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Christians, the ‘more obvious’ representatives of the religion of Israel than the Rabbis?

This chapter argues that second-century Hellenised ‘Jewish’ and ‘Christian’ philosophers re-conceptualised sacrifice and Temple-cult to compensate for what Guy Stroumsa has called one of the biggest challenges of the time, the cessation of regular blood-sacrifices. Starting from Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, I suggest that collective religious expertise was displaced by individual philosophers whose theme was ‘religion’.

In February 2004, the Israeli historian of religion Guy G. Stroumsa, a former pupil of Emanuel Levinas, delivered an important series of lectures at the Collège de France in Paris, ‘*La fin du sacrifice: Les mutations religieuses de l’Antiquité tardive*’, which was duly published in the following year.¹ After some little delay, the book was issued in American-English translation, under the title *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity*, where the term ‘mutations’ has been altered to ‘transformations’.² The German translation, on the other hand, *Das Ende des Opferkultes: Die religiösen Mutationen der Spätantike*, retains the original ‘mutations’. In 2008, Stroumsa himself summarised his book in an article in English entitled “The End of Sacrifice: Religious Mutations of Late Antiquity”, retaining the term ‘mutations’.³

Although one could happily continue discussing this stimulating book and the vexing terms ‘mutations’ or ‘transformations’, I would like in this contribution to concentrate on one of its main trajectories, the ‘transformation of the ritual’, which occupies the third chapter. Stroumsa starts with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Titus in 70 CE. He writes:

The Jews had to dramatically reinvent their religion, while arguing that they were changing very little, and this only under duress. If Jews could be perceived by some as a race of philosophers (for instance by Numenius, who famously argued, in the second century CE, that

1 Stroumsa (2005).

2 Stroumsa (2005, 2009).

3 Stroumsa (2008 [2011]). The article appeared in Houtman, de Jong and Misset-van de Weg (2008, 29–46).

Plato was ‘an atticising Moses’), it seems to me that it is in no small measure due to the fact that they could now be perceived as bearers of a religion without blood sacrifice. Some dramatic consequences followed from the destruction of the Temple. The first one was the birth of two new religions, rather than one. Side by side with the birth of Christianity, the appearance of Rabbinic Judaism after 70 CE, and its growth in the following centuries represents a real mutation of the religion of Israel: indeed, a religion now without sacrifices, a religion whose priests were out of business, in which religious specialists had been replaced by the intellectual elite. In a way, early Christianity, a religion centred upon a sacrificial ritual celebrated by priests, represents a more obvious continuity with the religion of Israel than the religion of the Rabbis.⁴

One may agree in general with what Stroumsa is stating as regards to Israel – although he himself admits that sacrifices did not simply disappear from the minds of Jews and those who lived with them, quoting the fourth century Emperor Julian, who in his work *Against the Christians* wrote:

The Jews behave like the Gentiles, except the fact that they recognize only one god. On everything else, however, we share the same things: temples, sanctuaries, altars, purification rituals, various demands on which we do not diverge from one another, or else only in insignificant ways.⁵

Whether or not Julian’s potentially one-sided view represents historical reality, Stroumsa sees the Rabbinic intellectual turn as one of the major ‘religious mutations’ of the time after 70 CE, a turn that transformed “the very concept of religion”.⁶ This he contrasts with the ‘post-Temple tradition’ of Christianity, which, on account of its priestly orientation and its focus on (self-)sacrifice, “represents a more obvious continuity with the religion of Israel”. His view of Rabbinic Judaism works well in the framework of a post-enlightened characterisation of Judaism, as can be found, for example, in Jacob Neusner’s *Handbook of Rabbinic Theology*, where Neusner describes Rabbinic Judaism as a religion of intellect, encompassing emotions within the conventions of rationality, a religion that knows God through the close analysis of what God says in so many words [...]. God meets holy Israel in the school house more than in the synagogue, in study of the Torah more than in prayer – much more. Neusner thus represents Rabbinic Judaism as a “religion of language”, rather than one of emotions.⁷

⁴ I quote from the summary article Stroumsa (2008, 40).

⁵ Julian *Gal. frg.* 72; see Stroumsa (2008, 38–39).

⁶ Stroumsa (2008, 29–30).

⁷ Neusner (2002, 26–27).

One would need to be a scholar of Rabbinic Judaism to discuss the Jewish side of the argument,⁸ which I am not, and in this short contribution, I do not pretend to set out an adequate reply to the Christian side of it. Nevertheless, Stroumsa’s thesis stimulates one to think further: to what extent did the Christian rhetoric of ‘novelty’ (New Testament, new birth, renewal) mask a deeper continuity – bordering on intellectual Alzheimer’s – that simply occluded the brute fact of the destruction of the Temple? How are we to judge an emotional behaviour that re-deployed ‘sacrifice’ in a world that had already moved on? Should we not, as Stroumsa implies, lift the veil and understand that it is Christianity, rather than Judaism, that should be called an ‘oriental religion’?

1. Christianity – a priestly Judaism?

Now it would be easy, but perhaps trivial, to refute Stroumsa’s claim that Christianity was “centred upon a sacrificial ritual celebrated by priests”. As I have tried to show in an earlier study, there is little evidence for a regular – for example weekly or even annual – meeting of Christians, be it for prayers or for celebrating the Eucharist.⁹ Neither presbyters nor priests are ever mentioned in Paul. And when Paul speaks of the service of liturgy (ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας), which is provided as eucharist to God (διὰ πολλῶν εὐχαριστιῶν τῷ θεῷ), he talks about the collection of money (2Cor. 9:12). Similarly profane is his single mention of the Temple-service in his letters, when in 1Cor. 9:13 he uses the example that “those who serve in the Temple are nourished from the Temple and those who serve at the altar receive their share from it”. Only in chapter 15 of Romans does the author speak of himself as “minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles” and that he “serves the gospel of God like a priest, so that the Gentiles may become an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit”. Yet chapters 15 and 16 (except the doxology at the end of 16) were not part of Marcion’s version of Romans, as evinced by the so-called Marcionite Prologues to Paul’s letters which could be from Marcion’s own hand, and an explicit statement of Origen

⁸ See, for example, Hezser (1994, 480–489); worth studying would be the *Testament of Levi* amongst the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* with its spiritualised apocalyptic vision of the Temple (*TestLev.* 5). Of course, the problem with this text is to what extent it displays a pre-Christian or non-Christian Judaism and how it relates to the Aramaic versions of this Testament and the Dead-Sea find of the *Aramaic Testament of Levi* (4Q213–214) with its sacrifice and wisdom topics, in the later text transformed into Torah-orientation (*TestLev.* 13); see De Jonge (1975, 247–260); Knibb (1998, 197–213, esp. 212–213; 247–258); Stone (1991, 228–246).

⁹ See Vinzent (2011, 193–226); now in a revised German translation: (2014, 265–302).

in his Commentary on Romans 16:25–27 that Marcion's version ended at Rom. 14:23, the last verse of its chapter 14.¹⁰ Chapters 15 and 16 of Romans as we have it today were unknown to the authors of the capitula in the 8th century Codex Amiatinus, nor do they appear in the Codex Fuldensis or the Concordia epistularum Pauli, a concordance of Paul's letters which can be found in Vulgate manuscripts.¹¹ As a result, chapters 15 and 16 of Romans may not stem from Paul, but are perhaps a post-Temple, even a second-century addition which shows the sacralisation tendency within Christianity. In other words, outside the suspect chapter 15, Paul's letters do not employ priestly language.

Likewise, if we look at other very early Christian writings, priestly language and topics are extremely rare. 1Clement applies the word 'holy' (ἱερός) to God's undefiled hands¹² and three times to the Jewish Scriptures;¹³ beyond that, the text once mentions Egyptian priests (ἱερεῖς),¹⁴ and once refers to priests and Levites in the Jewish writings (ἱερεῖς καὶ λευῖται).¹⁵ Similarly the author of 1Clement seems to refer to these Jewish writings when he draws on the divine order to underline the hierarchy of the presbyters in the Christian community.¹⁶ Again, the Epistle of Barnabas only introduces priests with reference to the Jewish Scriptures, priests as opponents of Jesus and (once) about 'priests of idols'.¹⁷ The term ἱερεῖς in connection with Christian ministers is, however, absent not just from the 'Apostolic Fathers' but also from all the New Testament writings with the exception of Hebrews and Revelation, where the term 'priest' is applied to

10 Orig., *Comm. in Rom.* 16.25–27 (PG 14,1290 A–B).

11 See Gamble (1977, 16).

12 1Clem. 33.4.

13 1Clem. 43.1; 45.2 (om. in A); 53.1.

14 1Clem. 25.5.

15 1Clem. 32.2; the same goes for λειτουργεῖω, see e.g. 1Clem. 9.2; 32.2; 34.5–6; 43.4. The only exception is *ibid.* 44.3 where the verb refers to those who have served the flock of Christ.

16 1Clem. 40.5: "These things therefore being manifest to us, and since we look into the depths of the divine knowledge, it behoves us to do all things in [their proper] order, which the Lord has commanded us to perform at stated times. He has enjoined offerings [to be presented] and service to be performed [to Him], and that not thoughtlessly or irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours. Where and by whom He desires these things to be done, He Himself has fixed by His own supreme will, in order that all things being piously done according to His good pleasure, may be acceptable to Him. Those, therefore, who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed; for inasmuch as they follow the laws of the Lord, they sin not. For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites. The layman is bound by the laws that pertain to laymen" (transl. Roberts-Donaldson); see also *ibid.* 43.4.

17 Barn. 7.3–6; 9.6.

Christ, and 'priests' to the believers.¹⁸ In a single passage, The Shepherd of Hermas gives a more detailed description of what is meant by service (λειτουργία), namely bishops who show hospitality:

[...] who always gladly received into their houses the servants of God, without dissimulation. And the bishops never failed to protect, by their service, the widows, and those who were in want, and always maintained a holy conversation. All these, accordingly, shall be protected by the Lord for ever. They who do these things are honourable before God, and their place is already with the angels, if they remain to the end serving God.¹⁹

Elsewhere I have tried to show that Christ as the 'sacrificed Passover lamb' (1Cor. 5:7) was more prominent than the Risen Christ in early Christianity.²⁰ Nevertheless, when Paul, *Hebrews* or *1 Clement* speak of Christ as the sacrificial Passover lamb, they mean a spiritual sacrifice. Likewise, when we read in the *Didache* the quotation from *Malachi* that the Lord said: "In every place and time, it is said, offer me a pure sacrifice" (*Did.* 14.1–3), the absence of a specific local and temporal reference points once again to the spiritual character of such sacrifice.

2. Christians and the memory of sacrifices

Taken spiritually, Stroumsa is of course right, and here starts the more interesting part of my response: Christians were impregnated with the idea of sacrifice, not in the physical sense of sacrificing in the Temple, but in commemorating, perhaps even emotionally and intellectually identifying themselves with their murdered hero. In documents such as *Hebrews*, *Revelation* and also the *Didache*, we discover that the desire to offer such sacrifices had died out neither with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple nor with the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem after the defeat by the Romans in the Bar Kokhba war. Sacrifice came to be understood as a non-local and non-temporal act, just as the Temple was re-configured into a spiritual idea.

It is noticeable that the most explicit reflection about sacrifice does not come immediately after the destruction of the Temple, i. e. in the years after 70 CE, but only after the end of the Bar Kokhba war of 132–135 CE. For it is only then that

¹⁸ *Hebr.* 5:6; 7:1–21; 8:4; 9:6; 10:11.21; *Rev.* 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; I return to these passages below.

¹⁹ *Herm.* 104.3 (Sim. IX 27).

²⁰ Vinzent (2014, 278–280).

we find Justin, in his rhetorical dialogue with the Jew Trypho,²¹ raising the topic of sacrifice in a serious manner. This passage is important enough to deserve quoting and discussing this passage at some length:²²

Accordingly, God, anticipating all the sacrifices which we offer through this name, and which Jesus the Christ enjoined us to offer, i.e., in the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, and which are presented by Christians in all places throughout the world, bears witness that they are well-pleasing to Him. But He utterly rejects those presented by you and by those priests of yours, saying, “And I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles (He says); but ye profane it”. Yet even now, in your love of contention, you assert that God does not accept the sacrifices of those who dwelt then in Jerusalem, and were called Israelites; but says that He is pleased with the prayers of the people of that nation then dispersed, and calls their prayers sacrifices. Now, that prayers and giving of thanks, when offered by worthy men, are the only perfect and well-pleasing sacrifices to God, I also admit. For such alone Christians have undertaken to offer, and in the remembrance effected by their solid and liquid food, whereby the suffering of the Son of God which He endured is brought to mind, whose name the high priests of your nation and your teachers have caused to be profaned and blasphemed over all the earth. But these filthy garments, which have been put by you on all who have become Christians by the name of Jesus, God shows shall be taken away from us, when He shall raise all men from the dead, and appoint some to be incorruptible, immortal, and free from sorrow in the everlasting and imperishable kingdom; but shall send others away to the everlasting punishment of fire. But as to you and your teachers deceiving yourselves when you interpret what the Scripture says as referring to those of your nation then in dispersion, and maintain that their prayers and sacrifices offered in every place are pure and well-pleasing, learn that you are speaking falsely, and trying by all means to cheat yourselves: for, first of all, not even now does your nation extend from the rising to the setting of the sun, but there are nations among which none of your race ever dwelt. For there is not one single race of men, whether barbarians, or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads, or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus. And then, as the Scriptures show, at the time when Malachi wrote this, your dispersion over all the earth, which now exists, had not taken place.²³

This passage provides us with a fascinating insight into the terms of Justin’s debate with people whom he calls ‘Israelites’, in a text written at most a couple of decades after the Jewish war against the Romans. Justin claims that the sacrifices

21 Whether Trypho is a mere literary fiction is undecidable, and anyway here quite irrelevant. On Justin and Jewish-Christian relations see Boyarin (2001; 2004, 37–73).

22 Elsewhere, Justin mentions the execution of Christians by the Jewish rebel leader: “For in the Jewish war which lately raged, Barchochebas, the leader of the revolt of the Jews, gave orders that Christians alone should be led to cruel punishments, unless they would deny Jesus Christ and utter blasphemy”: *1Apol.* 31.

23 Justin, *Dial.* 117 (tr. here and later by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson in *ANF*).

offered by Christians in the Eucharist are 'well-pleasing' to God, while those of the Israelites and their former priests have been utterly rejected – according to their very own Scriptures (again with a quotation from the book of *Malachi* [1:10–12]).²⁴ And yet – if we can take him at his word, and it seems we can – he witnesses to the fact that, after the disaster of the war, i.e. the foundation by the Romans of Aelia Capitolina on the site of Jerusalem, and the creation of a sacred Roman site in place of the Temple, the Jews themselves “assert that God does not accept the sacrifices of those who dwelt then in Jerusalem”, while “He is pleased with the prayers of the people of that nation then dispersed, and calls their prayers sacrifices”. For these are “the only perfect and well-pleasing” ones, “offered in every place”.

Both Justin and his interlocutor Trypho start from the acknowledgement that Jewish worship has had to be re-configured after the Bar-Kokhba war. Both sides are represented as subscribing to the reconceptualisation of the notion of sacrifice, such that the physical sacrifices conducted by priests in the Temple in Jerusalem have been replaced by prayers, and the focus on one single location has been given up. How paradoxical such a re-configuration must have sounded in contemporary ears can be seen from the clear distinction made by Plato between ‘sacrifice’ and ‘prayer’. In Plato’s dialogue *Euthyphro* (14c), Socrates states that “sacrificing is giving to the gods, while praying is making a request of the gods”. If so, how can prayer ‘replace’ sacrifice or be considered an equivalent to it?

Even if Trypho is only a prop on which to hang Justin’s arguments, the distinction between ‘giving to’ and ‘requesting of’ God has become blurred, while Justin assumes that both Trypho and himself share the thought that prayers are now called sacrifices and that sacrifices should be interpreted as prayers.

Against this background, we can understand why our passage does not mention priests, but instead speaks of ‘people’ and prayers ‘in every place’ that are now called ‘sacrifices’.²⁵ Interestingly, Justin states this view as a new Jewish un-

²⁴ Mal. 1:10–12 reads: (10) Oh, that there were even one among you who would shut the doors, so you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain. I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hands. (11) For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and everywhere offerings are made to my name, pure offerings; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. (12) But you profane it by saying, “The table of the Lord and its fruit is polluted, the food is contemptible”.

²⁵ Although Judaism still knew Levites and priests, as shown by Hezser (1994, 480–489), they now were seen as interpreters of the Torah. Grey (2011) is even more explicit: “Examples of post-70 priestly dynamics include Josephus’ endorsement of priestly leadership after the First Revolt, the priestly ideology behind the Bar Kokhba revolt in the second century, the continued presence of priestly aristocrats in Galilee, the leadership of priestly sages in the Tiberian academy during

derstanding of sacrifice to which he explicitly subscribes. He also claims that at least some Christians too (though not all, as we shall see) shared in this new understanding: “Now, that prayers and giving of thanks, when offered by worthy men, are the only perfect and well-pleasing sacrifices to God, I also admit”. He adds, however, that “Christians alone have undertaken to offer” such sacrifices in the form of the Eucharist (‘solid and liquid food’), whereas he blames the Israelites, particularly the high priests and the teachers, for “pro-fan[ing] and blasphem[ing]” the Christians and their sacrifices “over all the earth”.

Is Justin’s concern with the denigration of Christian worship by ‘high priests’ and ‘teachers’, due, as Stroumsa thinks, to the fact that the latter have given up sacrifices altogether and put the priests out of a job? Were Christians – whom Justin calls the ‘true Israelite race’ – now different in continuing the Israelites’ praxis by establishing a priestly class?²⁶ The answer to these questions is rather complex and requires some further discussion of Justin’s text.

To defend sacrificial practice, Justin had earlier inverted *Mal.* 1:10–12, claiming that Christians glorify God’s name among the Gentiles, while the Jews profane it.²⁷ His justification for this move was the allegedly universal spread of Christians among the Gentiles, “from the rising of the sun to its setting”. He had also raised the issue of the Jews’ new situation without the Temple, putting into Trypho’s mouth a question about Christians who “even now, wish to live in the observance of the institutions given by Moses”:

“But if some, even now, wish to live in the observance of the institutions given by Moses, and yet believe in this Jesus who was crucified, recognising Him to be the Christ of God, and that it is given to Him to be absolute Judge of all, and that His is the everlasting kingdom, can they also be saved?”, he [Trypho] inquired of me [Justin].

And I [Justin] replied, “Let us consider that also together, whether one may now observe all the Mosaic institutions”.

the late third and early fourth centuries, expressions of priestly nationalism in the Byzantine period, and the involvement of priests in synagogue worship”. See also Mimouni (2012); Fine (2014, 182) (with further lit., but note that Ze’ev Weiss is male, not female), although sceptical of the idea of ‘expansion of the priests as a sociological group’ still notices a ‘deepening interest in priests and priestly motifs’ in the Byzantine era in Judaism; see also Schwartz (1990, 58–109); Grey also points to the earlier studies by Trifon (1985) and Trifon (1989, 77–93); see also Jan Bremmer’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 2) to whom I owe the knowledge of Grey’s PhD thesis.

²⁶ Justin, *Dial.* 135, see Harvey (1996, 253–254).

²⁷ Cf. the earlier passages *Dial.* 28–29 and 41.

And he [Trypho] answered, "No. For we know that, as you said, it is not possible either anywhere to sacrifice the lamb of the passover, or to offer the goats ordered for the fast; or, in short, [to present] all the other offerings".²⁸

In other words, even after the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, the ban of Jews from living in or visiting the town once a year, and the impossibility of sacrificing the Lamb for Passover in due form after 135 CE, some believers, even those who adhered to the crucified Jesus, evidently still wanted to observe the Jewish Law in its entirety.²⁹ Yet Justin makes Trypho reject such a possibility. According to him, one can no longer be saved through observance, since there is no ritual sacrificing of the Lamb of the Passover or of the goats or "all the other offerings", which have vanished with the lost Temple. Yet the Jews are not left without alternatives:

And I said, "Tell then yourself, I pray, some things which can be observed; for you will be persuaded that, though a man does not keep or has not performed the eternal decrees, he may assuredly be saved".

Then he replied, "To keep the Sabbath, to be circumcised, to observe months, and to be washed if you touch anything prohibited by Moses, or after sexual intercourse".³⁰

There is no mention here of the study of the Torah that Neusner and Stroumsa foreground: it is rather ritual practice, based on the Torah, that is emphasised. Prayer alone does not seem enough for Trypho, for he adds some observances he thinks are still available, namely keeping the Sabbath, circumcision, calendar observance and purity rites such as ritual washing (βαπτίζειν). And, as the ensuing dialogue shows, it is not only Jews and Jews who believe in Jesus who observe these ordinances, but some of the latter also want to persuade Gentiles to join them in such observances, on the grounds that they are a pre-requisite for salvation.³¹ Sacrifice, however, is not mentioned, since physical sacrifices have ceased and need to be replaced by something else.

The further question, however, is whether, with physical sacrifice at the Temple a thing of the past, the privileged group of priests who officiated as those sacrifices also cease to be important. Despite what has been called the 'traumatis-

²⁸ Justin, *Dial.* 46.1–2.

²⁹ That they also believe in Jesus as 'absolute Judge of all' excludes them from being Marcionites, although the latter play a significant role in Justin's *Dialogue*; see now Hayes (2017).

³⁰ Justin, *Dial.* 46.2.

³¹ Jessica van't Westeinde (University of Durham) called my attention to the fact that this naturally presumes that such Gentiles had become Jewish, i.e. Jewish-by-conversion, because only then would observance be a pre-condition for being saved.

ing³² experience of the destruction and loss of the Temple, Simon Mimouni has claimed that “certain priestly classes, the מִשְׁמָרוֹת/*mishmarot* [...] preserved their authority and influence with the people both in civic and religious matters”.³³ In that case, in now representing all Christians as a ‘priestly race’, Justin might be broadening the idea of a priestly class and expanding it to apply to every Christian. Moreover, he even claims the sacrifices of prayer that God now receives are offered by gentiles viewed as the true high priests: “We are the true high priestly race of God, as even God Himself bears witness, saying that in every place among the Gentiles sacrifices are presented to Him well-pleasing and pure. Now God receives sacrifices from no one, except through His priests”.³⁴ Can we go so far as to claim that Justin is here claiming that the Christians have inherited the status of the Jewish *mishmarot*, the *cohanim* or that of the members of the tribe of Levi? I think not. The claim is rather that Christians see themselves as being *of the race of* the ‘high priests’ (as a matter of fact, high priests were never a specific caste, for the individuals chosen were recruited from a variety of backgrounds, such as Pharisees and Sadducees). Hence ‘race’ (γένος) here represents Christians as belonging to the Jewish people, something that accords with Justin’s claim elsewhere that Christians constitute the *verus Israel*. For him “the notion of *verus Israel*, the true Israel, is a key feature in the *Dialogue*”, as Mikael Tellbe points out, because “from the start, Justin makes it clear that ‘we are the true spiritual Israel, and the descendants (γένος) of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, who, though uncircumcised, was approved and blessed by God, because of his faith, and who was called the father of many nations (ἐθνῶν)’ (*Dial.* 11.5)”.³⁵

In opening the following paragraph with ‘we’, Justin seems indeed to be claiming that all Christians are to be regarded as high priests or priests:

Accordingly, God, anticipating all the sacrifices which we offer through this name, and which Jesus the Christ enjoined us to offer, i.e., in the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, and which are presented by Christians in all places throughout the world, bears witness that they are well-pleasing to Him.³⁶

On the other hand, in a passage of the earlier *First Apology*, where Justin describes baptism, he alludes to somebody whose role it is to “lead to the laver

³² Levine (2000, 491).

³³ Mimouni (2015, 549).

³⁴ Justin, *Dial.* 116.3.

³⁵ Tellbe (2009, 124).

³⁶ Justin, *Dial.* 117.1.

the person that is to be washed, calling him by this name alone [i.e. the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe]". He is, however, not referred to as a 'priest' nor is he said to be an intermediary. On the contrary, Justin continues with the communal 'we' and states that "we have thus washed" the baptisand, although remarkably enough he differentiates between this 'we' and the assembled persons, "who are called brethren".³⁷

When, in the same work, Justin describes the celebration of the Eucharist, he again refers to a person called the 'president of the brethren', who is eminent and set above the others. This person takes "bread and a cup of wine mixed with water, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands". While this person leads the thanksgiving, all the people present give their assent by saying 'amen'.³⁸ In addition to the president, a 'reader' is mentioned,³⁹ and also 'deacons' who "give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion".⁴⁰ It is certainly correct to read into this account an emerging hierarchy (president, deacons, people). But in my view it is questionable whether we should also see it as ascribing a priestly mediating function to the president, especially as the agents in both cases, baptism and eucharist, are God through Christ and the individual who makes a conscious choice, repents and knows, and thus remains no longer a child "of necessity and of ignorance".⁴¹ This process of emancipation is one of the reasons why "this washing [of baptism] is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings".⁴²

My argument is thus that for Justin, as for Trypho, the function of the High Priest as a privileged mediator of the divine has ceased with the end of the Bar Kokhba war. Moreover, both believe that the functions of the *mishmarim*, the *cohanim*, and the priests viewed as descendants of the tribe of the Levites, have come to an end. At least for Justin, the difference between Trypho and himself was not the abandonment of blood-sacrifice or the continuation of a spiritual form of it. The difference he emphasises concerns the identity of those who offer the true spiritual sacrifice. Whereas Trypho maintains that the Temple sac-

³⁷ Justin, *1Apol.* 55.1.

³⁸ Justin, *1Apol.* 65.5; cf. 67.4–5.

³⁹ Justin, *1Apol.* 67.4.

⁴⁰ Justin, *1Apol.* 65.5.

⁴¹ Justin, *1Apol.* 61.10.

⁴² Justin, *1Apol.* 61.12.

rifices are now being offered in the form of prayers by ‘worthy men’, Justin goes a step further and identifies the Christians not only as ‘worthy men’ but actually as ‘High Priests or priests’, perhaps indeed, as Stroumsa has suggested, to emphasise against Trypho their continuity with the ancient Israelite priestly tradition.⁴³

3. Jewish and Christian intellectualism and ritualism

What purchase does Justin give us on Stroumsa’s account of the situation after 70 CE?

Let us first take Stroumsa’s claim that a Christianity centred on priesthood diverged from a Rabbinic Judaism oriented towards teaching as early as the period after 70 CE. This view depends on an early dating of texts such as *Hebrews*, *Revelation*, and the canonical *Gospels*. All of these, however, are in my view later texts that attempt to insinuate an early divide between the two ‘new religions’, which is supposed to have occurred at the latest after the destruction of the Temple by Titus.⁴⁴ By contrast, I believe that once one recognises that such texts are themselves part of the literature of the ‘second sophistic’ of the mid-second century,⁴⁵ they can be used as evidence for the complex re-negotiation of what Ju-

43 He does not single out the *prohistamenoí* or presidents of the congregation as the ‘high priest’ or ‘priest’ in contrast to the lay congregation, but instead calls all Christians priests. In this respect, Clement of Rome in his letter to the Corinthians differs from Justin. To Clement, Christ descended from the tribe of the Levites, see *1Clem.* 32; 58. Christ is called the ‘High Priest’, see *1Clem.* 36. Is this a hint that this Letter has been written after 70 CE, but before the end of the Bar Kokhba war? For up to the end of this war, as I point out below, Jews had high hopes of rebuilding the Temple

44 It is interesting to note that after having shown that the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE did not make much, if any practical difference for western diaspora Jews (they were “long accustomed to honoring their god without offerings and sacrifices ... In this respect, with the Temple’s destruction, nothing changed. Instead, through the cycles of reading their scriptures, diaspora Jews could hear and learn about these sacrifices long before 70. They could and did continue to do so long after the Temple had ceased to exist”), even Paula Frederiksen refers to the “small body of interrelated Hellenistic Jewish texts”, “the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John” which “within very few years of the Roman destruction, do focus quite deliberately on the fall of the Temple”, while at the same time she mentions “the relatively muted trauma for the diaspora”, see Frederiksen (2014, 27); more precisely, she later notes in her summary (48) that ‘later Christians’ (and she should have extended this to the Gospel authors too) looked “through the prism of the Bar Kokhba revolt”, as this event supported their argument that God himself had ‘sent the Jews into exile’, although for centuries, the Jewish diaspora existed.

45 See Vinzent (2014).

daism was or should become. Although Titus had destroyed the Temple, the Jewish communities continued fervently to believe in the possibility of its being rebuilt.⁴⁶ But after 135 CE and the foundation of *Aelia Capitolina*, as I have pointed out, the Romans actually banned Jews from living in Jerusalem.⁴⁷ In this new situation, as one can see from Justin, both the Temple and its sacrifices were transferred to the realm of eschatological hope, became linked to the coming of the Messiah, and, in the meantime, had to be spiritualised.

Jews who turned to Rabbis and those who chose rather the one Rabbi, the 'friends of Christ', agreed on all this. What they disagreed over was their benchmark narrative of the turn – while the Rabbis used Moses' Torah and the prophets, the friends of Christ turned to the Prophets, as one can see from Justin, or his contemporary Ptolemaeus, or, even more radically, to the new narrative of the Gospel, which, in the form proposed by Marcion and Justin's student Tatian, rejected both Moses and the Prophets. Is the Rabbis' orientation towards the Torah really 'a religion of the intellect' in contrast to Christianity, with its orientation towards the Prophets and the Gospel? For it was not only the Christians who formed a religion – as Stroumsa puts it, not of the book but of the 'paperback' – producing countless pamphlets, including Justin's *Dialogue*, sometimes with more, and often with less, intellectual rigour. The Jews – from whom the Christians had not yet separated – did just the same. Neither of them, however, placed the intellect above emotions and tradition. And only individual exceptions such as Marcion or Tatian ever questioned their shared foundation, Moses and the Prophets, and the rituals prescribed in Scripture.

On the other hand, if we take Justin, the urban visitor to Rome, as our guide, Stroumsa does seem to be correct in his claim that Christianity, far more than Rabbinic Judaism, continued to emphasise the sacrificial topology of ancient Israel. Christianity deployed priestly language, cultic rituals, calendar-observation and a clearly-structured sacred hierarchy (whether from the very beginning⁴⁸ or at the latest after the Bar Kokhba war). It drew upon a mixture of traditions, including those of ancient Israel, Rome, even Mithras, re-reading earlier themes and combining them with new, idiosyncratic elements. The degree to which Christianity is to be viewed as continuous with ancient Israel rather than, say, a new form of religion or a transformation of Roman religion seems to me as open as the question of whether Rome was ever Christianised, or whether Judaism became Romanised in Christianity. More research is needed into the begin-

⁴⁶ See *Barn.* 16.4.

⁴⁷ See also Cass. Dio 79.12 with Schäfer (1981, 33–35).

⁴⁸ If Mimouni (2015, 501–563) is correct, the Jesus-movement was inherently priest-oriented, because Jesus' family belonged to the tribe of the Levites.

nings of Christianity and the documents on which its history is conventionally based, Paul's *Letters*, the *Gospels* and *Acts*. At all events, a simple binary reading that contrasts Judaism with Christianity makes little sense: it is an opposition we need to transcend if we are ever to succeed in revising the traditional histories of triumph, be they Jewish or Christian.

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