Digression II
Vice in all its Ugliness: Rittershausen

The notion of the dramatic poem took hold also in Germany. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, predating both Kaulbach's pictorial effort and the various musical articulations of the subject discussed above, the destruction of Jerusalem inspired also the dramatic engagement with the historical episode. The presumably earliest dramatic engagement with the destruction of Jerusalem in nineteenth-century Germany predates Loewe's oratorio by almost two decades. Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen's tragedy *Jerusalems Zerstörung* (Jerusalem's Destruction) was published in 1811. This play, because it includes no Ahasuerus figure, does not correspond to the pattern of the other dramatic texts discussed in the following chapter. It is, moreover, very different from both the British and the German emerging traditions. It nevertheless offers an important, though idiosyncratic and culturally unproductive, dramatic engagement with the subject and I therefore insert its discussion here as a digression.

An Idiosyncratic Precursor

Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen's (1748–1820) tragedy *Jerusalems Zerstörung* (Jerusalem's Destruction) was published in 1811 during the Napoleonic Wars in a time of momentous upheaval. It is intriguing in particular as an articulation of a Catholic appropriation of the subject long before the *Kulturkampf*, and for the political context by which it is implicitly informed.

An honorary spiritual counsellor (*geistlicher Rat*), for some time a monk of the Theatine order, professor of philosophy, and ordained priest living on a small sinecure in Munich, Rittershausen was moreover active as a painter of religious and historical subjects as well as a dramatist and writer. In the course of his long career, which took him also to France and Italy, the versatile and adversarial author ruffled quite a few feathers. In *Die Hypokriten in Bayern* (1802; The Hypocrites in Bavaria),[1] initially published anonymously and followed by several supplements,[2] Rittershausen polemically denounced the "Sadducean" professors at higher schools in Bavaria whom he censured for propagating atheism or at least

1 [Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen], *Die Hypokriten in Bayern* (s. l.: s. n., 1802).

2 See [Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen], *Ehre und Pasquill, Anhang zu den Hypokryten in Bayern* (s. l.: s. n., 1802) and [Joseph Sebastian von] Rittershausen, *Zum neuen Jahre für die Hypokriten in Bayern* (Munich: Zängl, 1803).

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the abandonment of true Christian faith.[3] Accusing them of "hatching Kantian embryos,"[4] he maintained that the egotism, despotism, and slavery to the passions they fostered ultimately produced nothing but despair.[5] The author's reference to Sadducees, one of the factions among the Jews of the later Second Temple period, associates the internal unrest which hastened the destruction of Jerusalem. It may already reflect, at least partially, the historical analogy the author was to elaborate a little later in *Jerusalems Zerstörung*.

Much earlier, in the first volume of his *Hauslegende oder Feyerstunden eines Christen* (1787; Home Legend or a Christian's Hours of Celebration), Rittershausen had described the Sadducees as a "stealthy sect" of "generally merry brothers and the foremost of lechers."[6] In the two volumes of *Hauslegende*, Rittershausen sought to relate the life of Jesus in an engaging narrative with the objective of educating the lower classes to the truths of the Catholic faith. In the first volume, he included also a lengthy description of biblical Jerusalem,[7] a setting of the scene, as it were, that encompassed the destruction and rebuilding of the First Temple.[8] The author seems to have projected further volumes but, if so, his plans came to nothing.[9] Nevertheless, his Jerusalem play, conceived by Rittershausen as a companion piece to his earlier *Die Tochter Jephtes* (1785; Jephtha's Daughter),[10] may arguably also be understood as a continuation—and conclusion—of his project.

3 [Rittershausen], *Hypokriten in Bayern*, p. 56.

4 [Rittershausen], *Ehre und Pasquill*, p. [3]: "Ungestört, unangefochten, durch keine öffentliche Schrift beleidigt, saßen ruhig auf ihrem Katheder die Professoren zu München, und brüteten Kantische Embrionen aus."

5 [Rittershausen], *Hypokriten in Bayern*, p. 56.

6 Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen, *Hauslegende oder Feyerstunden eines Christen*, 2 vols (Augsburg: Wolff, 1787–89), I, 107: "schleichende Secte" and p. 106: "insgemein lustige Brüder, und die ersten Wollüstlinge."

7 See ibid., I, 97–127.

8 See ibid., I, 99–100.

9 See ibid., II, [489]. Rittershausen announces that: "the sad fates and the abundance of misery which came to pass in latter times shall be told in their place. [Die traurigen Schicksale, und des Elends Fülle, welche sich in spätern Zeiten ereigneten, werden an ihrem Ort erzählet werden]," ibid., I, 100.

10 See Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen, *Die Tochter Jephtes* (Bregenz: Typographische Gesellschaft, 1785). For Rittershausen's play, see *Jephtas Tochter: Eine alttestamentliche Geschichte in Eichstätt*, exhibition catalogue, Universitätsbibliothek Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, 2003–04, ed. Klaus Walter Littger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), pp. 6, 138.

The Apex of Iniquity and Divine Retribution

In the epilogue to *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, Rittershausen acknowledges the "true history" of Josephus as his source and describes his subject as one of the "greatest occurrences" in universal history.[11] He maintains that the destruction of Jerusalem promotes the most profound reflection on the Lord's merciful forbearance as well as his eventual punitive justice. Echoing Schiller's thoughts on the stage as a moral institution, the author moreover identifies dramatic art as a distinct voice with a strong impact on human morals—be it positive or negative.

Anticipating the censure of his critics, Rittershausen moreover felt it necessary to assert that it was his objective to represent virtue as desirable and vice in all its ugliness. Again, this invokes Schiller and, more specifically, his preface to the first edition of *Die Räuber* (1781; *The Robbers*), in which the dramatist explains:

> It is the course of mortal things that the good should be shadowed by the bad, and virtue shines the brightest when contrasted with vice. Whoever proposes to discourage vice and to vindicate religion, morality, and social order against their enemies, must unveil crime in all its deformity, and place it before the eyes of men in its colossal magnitude.[12]

It may well be that Rittershausen was in fact inspired by his reading of Schiller's play to turn to the destruction of Jerusalem in the first place. In scene two of the first act of *Die Räuber*, Karl Moor, reading in Plutarch about the lives of great men, is disgusted with the insipidity of his own century and, more specifically, with the critical and creative reception suffered by the heroes of old at the hands of sickly academics and foolish playwrights; the scheming Spiegelberg chides him: "Josephus is the book you should read."[13] Spiegelberg then proceeds to develop his own bizarre scheme of gathering the Jews in Palestine and reviving the kingdom of Judah under his sceptre. Arguably, Spiegelberg was conceived by Schiller as a converted Jew, and his scheme of re-establishing a Jewish kingdom

11 Johann Sebastian von Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung: Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen mit Chören* (Landshut: Weber, [1811]), p. [116]: "nach Josephs wahrer Geschichte," "eine der größten Begebenheiten."

12 Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber* [1781], in *Schillers Werke, Nationalausgabe*, ed. Herbert Stubenrauch (Weimar: Böhlau, 1953), III, 5: "Es ist einmal so die Mode in der Welt, daß die Guten durch die Bösen schattiert werden, und die Tugend im Kontrast mit dem Laster das lebendigste Kolorit erhält. Wer sich den Zweck vorgezeichnet hat, das Laster zu stürzen, und Religion, Moral und bürgerliche Gesetze an ihren Feinden zu rächen, ein solcher muß das Laster in seiner nackten Abscheulichkeit enthüllen und in seiner kolossalischen Größe vor das Auge der Menschheit stellen."

13 Ibid., III, 20: "Den Josephus mußt du lesen."

in Jerusalem has been read as a desperate response to the inner conflict between his Christian and Jewish identities.[14] It seems that Rittershausen, albeit himself in danger of warping ("verhunzen") the heroism of yore in his tragedy, nevertheless felt compelled to take Spiegelberg's advice to engage with Josephus.[15]

Rittershausen's apology for the representation of vice and excess on the stage in emulation of Schiller may have been motivated in particular by the author's choice to give much prominence to Mary of Bethezuba's teknophagy in addition to the iniquities and cruelty of Simon bar Giora and John of Giscala (Johannes von Giscala). In justification of his approach, Rittershausen moreover cites the painter Correggio who is said to have responded to the charge that his designs were neither as accurate as Michelangelo's nor as beautiful as Raphael's that he painted as prompted by his emotions.[16] The allusion suggests that the author sought to engage an emotional dimension through his play that would potentially extend his own emotional investment to the reader and an imaginary audience, though it is doubtful that Rittershausen would have expected *Jerusalems Zerstörung* ever to be performed on the stage.

Rittershausen's decision to pre-empt the censure of his critics was neither arbitrary nor out of character. Decades earlier, his cicerone to the art collections in Munich, *Die vornehmste Merkwürdigkeiten der Residenzstadt München* (1787; The Most Distinguished Curios of the Capital City of Munich),[17] had been scorned by some reviewers. The indignant author responded with a lengthy polemical pamphlet *An die Rezensenten zu Jena* (1789; To the Reviewers at Jena).[18] Nor was Rittershausen very reticent in the literary debate he instigated with his denunciation of the "hypocrites" in Bavaria.

Indeed, his intractability did not stand Rittershausen in good stead. In the newly established Kingdom of Bavaria (1806), which relied very much on the support of imperial France to assert itself against the neighboring Austro-Hungarian

14 See Manfred Misch, "Spiegelberg und sein Judenstaatsprojekt," in *"In Spuren gehen . . .": Festschrift für Helmut Koopman*, eds Andrea Bartl et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), pp. 127–38, pp. 130–1.

15 See Schiller, *Räuber*, III, 21.

16 See Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, p. [116]. The play was initially published in two print runs, one of which, otherwise identical with the other, included a colored title vignette. Probably designed by Rittershausen himself and engraved by Joseph Erasmus Bellinger, this showed the burning Temple as a massive and forbidding edifice dwarfing the multitude of its attackers. The flames and smoke flaring from its roof are as yet the only indication of its destruction.

17 Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen, *Die vornehmste Merkwürdigkeiten der Residenzstadt München: Für Liebhaber der bildenden Künste* (Munich: Lentner, 1787).

18 Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen, *An die Rezensenten zu Jena* (s. l.: s. n., 1789).

Empire and against Prussia, the irksome author had incurred suspicion for his anti-Napoleonic stance and was exiled to Bayreuth in the recently acquired Franconian province where he remained until 1817.[19] Read in this context, *Jerusalems Zerstörung* acquires a topicality which suggests that the author's conception of the historical occurrence and its actors may have been intended as a commentary on his own time, perhaps even as an attempt to placate the political establishment.

The obvious analogy would suggest the Jews in Jerusalem and the tyrants under whose rule they suffer to correspond to the German states, in particular Prussia and Austria, with the Maccabee Silas and his followers as well as the sincere and honorable priests embodying an equally pious and enlightened minority that might conceivably be decoded as signifying the German states under French protection, such as those of the *Rheinbund* (1806–13; Confederation of the Rhine) which included Bavaria. In such a scenario, the conquering Romans might easily be identified with the French which would then suggest the figure of Titus to evoke the war-like emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte. Indeed the erstwhile First Consul's grab for, and irresistible rise to, the highest power in 1804 offers a plausible enough parallel to both the emperor Vespasian and his son and successor Titus.

While largely portrayed in accordance with the image sketched by Josephus, Rittershausen's characterization of Titus surpasses the Jewish historian's encomium of the Roman imperator. His Titus, hailed in emulation of Aurelius Victor without any irony as the "treasure" of his people and the "delight of humanity,"[20] appears at the end of the play as a kind of *deus ex machina* to insist that he was no more than the instrument of divine providence,[21] a trope perpetuated in Christian discourse no less than the imperator's alleged mercy and benevolence.

More importantly, and arguably intended as an implicit admonition to the French emperor, Rittershausen's Titus pledges his commitment to good governance:

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19 See Clemens Alois Baader, *Lexikon verstorbener Baierischer Schriftsteller des achtzehnten und neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Augsburg and Leipzig: Jenisch and Stage, 1825), II.ii, 38–41, 39. It is not quite clear when Rittershausen had to move to Bayreuth; his exile is not yet mentioned in Felix Joseph Lipowsky, *Baierisches Künstler-Lexikon* (Munich: Fleischmann, 1810), II, 44–5.

20 Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, p. 109: "Wonne deines Volkes und die Freude der Menschen." The epithet occurs in *Epitome de Caesaribus* attributed to Aurelius Victor, see *Sexti Aurelii Victoris liber de Caesaribus; praecedunt Origo gentis Romanae et liber de viris illustribus urbis Romae, subsequitur Epitome de Caesaribus; Liber de Caesaribus*, ed. Franz Pichlmayr (Leipzig: Teubner, 1911), X.6: "deliciae atque amor humani generis appellaretur."

21 See Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, pp. 106–7.

> Oh, you Romans! Would that I could satisfy all your desires. But I am only a mortal, like you. I shall love you like a father loves his children: but I will never be without faults; and yet my innermost striving shall aim to make you happy. Should I once be your emperor: I shall be yours truly and shall not entrust a hireling with your concerns:—I shall myself maintain law and justice and not suffer any tyranny that abuses my name. With my own hand shall I break the yoke that rests heavily on your necks: I shall watch if not a silent lament trouble the peaceful stars: if loud lamentation cry for justice to the seat of the immortal gods on high.[22]

Should he not succeed in making all his subjects happy, Rittershausen's Titus wishes at least to be able to say that he made none of them unhappy.[23]

The imperator's assertion that it was his objective to give the Jews a constitution which should have protected them from internal strife and any destructive tendencies is once again of contemporary significance.[24] Bavaria was given its first constitution only a few years prior to the publication of Rittershausen's play in 1808 by King Maximilian I Joseph. Its twofold objective was to unify the new state and to forestall a constitution otherwise to be imposed by the French emperor.[25] Clearly, the author welcomed the democratic innovation, though it was only the revised constitution of 1818—after Napoleon's fall and Rittershausen's return from exile—which actually came into effect and ultimately secured the people's representation in Bavaria.[26]

The destruction of Jerusalem and the divine punishment suffered by the contrary Jews emerges thus in a political sense as a warning example to the author's contemporaries:

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22 Ibid., pp. 110–11: "O ihr Römer! wäre es mir gegeben, alle eure Wünsche zu befriedigen. Aber ich bin nur ein Sterblicher, wie ihr. Ich werde euch lieben, wie ein Vater seine Kinder liebt: aber ich werde nie ohne Fehler seyn; indessen soll mein innerstes Bestreben dahin zielen, euch glücklich zu machen. Werde ich einst euer Imperator seyn: ich werde euch selbst anhören, und eure Sache keinem Miethlinge überlassen:—selbst Recht und Gerechtigkeit pflegen, und keine Tyranney gedulden, welche meinen Namen mißbraucht. Mit eigener Hand werde ich das Joch zerbrechen, das schwer auf eurem Nacken liegt: ich werde lauern, ob keine stille Klage die friedsamen Sterne beunruhigt: oder ob lauter Jammer um Gerechtigkeit zum Sitz der unsterblichen Götter hinaufruft."

23 See ibid., p. 111.

24 See ibid., p. 106.

25 See Karl Möckl, "Die bayerische Konstitution von 1808," in *Reformen im rheinbündischen Deutschland*, ed. Eberhard Weis (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1984), pp. 151–67 and Marcus Junkelmann, *Napoleon und Bayern: Von den Anfängen des Königreiches* (Salzburg: Pustet, 1985), p. 156.

26 Ibid., p. 157.

> Let, oh let this dreadful catastrophe be an unprecedented warning to all of humanity of the abyss into which the pride of human presumption hurls itself if, despising divine and human laws, it dissolves the ties of those obligations without which no state may endure![27]

In Rittershausen's play, any laws, human and divine, are indeed denied and mocked by the iniquitous Simon bar Giora and John of Giscala. John is drawn by the author as a villain of Machiavellian cast and Simon is portrayed as a sadistic brute. Their characterization is not only a perpetuation of the stereotypes that developed over the course of centuries in the wake of Josephus, it is in some ways even a further radicalization of the historian's account which offered gruesome illustrations of their cruelty and inhumanity that only served to emphasize the justice of the divine punishment to befall the city in which such excesses proliferated.

Simon and John's depravity, emphasized throughout the play, is demonstrated most graphically in the fourth act which sees them carousing and gorging themselves in a subterranean vault while famine and illness rage in Jerusalem. The devious John moreover plans to have the Temple burnt. He expects the sight to excite its defenders to an absolute frenzy toward the Romans that should result in Jewish victory; in addition, he hopes that Silas, the fictional descendant of the Maccabees and honorable antagonist of the tyrants, will perish in the flames. To Simon he promises kingship and, once he will have satisfied the people's superstition with a new Temple, that he will be hailed as savior. Yet as he relates his scheme to Simon, his asides reveal that he seeks to betray the other: He intends to accuse Simon of the deed to remove the uncomfortable rival and envisions for himself to be anointed High Priest and King.

The Machiavellian cast of John is acknowledged by the politically less savvy Simon with admiration. His own ambitions are less refined—or refined in a very different sense. Inspired by the other's stratagem, he reveals his own sadistic phantasies: Simon desires to emulate the historical precedent of the King and High Priest Alexander (i.e., Alexander Jannaeus) who entertained himself during a feast with the crucifixion and murder of hundreds of his opponents.[28]

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27 Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, p. 110: "Laß, o laß dieses entsezliche Verhängniß dem ganzen Menschen-Geschlechte eine beispiellose Warnung seyn, in welchen Abgrund der Stolz des menschlichen Eigendünkels sich stürzt, wenn er ein Verächter göttlich- und menschlicher Gesetze, das Band jener Pflichten lößt, ohne welche kein Staat bestehen kann!"

28 See ibid., p. 82; the same historical occurrence is described almost verbatim by the author in Rittershausen, *Hauslegende*, I, 107–8. See also Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Works of Josephus*, transl. William Whiston (1737; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), pp. 27–542, 13.372–83 and *Jewish War*, pp. 39–41 (1.4.2–6). See also James S. McLaren, *Power and Politics in*

Yet the very brief second scene around which the act pivots even eclipses this horror. In it Simon and John are informed of Mary's teknophagy. The scene is interesting in particular because John, characterized throughout as sly and crafty, if in his own way no less a villain than the brutish and cruel Simon whom he deftly manipulates, is completely shaken by the very idea. In the stage directions, he is described as "horrified," "much dismayed," "completely having lost his composure," and "faint-hearted."[29] Simon, in contrast, callously mocking that no feast should lack roast, is desirous to behold the "female tiger" and to relish her torture.[30]

The confrontation with Mary (Maria) follows in the third scene. Simon, his sadism now provided with an object, insists that he has not yet had his fill watching her pain and envisions that with his own belly full he will see her die of hunger. He will indeed see her die, yet the tables will be turned against him. The tyrants give Mary wine and the insane woman confides: "Human flesh gives a thirst." Toward Simon and John she continues: "You have devoured so much human flesh, that is why there are so many goblets in front of you."[31] When Mary eventually phantasizes to be accused by her murdered child and to be judged by God himself, her hallucination finally alarms even Simon. The distraught woman calls the eternal God's judgment upon the tyrants and invokes the dead:

> O rise up around me all you bloody shades of the murdered! [. . .] Tremble, entrails of the earth, release all the dead slain by all the tyrants of the earth—cast the world into chaos—jolt the elements—eradicate humanity—[. . .] Arise—arise—spectres—wreak vengeance—vengeance—[32]

Upon which the unfortunate woman falls dead to the ground. Yet to Simon and John she rises up again as a shadow to the unabating dreadful blare of a trombone which evokes the Last Judgment:

Palestine: The Jews and the Governing of Their Land, 100 BC–AD 70 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), pp. 55–7.

29 See Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, pp. 83–4: "entsetzt [. . .] sehr betroffen [. . .] ganz außer Fassung [. . .] zaghaft."

30 See ibid., pp. 83–4: "diesen weiblichen Tyger."

31 Ibid., p. 89: "Menschenfleisch macht Durst. [. . .] Ihr habt viel Menschenfleisch verzehrt, darum stehen auch so viele Pokale vor euch."

32 Ibid., pp. 94–5: "O ersteht um mich alle ihr Blutgestalten der Niedergemordeten! [. . .] Erschüttert euch Eingeweide der Erde, gebt die Todten alle herauf, die alle Tyrannen der Erde niederwürgten—bringt die ganze Welt in Unordnung—rüttelt die Elemente zusamm—vertilget die Menschheit—[. . .] Herauf—herauf—Gespenster—rächet—rächet—"

> John and Simon get up, reeling.—The chairs topple over. In front of their footsteps rises up the shadow of Mary with the bloody knife, the murdered child in her arm. The tyrants seize one another—wrestle—one hurls the other away, wherever they turn in flight, the shadows of the famished rise up against them. The lamps die down—flashes of lightning are thrown towards them.[33]

In an almost Shakespearean manner, the scene ends in a pantomime of confusion and dread. Mary's unnatural deed becomes paradigmatic of the guilt the tyrants have incurred not only through their own inhumane actions, but by making others guilty and by compromising all moral certainty. In a terrifying climax, the Chorus of the Famished rises up and demands their judgment to the accompaniment of programmatic music: "The music gives expression to the final punishment," the fate of damnation, and "[t]he tyrants meet in a pantomime of the most dreadful fright, stumbling through the shadows along the cavernous passages."[34]

In the concluding fifth act, Simon and John, once again fighting each other, are apprehended by the Romans and assigned to the jurisdiction of the Senate in Rome. Their well-deserved end is left to the imagination of the reader or their knowledge of the historical events.

Yet not all the Jews in the tragedy are as depraved and vile. The "good" Jews, Silas the Maccabee and his followers as well as the High Priest Matathias and his sons and daughter Dina are contrasted with them. However, all of these "good" Jews perish at the hands of the tyrants or in the cataclysm of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Matathias, who knowingly walks into the Temple toward his death at the hands of the tyrants, recognizes: "The extent of your sins, oh Judaea! is at full measure—now He will quarrel with you, the Eternal One."[35] He entrusts his children to the honorable and heroic Silas and prays that he may meet them again in the afterlife. Silas accepts the trust and promises either to triumph over the Romans or to lead his wards untainted and with their honor intact to the reunion with their father after their death.

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33 Ibid., p. 95: "Johannes und Simon taumeln auf.—Die Stühle stürzen um. Vor ihrem Fußtritte ersteht der Schatten der Maria mit blutigem Messer, das gemordete Kind im Arm. Die Tyrannen fassen sich an—ringen—einer schleudert den andern vor sich hin, wohin sie entfliehen, erstehen vor ihnen Schatten der Erhungerten [*sic*]. Die Lampen erlöschen—ihnen kommen Blitze entgegen."

34 Ibid., p. 96: "Die Musik drückt die letzten Ahndungen aus. Die Tyrannen begegnen sich in der Pantomime der schrecklichsten Angst, taumeln durch die Schatten die Felsengänge durch."

35 Ibid., p. 65: "das Maaß deiner Sünden, o Judäa! ist voll—itzt wird er mit dir rechten der Ewige."

Dina and her brothers, in no less a heroic spirit, then ask for swords to enter the fray. Silas's response is intriguing in that it articulates a rather "Catholic" belief in the martyr's crown. Toward Dina, his betrothed and another manifestation of the Beautiful Jewess, he enthuses:

> [I]f, in the morn, I will not wind the hymeneal wreath around thy tender temple, oh, then thou wilt already have gained the martyrs' crown!—If you, my sons! will not carry the hymeneal torch to the nuptials, then you will have robbed the palm of its most beautiful ornament. Perhaps we are the sacrifice the Lord is still waiting for to placate his wrath.[36]

In a Christian sense, the sacrifice envisioned by Silas has of course already been made and it is in Christian soteriology precisely Jewish guilt and blindness toward its veracity which provoke the divine wrath, although this is not made explicit in the play. With the notion of a sacrifice, Silas nevertheless mirrors Christian salvific discourse, which informs his further utterances as well.

The Ambivalent Catholicization of the 'Good' Jews

Confronted with catastrophe, Silas adopts a parallel discourse to "Catholic" discourse. It not only extols martyrdom but also emulates the invocation of intercessories. In analogy to the veneration of the Virgin Mary, Silas addresses the great Mother of the Maccabees, who stands "raised on a luminous cloud before the face of the eternal one."[37] The reference is to "The Martyrdom of Seven Brothers" in the deuterocanonical book of 2 Maccabees 7. Recognized by the Catholic Church as the "Holy Maccabean Martyrs" and included in the *Martyrologium Romanum* (*Roman Martyrology*),[38] the seven brothers, cruelly martyred for their faith, were domesticated in late antiquity as "Christian figures and gradually drained [. . .] of

36 Ibid., p. 71: "winde ich dir Morgen den hochzeitlichen Kranz nicht um deine zarte Schläfe, o dann hast du schon die Martyrer-Krone erkämpft!—Tragt ihr Morgen, meine Söhne! nicht die hochzeitliche Fackel zum Brautfeste; dann habt ihr die Palme ihres schönsten Schmuckes schon beraubt. Vielleicht sind wir die Opfer, auf die der Herr noch wartet, seinen Zorn zu versöhnen."
37 Ibid., p. 70: "O große Mutter der Machabäer! die du erhaben auf einer lichten Wolke vor dem Angesichte des ewigen [*sic*] stehest."
38 For the Christian commemoration and cult of the Maccabean Martyrs, see, e.g., Margaret Schatkin, "The Maccabean Martyrs," *Vigiliae Christianae* 28.2 (1974): 97–113; Gerard Rouwhorst, "The Emergence of the Cult of the Maccabean Martyrs in Late Antique Christianity," in *More Than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, eds Johan Leemans and Jürgen Mettepenningen (Leuven: Peters, 2005), pp. 81–96; and Raphaëlle Ziadé, *Les martyrs Maccabées: de l'histoire juive au culte chrétien: Les homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

their original Jewish identity."[39] In the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux noted, as paraphrased by Margaret Schatkin, that "[t]he Maccabees were Jewish martyrs since they died before the Redeemer had come and perforce went down to Hades; but they were to be counted as Christian martyrs because of the form of their martyrdom, which was a confession."[40]

The martyrdom of the "good" Jews in Rittershausen's tragedy takes a different form. And yet it seems as if Rittershausen construed an analogy to this precedent in relation to the "good" Jews, even though by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the Redeemer had come. Silas is a serious character and his words certainly are not a mockery or intended to be understood as such. When he elaborates the image of a sword piercing his soul seven times with the death of each of the seven brothers, this moreover evokes the *mater dolorosa* and, again, no mockery seems intended.

The certainty of a reward in the afterlife and the deferral of ultimate triumph to the world to come as the basic premise and promise of martyrdom is another instance of the "Catholicization" of Silas. His almost ecstatic vision blatantly emulates hagiographic discourse:

> What will the glory of transfiguration be in which your immortality will hover around me—rise up to the halleluja of the heavens from decay and death. A trembling sense of joy awakens in me!—Oh, my children! Look up—there already comes down from eternal spring to meet us the lovely youth of heaven: [. . .] crowns, crowns, glide down—away to death, to death—to triumph.[41]

The sons of Matathias are subsequently indeed slaughtered on the steps of the Temple by the followers of John while the tyrant himself murders Matathias in front of the "ark of the covenant"[42]—which is a curious lapse in the author's historical awareness as the ark of the covenant was lost after the destruction of the First Temple and the Holy of Holies was left void in the period of the Second Temple.[43]

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39 Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories of the Maccabean Martyrs* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 76.

40 Schatkin, "Maccabean Martyrs," 112.

41 Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, pp. 71–2: "In welcher Glorie der Verklärung werde ich von eurer Unsterblichkeit umflogen—von Verwesung und Tod zum Jubelgesang der Himmel aufsteigen. Bebendes Freudengefühl erwacht in mir!—O meine Kinder! blickt empor—sie kommt uns schon entgegen aus dem ewigen Frühling die holde Jugend des Himmels: [. . .] Kronen, Kronen schweben herab—fort zum Tode, zum Tod—zum Triumph."

42 See ibid., p. 75: "vor der Lade des Bundes."

43 See, e.g., 2 Maccabees 2:4–8 and Graham Hancock, *The Sign and the Seal: The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant* (New York: Crown, 1992).

Dina and Silas also die in the concluding act. Their deaths suggest a further redemptive trait. Both transcend notions of the unforgiving God of the Old Testament by endorsing forgiveness as they die, similar to the last words of Jesus on the cross according to the gospel of Luke: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."[44] Doing so, they in effect appear to embrace the new dispensation. Dina, at the beginning of the fifth act dying in the arms of Silas of an unspecified and unexplained wound, implores him: "To the Avenger leave the vengeance."[45] Silas, perfidiously stabbed from behind by John, dies next to her body, saying to his assassin: "Silas forgives you."[46]

The implicit reinterpretation of the destruction of Jerusalem as a martyrdom is of course theologically problematic. As Bernard of Clairvaux implied, subsequent to the death of Jesus on the cross, his continued rejection equalled the rejection of divine grace and the wilful denial of God's plan of salvation. Intriguingly, if compared with other cultural engagements with the destruction of Jerusalem, conversion is not a topic in Rittershausen's tragedy. There are no Christian characters among the *dramatis personae*, nor is the conversion of the Jews pictured at any time.

However, in this context the appropriation of martyrological discourse by Silas, or perhaps, conversely, his subsummation under Catholic martyrology at the intersection between Judaism and Christianity, is important. It signifies a path of redemption which, although it forecloses Jewish existence post-destruction, admits its potential redeemability through martyrdom. And yet, there remain further inconsistencies because of the punitive nature of the destruction visited upon Jerusalem that supposedly was preordained by the Lord, whereas Titus and his Roman soldiers were merely instruments to the fulfilment of the divine will. Silas and Dina as well as the other "good" Jews are caught up between rejection of the new faith and divine retribution. Their death is inevitable but their redemption, though anticipated rather than promised, appears possible as the result of their atonement. With such a suggestion Rittershausen deviates significantly from established doctrine.

44 Luke 23:34.

45 See Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, p. 98: "Dem Vergelter laß die Rache."

46 Ibid., p. 103: "Silas vergiebt dir."

Josephus as Explicator and Facilitator

Rittershausen used the figure of Flavius Josephus to extrapolate on the perceived authority of his historiographic account. The figure of the Jewish historian appears in two consecutive scenes in the tragedy when, at the behest of the imperator, he seeks to negotiate with the Jewish defenders of Jerusalem. In effect, his character, as it has been alleged about the real Josephus's history of the Jewish War, is a mouthpiece for the praise of Titus. When he first begins to speak to Simon and John, he apostrophizes the imperator as "peace-loving" and "kind" and asserts that all he desires is to deliver the city from its misery.[47] Josephus's speech is rhetorically polished and flowery. Whereas it reiterates some of the arguments proffered by the historian in *The Jewish War*,[48] it is based only loosely on the historical model. More specifically, Rittershausen's Josephus insists on his good intentions: "I am not, as you deem, bribed to flatter the Roman triumphs. Titus has chosen me because I am of your tribe and of your law. He believes that from my mouth you will calmly listen to the truth."[49]

At the same time, Rittershausen casts the impiety and depravity of Simon and John into sharper relief through Josephus. The peace envoy is careful to emphasize the difference between their experience of the siege and that of the people: "But you do not suffer hunger [. . .]; you do not bleed, therefore you also do not know. [. . .] You do not see the thirsting babe-in-arms [. . .], not the father [. . .], not the bridegroom [. . .], not the bride [. . .]. You do not recoil in horror [. . .]."[50]

The other characters' attitude toward Josephus is to some extent an indicator of their own integrity. Josephus is denounced by Simon and John as traitor. Yet while it is only down to the latter's cunning eloquence to save the negotiator from immediate execution, he is nevertheless arrested by Simon, in breach of the conventions of war. Silas, in contrast, come to rescue his beloved Dina from the clutches of Simon, who abducted the young woman and seeks to violate her, hails him as "dear Joseph!"[51] and, as the historian points him to where the tyrants have fled, effectively sets him free as well.

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47 Ibid., p. 46: "friedliebend [. . .] gütig."

48 For the first address of Josephus to the defenders of Jerusalem, see Josephus, *Jewish War*, pp. 317–22 (5.9.3-4).

49 Rittershausen, *Jerusalems Zerstörung*, p. 48: "Ich bin kein erkaufter Wohlredner der römischen Triumphe, wie ihr wähnt. Titus hat mich ausersehen, weil ich aus eurem Stamme und eures Gesetzes bin. Er glaubt, daß ihr aus meinem Munde die Wahrheit gelassen hören werdet."

50 Ibid., pp. 48–9: "Aber ihr hungert nicht [. . .]; ihr blutet nicht, darum wisset ihr auch [nicht]" and: "Ihr sehet den lechzenden Säugling nicht [. . .], den Vater nicht [. . .], den Bräutigam nicht [. . .] die Braut nicht [. . .]. Ihr schauert nicht zurück [. . .]."

51 Ibid., p. 53: "theurer Joseph!"