish identity and the need theologically to justify the modern community’s participation in the larger world. As the traditional prayer book included some universalistic statements, our concern here will be to highlight the places where the various movements have altered or augmented the traditional statement.

#### *B. Conservative*<sup>51</sup>

Conservative prayer books begin with an acceptance of the authoritative traditional Ashkenazi liturgy and make limited changes to the Hebrew of the statutory prayers, usually by retrieving some historical variant on the received text.<sup>52</sup> These prayer books continue the traditional positive portrayal of Jews as God’s chosen people and of the community’s national identity as Israel. This defines the



prayer community. But the Conservative liturgies also exhibit consciousness of a wider social circle and struggle to express this. The clearest example appears in the prayers for peace, which in their traditional formulations pray only for Israel. Based on a text found in the tenth-century *Siddur Rav Saadia Gaon*, the 1946 Silverman prayer book changes the beginning of the prayer *sim shalom* to read *sim shalom ba'olam*, "Grant peace . . . unto the world," but the rest of the prayer, and, indeed, all other prayers for peace, continue in particularistic mode, "for us and for all Israel, Thy people" (101 etc.). The 1985 *Sim Shalom* prayer book extended this sentiment in similar fashion (but without similar precedent) to the afternoon and evening version of the prayer, *shalom rav*, asking for peace *'al yisra'el 'amekha ve'al kol yoshevei tevel*, "to Your people Israel and to all who dwell on earth," before continuing, asking God "to bless Your people Israel in every season and at all times with Your gift of peace," and concluding with the traditional blessing, "who blesses His people Israel with peace" (184–85 etc.). Although the result is ambiguous, this ambiguity is less theological than a product of a desire to preserve the traditional text and to present a reasonably literal translation.<sup>53</sup>

Where these prayer books provide a second and interpretative English text, the message is sometimes much clearer. Where the traditional Sabbath evening *hashkiveinu* prayer concludes with a call for peace for us, Israel, and Jerusalem, Silverman's alternative "translation" concludes with the blessing "whose sheltering love spreads over us, enfolding all who seek thy peace, who find their hope and strength in Thee" (19). *Sim Shalom* imitates this in a reading adapted from a nineteenth-century source that begins, "... guide us to a covenant of peace with all of Your creatures, birds and beasts as well as all humanity reflecting Your image of compassion and peace" and concludes, "Beloved are You, Sovereign of peace whose embrace encompasses Jerusalem, the people Israel and all humanity" (293).<sup>54</sup>

Silverman also tried to avoid some traditional criticisms of gentiles. He changed the morning blessing "who has not made me a gentile" to a positive statement, "who has made me an Israelite" (45), and *Sim Shalom* follows suit (11).<sup>55</sup> Silverman's translations of the *ge'ulah* (redemption) prayers omit all the references, required by the talmudic tradition,<sup>56</sup> to the details of the destruction of the Egyptians in the Exodus (18, 95). He also eliminated the reference to the removal of idolatry from the second paragraph of *'aleyynu* (158). His

*havdalah* text translation includes the distinction “between Israel and the heathen” (247, 262) rather than the literal and broader “[other] peoples.” *Sim Shalom*, in contrast, fairly consistently translates these (and all) prayers literally, visually separating its interpretative alternative texts. One wonders how many of Silverman’s changes were generated by a sense of what was inappropriate content for public vernacular prayer rather than a more nuanced theology.<sup>57</sup>

But Silverman seems to have been very concerned to offset, where possible, the particularism of the traditional *siddur*. He includes various introductory prayers and readings within the body of the prayer book proper, several of which are explicitly universal. One of four suggested prayers before the mourner’s *qaddish* on Friday night reads:

May the Kaddish prayer proclaiming Israel’s hope for Thy true kingdom here on earth, impel us to help speed that day when peace shall be established through justice, and all men recognize their brotherhood in Thee (38).

He invokes every Sabbath with:

Cause us to understand that only through human betterment, true fellowship and deeds of kindness can we feel Thy presence. May this, our Sabbath worship, bring peace to our hearts and strengthen our desire to live in peace with all our fellowmen (2).

On Passover, he opens with “Recalling the redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage, we pray, O Lord, that the day may soon dawn when all Thy children shall be free” (3). *Sim Shalom* includes comparable passages, but transfers most of them to the supplementary readings at the back of the book.<sup>58</sup> Thus, while restrained by its respect for received and traditionally authoritative liturgies, there is a demonstrable and continuing effort by the Conservative movement to include wider circles within the horizons of its prayer. The result is a somewhat mixed message but one with a discernible degree of consistency.

### C. Reconstructionist<sup>59</sup>

There is no comparable ambivalence in the Reconstructionist prayer books, in large part because, although the Reconstructionist movement has preserved much of the structure and general atmo-

sphere of the traditional liturgy, it is readier to change texts and omit passages it finds theologically incorrect. Thus, themes like chosenness, which Mordecai Kaplan, the visionary founder of the movement, found incompatible with a modern view of Judaism, disappear entirely from this liturgy; instead, Israel's mission is part of the free human response to God's call.<sup>60</sup> The Torah blessing, for instance, substitutes *'asher qerevanu la'avodato*, "who has drawn us to your service" (Shabbat 398; comp. Kaplan 161) for the traditional "who has chosen us from among all the peoples."<sup>61</sup> Israel appears throughout as a nation like any other and one integrated into the world community. The *havdalah* text, in listing the distinctions that God has made in the world, simply omits the traditional "between Israel and [other] peoples" (Shabbat 525). The traditional Sabbath liturgy's "You have not given it [the Sabbath/Torah] to other nations" is completely replaced, beginning with Kaplan's liturgies.

Congruent with this, Kaplan begins a process of making the prayers for peace universal. He uses a single translation, mostly derived from *sim shalom*, for all versions of the *'amidah* blessing, which he begins with an inclusion of "all who revere Thee" (like Silverman) and concludes with "may it be good in thy sight to bless Thy people Israel and all the other peoples with abundant strength and peace. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, Author of Peace" (53, 137). His use here of the Palestinian rite's concluding blessing formulary avoids the traditional "who blesses His people Israel with peace" and transforms the entire prayer into a universal text. *Kol Hane-shamah* perpetuates these changes (although it restores the distinction between morning and evening texts),<sup>62</sup> but where Kaplan retained the traditional, particularist texts of the brief but recurring lines like *'oseh shalom* and *yehei shelama' raba'*, it universalizes them too. Everywhere that the liturgy calls on God to bless Israel with peace, this prayer book inserts "and all peoples" or "and all who dwell on earth." An exception to this, the decision to preserve the concluding blessing of the Sabbath evening *hashkiveinu* prayer ("who spreads your canopy of peace over all your people Israel and over Jerusalem," 80–81) and to emphasize it with elaborate illustration and calligraphy, generates a full two pages of commentary. Two of these emphasize that praying for the peace of Jerusalem is really praying for peace for the entire world.<sup>63</sup> The "we" of this liturgy is still undoubtedly Israel, but that Israel situates itself within the family of nations and not over and against them.<sup>64</sup>

Specific references in the traditional liturgy to “others” have also received attention.

- The *birkat haminim* omits the lines referring to God’s enemies and the explicit prayers for their destruction, and the translation reads “Let all who speak and act unjustly find no hope for ill intentions. Let all wickedness be lost” (Daily 112–13 *inter alia*).
- The abbreviated *berikh shemei* retains in its Aramaic text the line of concern to us here, but its translation reads, “In no human benefactor do I place my trust, and on no lesser power do I rely” (Sabbath 386). Kaplan (157) retained “angels”—surprising, given his concerns about supernaturalism. Both, however, avoid the literal and anti-Christian translation, “son of God.”
- In *‘aleyynu*, rather than restoring an original (maybe anti-Christian) line, *Kol Haneshamah* recommends replacements for the entire introductory section, suggesting two alternative texts, one of which is Kaplan’s (59, 195) (relegating the original to the commentary). Where the traditional text teaches that the obligation to praise God arises from Jews’ being set apart from the other nations, these texts derive this obligation either from God’s giving of Torah or from God’s act of creation. David A. Teutsch’s commentary underlines this, stating, “The traditional *Aleyynu* ... has troubled Reconstructionist Jews because it implies the inferiority of other faiths and peoples” (Shabbat: 120–21 *inter alia*).
- As in Silverman, any seeming gloating over the downfall of the Egyptians disappears from the Reconstructionist liturgies, beginning with Kaplan’s own prayer book (38–40, 125). *Kol Haneshamah*’s *ge’ulah* prayers offer a “traditional text” (Shabbat: 74–75; 286f.) as well as Kaplan’s “interpretative version” (Shabbat: 76–77, with reference to it in the morning, p. 286), but none of these texts includes the traditional references to the plague of the firstborn or the drowning of the Egyptians. Instead, in the evening, both versions make reference to the contemporary disaster from which Israel has been saved, the Holocaust and the subsequent redemptive birth of the State of Israel. *Kol Haneshamah*’s “traditional text” reads:

#### THEOLOGIES OF SELF AND OTHER

... it is God who saves us from the hand  
of governments, the very palm of tyrants ...<sup>65</sup>  
From one generation to the next, God is our guarantor,  
and even on a day that turned to night,  
God stayed with us when death's deep shadow fell.  
And even in our age of orphans and survivors,  
God's loving acts have not abandoned us,  
and God has brought together our scattered  
kin from the distant corners of the earth.

(Shabbat: 74, Weekdays: 278–80)

Thus, in its universalism, the Reconstructionist liturgy loses sight neither of the historical identification of Israel nor of the relevance of this historical identification today.<sup>66</sup>

Communal boundaries are more permeable in the contemporary Reconstructionist world. This extends, openly, to the sources of inspiration for religious life. *Kol Haneshamah* identifies the author of each additional reading, whether printed at the bottom of the page or included in the rich selections at the end of the volumes. While the vast majority of authors are Jews, the list includes sources such as Native American prayers, a Palestinian Arab child's prayer for peace, writings of American presidents, Martin Luther King Jr., (secular) Christian authors like Carl Sandburg, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Archibald MacLeish, a Hindu, Rabindranath Tagore,<sup>67</sup> and a Muslim, Sidi Sheikh Muhammad al Jemal. However, this does not extend to actual engagement with the religious teachings of others; like its Conservative cousins, it never mentions the religions by name. Reconstructionist liturgies, thus, portray Israel as one nation among others and Jews as citizens in the human family. Other religious groups have similar status.

#### *D. Reform*<sup>68</sup>

*Kol Haneshamah* presents perhaps the most coherent theology of the religious other of any contemporary American prayer book. In contrast, contemporary Reform liturgies reflect the movement's deliberate theological diversity. Indeed, there is little evidence that, even within this diversity, twentieth-century Reform liturgists have systematically addressed questions of identity vis-à-vis the non-Jewish world. This remains true in the 1994 revision of the *Gates of Prayer*, which eliminated more than half of the alternative services for each occasion, each of which had reflected a unique philosophy

of prayer.<sup>69</sup> This stands in direct contrast to earlier Reform liturgies, which were deliberately crafted works with well-defined theologies expressed in their vernacular prayers and, frequently, also in freely reformed Hebrew texts.<sup>70</sup> Contemporary Reform liturgies often preserve beloved passages from the earlier texts without always considering their theological coherence with the rest of the new composition. Hence, any generalization about or attempt to systematize the statement of Reform liturgies is inherently dangerous. Nevertheless, we can draw some conclusions.

We begin here with an examination of the types of passages that we have discussed in the liturgies of the other movements. For the most part, the traditional texts that might be understood as explicit references to Christianity are entirely absent from the *Union Prayer Book* and remain so. The exception is *yigdal* with its obvious denials of incarnation and trinitarian theology, even in its poetic translations. However, as noted above, the poem as a whole is a positive statement of Jewish creed, not a criticism of Christianity. *Berikh shemei*, like other prayers of kabbalistic origin, is fully absent. The traditional text of the *‘aleyynu* has been reinstated in the *Gates of Prayer*, but without its censored line and with its reference to idolatry now asking that “false gods vanish from our hearts” (1975:615; 1994:148). The *birkat hamininim* is the only blessing of the weekday *‘amidah* still fully omitted in 1975 *Gates of Prayer*—others having been reformulated to avoid mention of the messianic restoration of the Temple or the Davidic kingship. In the 1994 revision, it reappears titled “On Evil” with a revised Hebrew text, translated as:

Let the reign of evil afflict us no more. May every errant heart find its way back to You. O help us to shatter the dominion of arrogance, to raise up a better world where virtue will ennoble the life of Your children. We praise You, O God, whose will it is that evil may vanish from the earth (29).

Though the reference here is clearly political, in a post-Holocaust era, and in a prayer book that is openly cognizant of the Holocaust, the “reign of evil” can allude to the historical experience of Jews in Europe, although the language leaves open other applications.

Specific vindictiveness or any sense of gloating over the downfall of Israel’s enemies is largely absent from these prayer books—there is no traditional mention of drowning Egyptians or the death of the firstborn in the *ge‘ulah* prayers. However, as with the *birkat hamininim*,

the free translations, adapted Hebrew prayers, and totally new texts that characterize Reform liturgies created a unique opening for response to the contemporary world, particularly to the state of Israel and the Holocaust. Simply in the prayers reflecting on God's redemptive powers, we find texts like, "And how unyielding is our people Israel! After the long nights, after the days and years when our ashes blackened the sky, Israel endures, heart still turned to love, soul turning still to life" (1975:209); or more subtly, "He gives us our life; by His help we survive all who seek our destruction" (1975: 34, 131). In addition, to a degree not found in the other prayer books considered here, the *Gates* series includes specific liturgical inserts and services for Holocaust commemoration (1975: 407–11, 573–89; 1994:184–85). Although these and other readings scattered throughout the prayer book mention Auschwitz and Treblinka, although they speak of the sin of those who failed to protest (1975: 408), although they use readings well known as Holocaust poetry, they never once identify the perpetrators or use the words Nazi, German, Christian, etc. Instead, they focus on Jewish memory, healing, and even forgiveness. Still, the most damaging "other" of the twentieth century is definitely present and a subject of theological reflection.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike the Reconstructionists, the Reform movement's prayers show no hesitation about expressing a positive Jewish identity that is distinct from other nations. Chosenness appears not only in the Hebrew, but also regularly in translation.<sup>72</sup> Unlike even the Conservative movement, there is little hesitation about expressing a sense of Jewish superiority through this concept, even where it does not appear explicitly in the traditional liturgy.<sup>73</sup> Many such statements, expressed in terms of Jewish mission, may be traced to beloved prayers from the *Union Prayer Book*. For instance, the festival *qedushat hayom*, reads: "O God, You have chosen us from all the peoples, exalting us by hallowing us with Your Mitzvot. Our Sovereign, You have summoned us to Your service, that through us Your great and holy name may become known in all the earth" (1975:482, 518; comp. UPB I:228). This is a very specific interpretation of the traditional Hebrew text, which translated literally, means only, "You called us by Your great and holy Name," without any indication of mission. This theme occurs regularly in Reform introductory prayers too, those with no (traditional) Hebrew precedent. Lines recur like, "I, the Lord, have made you a covenant people, a light to the nations" (1975: 75, 189, 319, 369–70; 1994:89; UPB I:7). Perhaps

the most bold statement, in an interpretative translation of the *gevurot* in a service designed for the celebration of Bar and Bat Mitzvah, that is, one meant to be comprehended by children, is “Great is the power of Your love. You have made us in Your image and raised us high above all others. You have exalted us to struggle against evil, to strive for holiness, to plant seeds of love in all our dwellings” (1975:372). However, a few other passages place this sense of mission into a universal and less self-aggrandizing context. In the section of readings on “Israel’s Mission” at the back of the book, we find:

The sense of being chosen impressed itself deeply on the soul of our people. And yet they did not consider themselves superior to other nations, for they knew that all humans are God’s children. It was not their lineage but the possession of Torah that made them a choice people ... they always believed that other, too, might be chosen, if only they would choose the way of God ... Israel gave birth in time to other religions that have brought many to God, but our responsibility continues, for our mission remains unfulfilled. It will continue until the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord as the sea-bed is covered by water (1975:704).<sup>74</sup>

This is the most explicit reference to a role of “other religions” that I have located in any contemporary prayer book—and note that these “others” remain unnamed.

At the same time, these liturgies exhibit a growing tendency to locate Israel within the world community and to pray for its benefit too. Although there are many instances in the 1975 *Gates of Prayer* where prayers for peace are voiced just for Israel,<sup>75</sup> many more, and virtually all in the 1994 revision are universalized, either by the insertion of “and all peoples” or more frequently by the use of an interpretative text. A beloved example is the following, adapted from the *Union Prayer Book* and combining themes of universal peace, secular (American!) nationalism, and Israel’s mission:

Grant us peace, Your most precious gift, O Eternal Source of peace, and give us the will to proclaim its message to all the peoples of the earth. Bless our country that it may always be a stronghold of peace, and its advocate among the nations. May contentment reign within its borders, health and happiness within its homes. Strengthen the bonds of friendship among the inhabitants of all



#### THEOLOGIES OF SELF AND OTHER

lands, and may the love of Your name hallow every home and every heart. We praise You, O God, the Source of peace.<sup>76</sup>

We find also some more extreme statements of universal vision, like the following version of *ʿahavah rabbah*, the prayer preceding *shema*<sup>c</sup> in the morning:

O God, the guide and inspiration of all humanity, You have spoken in a thousand tongues for all to hear. In every land and age, we, Your children, have heard Your voice and imagined You in our separate ways. And yet, O God, You are the One: though each may see You differently, You are the One God of all humanity. We give thanks for the sages and teachers of all peoples and faiths, who have brought many to deeper understanding of You and Your will. Gratefully we recall that among them were the lawgivers and prophets, the psalmists and sages of Israel (1975: 321–22).

The “we” of this text is first and foremost “humanity” and only then, as a subcategory of it, “Israel.”

This ambiguity finds clear expression in the weekday prayers. The 1994 edition in its primary service reinstates the morning blessing omitted entirely earlier, but in its liberal form, “who has made me a Jew.”<sup>77</sup> Where the *Union Prayer Book* had just summarized the contents of the intermediate petitions of the *ʿamidah*, the 1975 *Gates of Prayer* and after it the 1994 edition reinstated these prayers as individual blessings. The contents of most of these blessings, traditionally, is far from universal, petitioning God for Israel’s redemption, for the healing of ill Jews, for the restoration of divinely mandated government, for blessing of righteous Jews, and for the specific messianic scenario of the ingathering of the exiles, the restoration of the Temple cult, and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. The *Gates of Prayer* maintains particularism in its prayer for the redemption of Israel, and to a lesser extent in its presenting the messianic era as emanating from Jerusalem to the rest of the world. But its prayer for healing applies to all humanity; ingathering of the exiles has become “liberation for the oppressed”; divinely mandated government refers to “the rulers of all lands”; and the righteous are of “all humankind” and “all honest men and women” at least in English.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, Reform prayer books of the late twentieth century present no coherent theology of Jewish identity vis-à-vis the religious other. Many factors are at play, the most important being: the heritage of beloved Reform prayer texts from a period that was less confused,

combined with incomplete assimilation of the factors that challenged the classical Reform worldview. These factors range from the need to reintegrate Jewish national identity after the Holocaust and the birth of the state of Israel,<sup>79</sup> to changes in American social reality, especially the presence of non-Jews within the synagogue community because of intermarriage. All these factors make it necessary to redefine the identity, the “we,” of the praying community—a task that, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet been seriously undertaken, perhaps because our quickly changing world defies definition.<sup>80</sup> This task probably takes priority over, but will lead to, a redefinition of the “them” that responds to a changing Christian world.

### Conclusion

Traditional Jewish liturgies pay little attention to the world outside, except where it impinges on the welfare of the Jewish community. Prayer emanates from within the community of Israel, rarely acknowledging in any specific way the outside world that lies beyond the horizon of the praying community. Though we find modern additions of prayers for the rest of humanity in general, none of the prayer books examined here specifically engages Christianity or Islam, the religious others with which Jews have engaged and continue most intensely to engage. This underlies the obvious: Jews do not define themselves liturgically as “not Christian” or “not Muslim.” Therefore, the statement of religious identity as presented in the underlying theology of the prayer book does not address directly the Jewish theology of the religious other. However, the ways that Jews define themselves do implicitly define an understanding of non-Jews, those outside “Israel.”

Modern Jews are heirs to this liturgy, and few groups have moved substantially beyond its structures and concepts. However, many Jews today live in a tension between this received religious identity and the reality of their lives as full members of western society. Liturgical resolutions of this tension—where any have been attempted—vary depending on the degree of authority a community grants the received text and the traditions it represents. Thus, we find no responses of substance in Orthodox prayer books; Conservative prayer books have generally made changes only where some Jewish tradition can justify it; Reconstructionist prayer books, based on a coherent modern theology that addresses this question,

present a revised statement of Jewish identity vis-à-vis the outside world; and Reform prayer books present a gamut of theological responses, often contradicting one another, reflecting different periods of Reform theologies. None of these yet reflects a world in which Christians are approaching Jews with hands outstretched in peace. But specific and positive Jewish liturgical response to another religious group requires such a radical reformulation of the nature of the praying community and of its prayer structures that perhaps such responses will largely remain on the margins and uncodified—in sermons, in poetry, and in incidental prayer.

### Notes

1. Scholars like Israel Yuval today and many others in previous generations often explain every anomaly in Jewish ritual practice as a reaction to a specific encounter with Christianity or some persecution. Although historically intriguing, most of these explanations arise from pure speculation and cannot yet be demonstrated. See, for instance, Yuval's two articles in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, vol. 5 of *Two Liturgical Traditions* (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame, 1999). He expands on his methodology in his Hebrew book, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2000). In his introductory chapter (p. 37f.), he suggests that the struggle with Christianity was a fundamental factor in the shaping of Rabbinic Judaism.
2. And not the "synagogue," as is common in Christian discussion. The proper pair to *ecclesia* (church) in Jewish perspective is *'am yisra'el*, the people of Israel, or perhaps *b'nei yisra'el*, the children of Israel.
3. The contemporary liturgies of the British Reform and Liberal movements also evidence conscious reflection on this issue. Contemporary non-Orthodox Israeli liturgies reflect their unique reality. Both of these, even though deserving attention, are beyond the scope of this paper.
4. Our earliest preserved Jewish prayer texts date only from about the ninth century. The earliest manuscripts of the Ashkenazi rite (and all other European rites) date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, more or less the period when the Rhineland communities were insisting on very precise prayer texts. All extant rites thus reflect a community that has been in significant contact with Christianity and Islam.
5. Precise verification of this generalization would require a detailed study of the liturgical poetry inserted into the festival prayer books in various communities, combined with an attempt to understand which texts were actually recited. Particularly in the case of the highly allu-

sive Ashkenazi poetic traditions, there is good reason to question how much of the community understood the meanings of the texts as the words washed over them. Some medieval rabbis, like the Maharil in the fourteenth century, required detailed study of the prayers before participating in them. Aside from the few who followed this, it is unlikely that many dwelled on the precise meanings of individual phrases of the lengthy liturgies. See my *To Worship God Properly: Tensions between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism* (Hebrew Union College Press, 1998), 132.

6. In a lecture on April 26, 2001, at Boston College.
7. One of the most comprehensive recent discussions of this blessing is by Reuven Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 2, ed. E. P. Sanders (Fortress, 1981), 226–44; see also P. W. van der Horst, "The Birkat Ha-Minim in Recent Research," in *Hellenism - Judaism - Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction*, ed. P. W. van der Horst (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 99–111. Kikuo Matsunaga, "Christian Self-Identification and the Twelfth Benediction," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Brill, 1992), 355–71, makes interesting use of Christian sources but with little awareness of the Jewish reality against which he tries to contextualize them.
8. *B. Berakhot* 28b–29a. The talmudic discussion here is a complex layering of editorial traditions with Rav's third-century interpretation of the meaning of Shmu'el Haqaton's composition of the text and subsequent forgetting of it in the first century. It would be fallacious to assume that in the late first century, the implications of failing to recite the text correctly were the same as they were more than a century later. This is particularly true if the object of the malediction was Christians, as the nature of the Christian community and its connections to Judaism changed drastically in the intervening years. In addition, the Babylonians applied the term "min" differently than did the Palestinian Jews, and Rav may not have been referring to the Palestinian context at all.
9. John 9:22, 12:42, 16:2. On this, see Kimelman, 234ff., who suggests correctly that if this reflected doctrine promulgated at Yavneh, it would find reflection in more than one Christian source. John also makes no reference to any specific malediction designed with this intent. Patristic texts supposedly supporting this theory also make no mention of a specific prayer.
10. Synagogues existed in the Second Temple period, but they were a place of Torah reading and apparently not of communal prayer. Inscriptions suggest significant "lay" communal investment in synagogues, and only rarely rabbinic leadership through the end of the Rabbinic period. It is highly unlikely that rabbinic "infiltration" of the synagogues was anything less than gradual. See Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), Ch. 13, "The Sages and the Synagogue."

11. Translations are mine. Versions A and B are according to Yehezkel Luger, *The Weekday Amidah in the Cairo Geniza* (Orhot Press, 2001), 135. Luger also includes a third version that includes lines A (apostates) and B (with only two verbs), and H (like Version A). The contemporary diaspora version, presented here for the sake of comparison, represents a long process of censorship and internally generated changes. Issachar Jacobson, in his *Netiv Binah* (Tel Aviv: Sinai, n.d.), I: 283–84, lists several other historical variants with various other combinations of these same elements.
12. See my forthcoming book on the history of the *birkat haminin*, tentatively titled *Cursing Christians? A History of the Birkat Haminin*.
13. I follow here the historical argument of Meir Bar Ilan, “The Origin of the Prayer ‘Aleynu Leshabeah,’” [Heb.] *Da’at* 43 (1999): 5–24. He convincingly refutes the tradition that the prayer originated in liturgical usage and argues that its origins probably lie in the early Jewish mystical work, *Ma’aseh Merkabah* (third to fifth centuries C.E.), from which it migrated into the synagogue liturgy.
14. On the medieval history of this prayer, see Israel Ta-Shma, “The Origin and Placement in the Liturgy of the Prayer ‘Aleynu Leshabeah,’” [Heb.] in the *Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*, ed. Dov Walfish (University of Haifa, 1993), I: 85–98. See also his discussion in his *Early Ashkenazic Prayer: Literary and Historical Aspects* [Heb.] (Magnes, 2003), Ch. 10.
15. Most written versions of this tradition were censored out of Jewish books. One recovered example may be found in Efraim Urbach’s edition of Abraham ben Azri’el’s liturgical commentary, *Arugat Habosem*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1962), pp. 468–69. Urbach notes there that this passage has a complete parallel in the better-known French liturgical work, *Mahzor Vitry*, with the exception of this comment, which was obviously censored. This passage, after explaining that the previous line, “who has not made our portion like theirs,” refers to the prohibition to Jews to participate in idolatry—for which they would be punished—, continues: I have heard that one should pray “to emptiness and nothingness” because in *gematria* [numerology] these are Jesus and Muhammed; consequently anyone who believes in these two “is bowing down to emptiness and nothingness.” Note that the numerical values of “Muhammed” (97 as spelled here) and “to nothingness” (68) are not the same!
16. Note that the line never disappeared from the Sephardi rites. Whereas Ashkenazi rites tended to eliminate the entire line, Italian rites tended to eliminate just the sensitive words, resulting in texts like “they bow down and worship while we bow down . . .” or “they used to bow down to emptiness and nothingness . . .” An adequate history of prayer book censorship and its consequences remains to be written.
17. In a lecture “Confrontation, Confluence, and Conflict: Jewish Perspectives on Other Religions,” delivered at Congregation Shaarei Tefillah, Newton Centre, Mass., Summer 2000, as part of the Summer Beit Midrash.

18. *Vayakhel* II, 206a.
19. See my "Sinai, Zion, and God in the Synagogue: Celebrating Torah in Ashkenaz," forthcoming in *Liturgy and the Life of the Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine and Ruth Langer. The prayer appears a bit earlier in some Sefardi prayer books.
20. Compare this to the much older passage from the Passover Haggadah that may well be responding to Christian arguments about salvation:
 

"And the Eternal brought us out of Egypt"—not by an angel and not by a seraph and not by a messenger. Rather, the Holy One, Blessed be He, in His glory and by Himself ... "I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night," I and not an angel; "I will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt," I and not a seraph; "on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments," I and not a messenger; "I am the Eternal," I am He and there is no other.
21. This was the dominant method of Jewish liturgical studies from their nineteenth-century origins with Leopold Zunz in his *Die gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (1832; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1892 corrected according to Zunz's glosses; Hebrew translation with translator's notes by Hanokh Albeck, 1946) through the mid-twentieth century. Perhaps the most extreme exemplar was Louis Finkelstein's reconstruction of an original *amidah* text, the individual segments of which he then read against known disputes and events from the pre- and early-rabbinic world ("The Development of the Amidah," in *Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy*, ed. Jakob J. Petuchowski [New York: Ktav, 1970], 91–177). Similarly, Jacob Mann, in his "Changes in the Divine Service of the Synagogue Due to Religious Persecutions," *HUCA* 4 (1927): 241–311, dated every change in the liturgy that rabbinic tradition explained as due to persecution. Since at least the 1964 publication of Joseph Heinemann's book, translated by Richard S. Sarason as *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), this approach to liturgical history has been discredited. Even Ezra Fleischer in his current challenge to Heinemann's work (see my review essay, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy: The Recent Contributions of Ezra Fleischer," *Prooftexts* 19:2 [1999]: 179–94; and the subsequent exchange, "On the Origins of the *Amidah*: Response to Ruth Langer," and "Considerations of Method: A Response to Ezra Fleischer," *Prooftexts* 20:3 [2000]: 381–87) does not suggest a retrieval of the assumptions behind these methods. Note, however, that these methodologies are more legitimate in the medieval world, where we can sometimes point to specific composition of prayers, and where more kinds of evidence are available in general.
22. See note 1, above.
23. Leo Strauss explores double-edged writing as a safe mode of subversive behavior in a time of persecution in his essay, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," in a volume by the same name (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1976), pp. 22–37.

24. The titles here, as with most Jewish liturgy, are the first words of the songs. *ʿAdon ʿolam*, “Eternal Master,” and *yigdal*, “Magnify [the living God],” are both of unknown authorship. Ismar Elbogen suggests that the first might be Spanish in origin (and does appear in manuscripts before the advent of printing), whereas the latter may be from Rome in the fourteenth century. See his *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond Scheindlin (Jewish Publication Society, 1993; German original 1913, Hebrew updated edition, 1972), 77.
25. Based on Maimonides’ introduction to Mishnah Sanhedrin, Chapter 10 (*Pereq Heleq*), commonly printed in prayer books for private recitation at the conclusion of morning prayers in an abbreviated formulation in which every line begins, “I believe with perfect faith ...”
26. As in the *musaf qedushah*, “From His Place He will turn in mercy and be gracious to the people who unify His name evening and morning, continually, every day, saying *shema*<sup>c</sup> lovingly twice,” or the parallel statement in the supplicatory weekday prayer, *hapoteah yad*. One more plausible reference to Christianity in this sort of context—but potentially a serious overread of the text, may be found in the poem *shomer yisraʿel* (Guardian of Israel) that now concludes the formal daily supplications. Here, God is asked in subsequent verses to guard the people who recite “Hear O Israel,” who unify God’s name with the completion of the verse, “the Eternal our God the Eternal is One,” and who “triple the three sanctifications to the Holy One”—referring to the recitation of the *qedushah*, “Holy, holy, holy ...” recited three times in the morning service. This last line, though, could be read as an anti-trinitarian statement, praising Israel for directing all three “holies” to the one God. Such an interpretation appears in none of the commentaries I have consulted.
27. *Seder ʿAvodat Yisraʿel* (rpt. Tel Aviv, 1957), 111, 233.
28. A truly comprehensive historical study would have to include this category. However, it is complicated by regional variants, by the non-obligatory nature of most compositions, and by the fact that the vast majority of compositions containing references offensive to Christians did not (or could not) persist into the modern era, thanks to censorship. Given the complexities of the language of most of this poetry, one might also ask how much of it is understood by any but an elite today too. At the same time, some genres of this poetry are a major vehicle of historical memory, particularly the *qinot* (lamentations) of the Ninth of Av. The dialogue and new relationship between Jews and Christians that is generating this paper asks for a confrontation of this history, not an erasure of it.
29. Christian censors were sensitive to the implications of this blessing. During the peak of their activities, we do find substitutions for this blessing in prayer books, particularly the positive statement, “who has made me an Israelite/Jew.” See Joseph Tabory, “The Benedictions of Self-Identity and the Changing Status of Women and Orthodoxy,” *Kenishta: Studies of the Synagogue World* 1 (2001): 127.

30. Compare: other Torah blessings.
31. Depending on the origins of this prayer, it may well refer explicitly to Christians. Certainly, for the Jews of the twelfth century who debated its inclusion, the “uncircumcised” were Christians (Muslims do circumcise). Note though, that the structure of the poem dictates that “those who worship idols” and “uncircumcised” describe the same people, raising the possibility that this text simply continues biblical references to pagan idolatry. On the history of this poetic excerpt, see Naphtali Wieder, “*Yismah Moshe—Opposition and Defense*,” [Heb.], in *The Formation of Jewish Liturgy in the East and the West: A Collection of Essays* [Heb.] (Jerusalem, 1998; original publication, *Memorial Volume for J. Heinemann*, Jerusalem, 1981, 75–99), 295–322, especially note 18.
32. Compare: Sabbath evening *qiddush*, *’atah ’ehad* from the afternoon service; to a lesser degree, the *qedushat hayom* paragraph common to every Sabbath service. Also of great significance here, although the specific language of chosenness does not appear, are the various texts of *havdalah* for the conclusion of the Sabbath. The most frequently recited praise God for having separated “between holy and profane, light and darkness, Israel and the nations, and between the seventh day and the rest of the days of Creation.”
33. This can be compared to the Catholic “communion of saints” and its role in indulgences.
34. By beginning the *amidah* with this invocation, the worshiper reminds God of His covenantal obligation to listen to the subsequent prayers. The worshiper calls on God using the name God revealed at the burning bush (Ex 3:15), God’s name in relationship to the patriarchs; the sophisticated worshiper also recalls the midrash that notices that after the Golden Calf, it was only when Moses called on God to remember his covenant with the patriarchs that God forgave Israel (Ex 32:13). See Exodus Rabba 44:1 and Nachmanides to Ex 3:15.
35. Note, though, that the process of conversion to Judaism is essentially a process of adoption into the covenantal family. One’s new (Hebrew or Jewish) name has patronymic and matronymic reference to Abraham and Sarah.
36. This list might be extended to include the various disasters commemorated liturgically, from the martyrdom of the ten leading rabbis in 135, to the Rhineland Crusades massacres, to the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel. This particularism also shapes the Jewish tendency to remember the Holocaust as a personal and familial/national tragedy, ignoring Hitler’s other victims.
37. Most of these, of course, are remembered through specific holidays and their associated readings or special prayers.
38. Compare the line toward the conclusion of the *qedusha’ desidra’ (uva’ lezion go’el)*, “Blessed is our God who created us for His glory and separated us from the errant ones and gave us the Torah of truth ...”



39. A similar idea appears in the supplicatory prayer, *ʾavinu ʾav haraḥaman*. Compare also the slightly more ambiguous statement in the early morning prayer concluding with the blessing, “Who sanctifies Your/His name among the multitudes,” both in the paragraph this blessing concludes and in the following paragraph.
40. I argue elsewhere that it is plausible that rabbinic liturgy became widely known and influential only in the Byzantine period. This opens the possibility that the specific language of the prayers does indeed respond to Christianity—a topic that remains to be explored. See my “Early Rabbinic Liturgy in Its Palestinian Milieu: Did Non-Rabbis Know the *ʿAmidah*?” in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini*, ed. Avery-Peck, Harrington, and Neusner (Leiden, Boston: E. J. Brill Supplements to Review of Rabbinic Judaism, 2003), II: 423–439.
41. This runs the gamut from changes in the physical layout of the synagogue to a more auditorium-like space with the pulpit in the front and the officiants facing the congregation, to abandonment of distinctive ritual garb except, in some cases, clerical garb for the rabbi and cantor, to vernacular prayer, to emphasis on decorum, to an enhanced sermon, to formal performed music with organ and mixed choir. Most of these elements were most marked in the Reform movement, but many influenced even the modern Orthodox. The semiotic significance of these changes is not to be ignored in this context, even as we focus on the verbal content of the liturgy. However, it might be argued that these elements reflect more on Jewish comfort with being other, rather than on a theological statement about the non-Jew. See Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: The World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968); and my forthcoming “Prayer and Worship,” in *Modern Judaism: An Oxford Guide* (Oxford, 2005).
42. On the deliberate use of prayer books to define and instill identity, particularly in a changing world, see Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), especially Ch. 4, “American Jewish Liturgies: A Study of Identity” and Ch. 6, “Sacred Myths: II. After the Enlightenment.” See also his “The Liturgical Message,” in *Shaarei Binah: Gates of Understanding* (New York, 1977), 146.
43. For an analysis of these options, see Debra Reed Blank, “Some Considerations Underlying Jewish Liturgical Revisions,” *CCAR Journal* 50:1 (2003): 11–20.
44. A comprehensive, global study of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. A full study begins with the earliest prayer books with translations, those written for the former *conversos* as they reverted to Judaism in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century (available in manuscript). The prayer books of liberal Judaism in Europe have been well analyzed by Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (World Union for

Progressive Judaism, 1968). See particularly his chapters 11 and 12, "Zion and Jerusalem," and "The Problem of 'Particularism' in the 'Alenu Prayer.'" A full study should also include both earlier American volumes and those of European and Israeli synagogues. On the other hand, each of these represents a distinct Jewish subculture with its own identity issues that ought not to be merged. My thanks to Boston College's Theology Department and Center for Christian-Jewish Learning for their support of this project and to Brian Lerman, Boston College '03, for his assistance researching the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform prayer books.

45. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1949.
46. Published in various configurations with different Hebrew titles, but all fundamentally the same prayer book, edited and translated by Nosson Sherman, with the English title, *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur Nusach Ashkenaz* (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.)
47. Note, though, that the 1947 *Book of Prayer according to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, Second Edition, ed. and trans. David De Sola Pool (New York: Union of Sephardic Congregations, 1947), p. 209, translates the phrase as "a son of God." The first edition of his *Prayers for the Festivals according to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, published in its first edition in the same year, p. 214, contains the same text. However, his *Prayers for the New Year according to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, published in 1948, already reflects a reaction to this text, and it reads (p. 202) "nor do I rely on any of the Sons of God." The 1960 revised edition, *The Traditional Prayer Book for Sabbaths and Festivals*, published by Behrman House, reads "nor do I lean on a created being" (p. 241).
48. *Rinat Yisra'el*, the prayer book commissioned by the Israeli chief rabbinate, also includes this line, as do various other Israeli prayer books. In these cases, the statement made by the change is primarily that in a Jewish state, Jews are freed from concerns of external censorship. This is seen as restoration of ancient poetry rather than a slur against a particular "other." In Israel, in any case, the primary religious other is Islam, not Christianity. Note, though, that *Rinat Yisra'el* does not hesitate to translate the Aramaic *bar 'elahin* literally into the Hebrew equivalent, thus losing its allusion to Daniel, and making it a more obvious anti-incarnational statement.
49. Pp. 288–89. The language of this prayer easily identifies it as a late medieval kabbalistic addition to the *siddur*. Birnbaum's omission may not be meaningful, as there is significant variation in the printed texts of this ritual. Baer too does not include this prayer. While *Rinat Yisra'el* includes the prayer, it omits this particular qualification.
50. The Orthodox world is itself fragmented. The prayer books we have considered here would commonly be found in congregations with ties to the Orthodox Union, with rabbis who graduated from Yeshiva University and who are affiliated with the Rabbinical Council of America. But exceptions are too numerous to list. There are also numerous

non-Orthodox congregations who do not affiliate with any movement and increasing numbers of congregations affiliated with a movement that do not use its prayer books. In this age of desk-top publishing, many congregations have developed their own liturgies.

51. Compared here are: *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book*, ed. Morris Silverman (New York: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Rabbinical Assembly, 1946), henceforth "Silverman"; *Siddur Sim Shalom*, ed. Jules Harlow (New York: Rabbinical Assembly: United Synagogue of America, 1985); and the revised gender-neutral *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals* (New York City: Rabbinical Assembly, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 1998). References just to *Sim Shalom* refer to pages in the 1985 edition.
52. There are exceptions, most obviously the addition of the matriarchs to an alternative *avot* in *Sim Shalom* (1998). The door was opened to this change by the reformulation of sacrificial references in the first official Conservative prayer books, the *Maḥzor Leshalosh Regalim, Festival Prayer Book* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1927) and more extensively in Silverman (1946). For discussions of the decision-making processes behind Silverman, see Robert Gordis's foreword, a more expansive version of which may be found as "A Jewish Prayer Book for the Modern Age" in *Conservative Judaism* (October 1945) and reprinted and updated in his *Understanding Conservative Judaism*, ed. Max Gelb (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly of America, 1978), pp. 132–54. On the precursor to this prayer book, to the extent that it had one, see the discussions of Benjamin Szold's 1864 *Abodat Israel*, issued in an English version by Marcus Jastrow in 1871 in Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (Jewish Publication Society, 1963), III:2, "Interpretation of the Jewish Faith," and in more detail in his Hebrew *Yahadut 'Amerika Be-Hitpathutah: The Shaping of American Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1951), 292ff. The texts Davis discusses were, in general, even more concerned about reshaping Jewish attitudes to the gentile world than were their conservative successors.
53. Similar ambiguity appears in the *mi sheberakh* prayer for the sick. Silverman did not include any of this genre of prayers in his congregational text. *Sim Shalom* 1985 includes the traditional Hebrew text with its call for the individual's healing *betokh she'ar holei yisra'el*, literally "amidst the other ill Jews." The English, however, reads "together with others who suffer illness" (404–5). The 1998 edition includes a text titled "for all who are ill" that proceeds to ask for "blessing and healing" to "all those who suffer illness within our congregational family" (144). The Hebrew text calls for the insertion of the congregation's name—indicating an even narrower conception of the identity of the prayer community. Note, though,

- that this particular prayer's text is governed only by custom and not by liturgical law (*nusah* and not *matbe'a*).
54. "Adapted from the Hebrew of Rabbi Natan Sternhartz (1780–1845), Ukraine, *Likutei Tefillah* 1:95" (875).
  55. See Gordis's discussions of this, op. cit. Szold-Jastrow had incorporated this change, but without the same discussion to justify it. *Sim Shalom*'s translation of *yisra'el* as "Jew" simply reflects contemporary English usage.
  56. Tosefta Berakhot 2:1 and parallels.
  57. Silverman's tentativeness on this topic extends even into the readings included in the back of the book that recount Jewish history. "Millions of human beings belonging to the most diverse denominations have derived instruction" from the Jewish Bible. He continues with the hope that the second two millennia of Jewish history, the "thousand years' martyrdom of the Jewish people, its unbroken pilgrimage, its tragic fate ..." will have similar impact (290). Even in this context, Christians receive no name.
  58. This transfer is probably for practical and not theological reasons. Such readings are not always appropriate, become dated easily, and can intrude onto the congregations' prayer experience. See 1985: 807; 1998: 359, "No religion is an island; there is no monopoly on holiness ..." (Abraham Joshua Heschel); 1985: 805, "Redemption will be realized when all people return out of their exile from each other. Then Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau, will embrace upon the peaceful shores of love and understanding" (Martin Buber); 1985: 866. "The new redemption to which Jews look forward involves the redemption of society in general from present ills ..." (Mordecai Kaplan).
  59. Texts discussed here include: *Sabbath Prayer Book with a Supplement Containing Prayers, Readings, and Hymns and with a New Translation* (New York: The Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 1965; reprint of 1946 second printing). The editors of this text are unidentified but prominent among them was Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of the movement. Note that this text includes no weekday liturgies at all. Henceforth, we will refer to this text as "Kaplan." This text has been replaced now by the *Kol Haneshamah* series (Wyncote, Pa.: Reconstructionist Press)—*Shabbat Vehagim*, 1994, henceforth "Shabbat," and *Daily*, 1996, henceforth "Daily."
  60. See "Rejecting the Chosen People Idea" in *Dynamic Judaism: The Essential Writings of Mordecai Kaplan*, ed. Emanuel S. Goldsmith and Mel Scult (New York: Schocken Books/Reconstructionist Press, 1985), 189–94, from *The Future of the American Jew*, 211–19.
  61. Compare the text of the Sabbath evening *qiddush*, 118–19. See too the *qedushat hayom* in the Sabbath *amidah*, which translates the traditional *veyanu'hu vah yisra'el meqadeshei shemekha* (literally: let all Israel, the sanctifiers of Your name, rest on it) as "Let all Israel, and

all who treat your name as holy, rest upon this day" (96, 310, 500). Similarly, the festival *qedushat hayom* simply drops the phrase "you have chosen us from among all peoples," adapting the grammar of the rest of the text accordingly (604–5). The festival *qiddush* eliminates "who has chosen us from all peoples and elevated us above all tongues" in favor of "who has called us to your service." The Hebrew text adds *veromemanu biqedushato* "and elevated us through His holiness" (626–27).

62. Here with the comment of Arthur Green, then president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, on this point, "In our times, when life has been transformed by the constant threat of global destruction, the need of the hour calls for the more universal form of the prayer throughout the year" (Shabbat: 104).
63. See the note of David A. Teutsch and the commentary of Arthur Green on p. 82.
64. The exception to this are the intermediate petitionary blessings of the weekday *'amidah* that appear in their traditional form.
65. These two lines translate the traditional text.
66. The only reference to "others" that remains fundamentally unchanged is the positive theological statements about God's unity and Moses as a unique prophet in *yigdal*.
67. Following Kaplan, where this, taken from a Hebrew translation by David Frishman, is the only non-Jewish text in over 300 pages of supplementary readings (excluding the texts for American civil holidays) (342–49).
68. Texts discussed here, all produced by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, include the *Union Prayerbook* (UPB), newly revised edition (Cincinnati, 1940); *Gates of Prayer* (GOP), (New York, 1975) and its revision, *Gates of Prayer: A Gender Sensitive Prayerbook* (New York, 1994). *Mishkan T'filah*, the next generation of Reform prayer books, was only in preliminary stages when this study was completed.
69. 186 pages compared to the original 779. The philosophies of the multiple services in the 1975 edition are explained by Lawrence A. Hoffman, "The Liturgical Message" in *Shaarei Bina: Gates of Understanding, A Companion Volume to Shaarei Tefillah: Gates of Prayer*, ed. Lawrence A. Hoffman (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977), especially pp. 138, 162–63; and in Chaim Stern's "Guide to the Services and Their Themes," 171–76. The list includes topics such as religious naturalism, the mystical search, and social justice. These meta-themes overlay but do not replace the classical topics of the liturgy.
70. For a study of European prayer books, see Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe*. Eric L. Friedland discusses some American exemplars in his "Were Our Mouths Filled with Song": *Studies in Liberal Jewish Liturgy* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997).

Issues such as Israel's mission, prophetically driven social justice, and not praying for restoration of sacrificial worship continue to find clear expression in the *Gates* series. Other questions, such as the theological role of the modern state of Israel, find extensive expression here for the first time and replace the earlier stress on Judaism as purely a religious tradition without national identity. While the 1975 text made huge strides toward including women in the human community, only the 1994 text degenders God and includes women in the historical mentions of the liturgy. For a brief discussion of some of the discussions and diversity already underlying the 1940 revision of the *Union Prayerbook*, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 320–22; many of the discussions in this volume indexed under "liturgy," "prayer," and "prayerbook" are also relevant here.

71. At the same time, we must note that the vast majority of these readings, with the exception of the allusive *birkat haminin* text, were not repeated in the 1994 edition. Some of this is due to the generally more traditional texts included in this shorter *siddur*, but there may have been a deliberate decision underlying the exclusion. For instance, the collection of meditations preceding *qaddish* in the 1975 edition contains thirteen readings, the last of which, "Our Martyrs," focuses on the Holocaust. The 1994 prayer book contains only five of these readings, not including this one. Contrast this to the *yizqor* (memorial) prayer common in some Orthodox synagogues that refers explicitly to the "Nazi murderers."
72. However, where the English "translation" is broadly interpretative, the theme may not appear.
73. For example, it is implied in the interpretation of the *amidah*, 1975: 97–98 and in the introductory prayer, p. 145.
74. Adapted from the British Liberal prayer book, *Service of the Heart*, p. 260. Compare p. 588, "Our mission involves other peoples. Jews do not live alone"; and pp. 321–22, which places Israel's sages and teachers among all others.
75. See, for example, in the most traditional versions of the *amidah* proper, pp. 46, 140; *hashkiveinu*, pp. 35, 133. Not a single example of *oseh shalom*, either in concluding any *amidah* or in the mourner's *qaddish* (including its Aramaic prayer for peace, *yehei shelama<sup>2</sup> raba<sup>3</sup>*), has been modified.
76. 1994: 36, 80, 123, 139—i.e., four of the six services included in this volume. This prayer occurs markedly less frequently in the 1975 edition, appearing only three times in the twenty plus services in the volume (202, 345, 486). This may reflect the challenges to American patriotism of the Vietnam era.
77. 1994: 14, 106 (weekdays and Sabbath); 1975, only p. 365, the fifth Sabbath morning service.

THEOLOGIES OF SELF AND OTHER

78. 1975:40f.; 1994: 27f. See my discussion of the addition of the *birkat haminin* above.
79. "Our country" in American Reform liturgies through the mid-twentieth century always referred to the United States.
80. Historical precedent suggests that it takes at least fifty years and often much more for the community to begin to assimilate the theological implications of significant upheaval, perhaps because personal memory does not create theology as effectively as the less intense, more selective, inherited communal memory. On the aftermath of medieval persecutions and population shifts, see my *To Worship God Properly*, especially the conclusion.