Rembrandt, the Jews and Judaism

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ABSTRACT

Rembrandt demonstrated interest in Jews throughout his career. This study explores his images of Jews within the setting of the Temple, as well as his formulation of a presumably Jewish Jesus in the Louvre *Supper at Emmaus*. My investigation explores the relative accuracy of these interpretations and their underlying religious meaning. As great as the liberties he took in rendering Hebraic ritual garments and Temple architecture, in certain instances he achieved a degree of authenticity. To this end, he read his Bible and the Jewish histories of Flavius Josephus, and consulted Hebraic texts, as well as a Temple elevation by Villalpando. Most importantly, Rembrandt juxtaposed scenes of Jewish atonement with Christ, thereby asserting the Pauline concept of the superiority of Christian redemption over Judaism.

KEYWORDS

Rembrandt, Judaic Studies, Temple, Christ, Bible, St. Paul

Any discussion of Rembrandt and the Jews is challenging and fraught with contradictions. The difficulties begin with the attempt to understand Rembrandt's own attitude toward Jews and Judaism. While not a philosemite, as some have suggested, the artist nonetheless had an abiding, lifelong interest in Jews and Judaism. This applied not only to the Hebrews of biblical history, but also to the Jews he saw around him, who came to Amsterdam to escape the Inquisition in Portugal and the pogroms in Eastern Europe. Many resided in his own neighborhood on the Breestraat (by mid-seventeenth century also known as the Jodenbreestraat, Jewish Broad Street). Rembrandt portrayed

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Rembrandt, *Head of Christ*, ca. 1648–50
Oil on panel,
25 × 21.5 cm

Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussicher Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie (811C; presented to the museum by Mr. and Mrs. Martin Bromberg, 1907)

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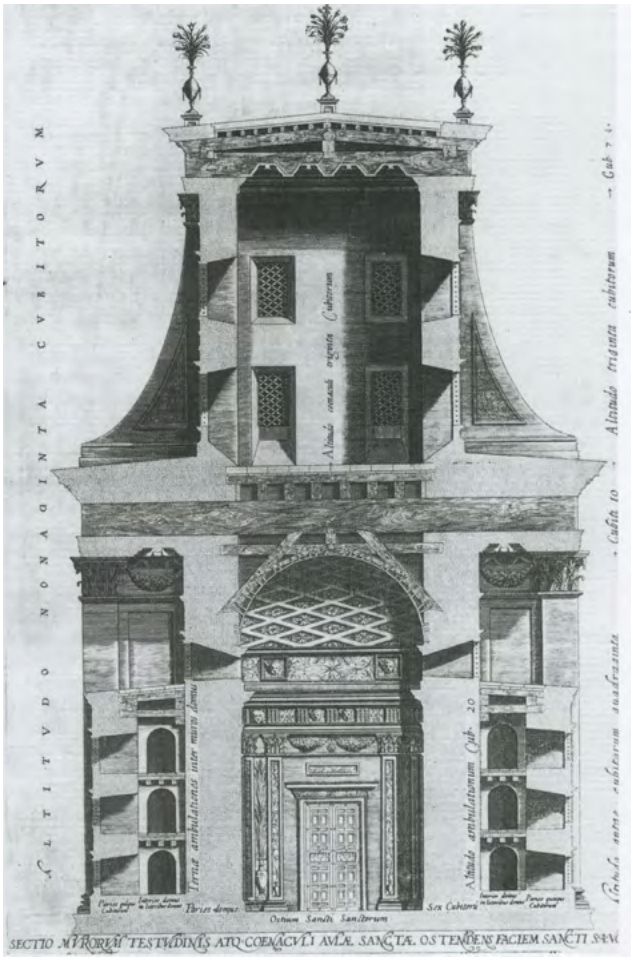
Rembrandt, *Pharisees in the Temple,* formerly known as *Jews in the Synagogue*, 1648
Etching and drypoint,
7.2 × 13.1 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
(RP-P-1962-60)

foreign, "exotic" elements of Jewish attire, without aiming for accuracy. This was also the case for the architecture in his depictions of the ancient Jerusalem Temple. At best, the Dutch artist achieved what I call "a semblance of authenticity" in his imaginative formulations treating ancient and contemporary Jewry, the Jerusalem Temple and even the face of Jesus. While he may have used Amsterdam Jews as models for depictions of Jesus, these images also answer to a description of the Christian savior found in a letter, that was believed to have been written by a first-century Roman governor named Publius Lentulus. The letter was actually a medieval fabrication, but even though this was suspected in the seventeenth century, it was quoted by Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten as an appropriate source for the image of Christ. In his depictions of subjects like the Presentation in the Temple, Rembrandt stressed fundamental differences between Second Temple Judaism and Christianity, especially with regard to the atonement of sin and the role of the priesthood.

Rembrandt's attraction to Jews and Judaism would have been grounded in the Bible, fundamental reading in a Protestant country. Steeped in the reading of scripture, he portrayed many events of the Hebrew and Christian Testaments. He consulted the copious notes in the Dutch State Bible translation of 1637 and such other sources as Flavius Josephus's Jewish history (*Antiquities of the Jews*, *Jewish Wars* and *Against Apion*), a copy of which was in his own collection.[1] Josephus was a major source for the artist.

Rembrandt's approach to Judaism was firmly grounded in the teachings of St. Paul. The artist literally identified himself with the apostle in his *Self-portrait* of 1661, now in the Rijksmuseum, which may be taken as his profound endorsement of Pauline theol-



59
Juan Battista Villalpando, *Elevation of the Temple*, from Jerónimo de Prado and Juan Battista Villalpando, In *Ezechielem explanationes et apparatus urbis ac templi Hierosolymitani* [...], vol. 2, Rome (Aloysij Zannetti), 1604

Private collection

ogy (see frontispiece). The apostle laid out essential differences and oppositions between Judaism and Christianity. Of primary importance were his beliefs that the Covenant between God and the Jews was inherited by Christians (Galatians 3:29), and that Judaism was based upon the Law, whereas Christianity was a religion of Grace. This was conferred through Jesus, who assumed the burden of law for the faithful (cf. Galatians 3:1–22). The Book of Hebrews in the New Testament, attributed to St. Paul in Rembrandt's time, celebrated Christ as the new High Priest in heaven, who replaced the Jewish High Priest on earth (Hebrews 2:17, 4:14–16). This theology is inferred in many of Rembrandt's interpretations of biblical subjects.

The artist would have consulted with Christian scholars, whose knowledge of Hebrew sources seems to have informed his religious works. Christian Hebraists held Jewish learning in high regard and studied it assiduously. This point was raised by the famous jurist Hugo Grotius concerning the conditions under which Sephardic Jews who had been expelled from Portugal were to be allowed to live in Amsterdam. In his *Remonstrance Concerning the Regulations to be Imposed upon the Jews in Holland* (1616), Grotius observed that it would be useful to admit them in order to learn Hebrew from them and study Judaism. While calling their religion the "beginning of the Truth," he propounded the goal of converting them to Christianity, to be accomplished by demonstrating to Jews that

their own testimonies prove his divinity.[2] Around 1640, both Christians and Jews began to be seized by the strong belief that the coming of the Messiah (for Christians the Second Coming) was on hand, ushering in the thousand-year Millennium of Peace before the end of time. For Christians, Jewish conversion was a precondition for this much anticipated eschatological event.

In Rembrandt's etching of 1648, the so-called *Jews in the Synagogue*, the congregants engage in lively dialogue, on either side of a lone, seated man, pensively stroking his beard (fig. 58). The architecture in the print has no resemblance to a contemporary synagogue; the scene rather inflects the earliest title for the print, *Pharisees in the Temple,* listed in the inventory of the dealer Clement de Jonghe.[3] The Jews in the etching have gathered in the *bet midrash* (a space reserved for the study of holy texts) located in a side chamber of the Jerusalem Temple, the place where Christ may have disputed with the doctors.[4] The number of figures in the etching adds up to ten, the minimum number of men, known as a minyan, required for Jewish worship, so they must be there also for daily prayer.[5] The narrow, latticed windows, angled walls and stair landing situate the setting within one of the passageways encompassing the side chambers of the Temple on three sides, as described in 1 Kings 6:4, illustrated in Juan Battista Villalpando's engraved elevation of the Temple (fig. 59).[6]

Notably in the same year that Rembrandt produced this print, an influx of Eastern European Jews came to Amsterdam to escape the Chmielnicki massacres in Ukraine and other persecutions in Eastern and Central Europe. Unlike the Sephardic Jews, who dressed like everyone else, the Ashkenazim had full, untrimmed beards, and wore long caftans and floppy and tall hats. The figures in the print may resemble the Ashkenazi Jews Rembrandt observed in the streets of Amsterdam, as in his drawing, *Two Jews in Discussion, Walking*, in the Teylers Museum (see fig. 36). My discussion will demonstrate how Rembrandt merged lived experience with his own imaginative vision of Jews and the Jerusalem Temple, even while employing textual and visual sources.

Most particularly, Rembrandt's intense engagement with Judaism is best conveyed through his own distinctive interpretations of subjects that involve the youthful Jesus in relation to the rituals of Judaism in the Herodian Temple. These narratives address a moment of transition between institutions of the Jewish tradition and the New Testament, when the young Jesus, raised as a Jew, is initiated into the laws and ceremonies of his ancient faith within the Temple, but also encounters opposition from Temple officials. St. Paul emphasized the significance of Judaism in Christ's early life in Galatians 4:4–5: "The Lord sent his Son made of a woman, made under the law, that he might deliver them that were under the law."

A biblical event closely related to the initiation of Jesus into Judaism is the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, a subject that Rembrandt returned to again and again throughout his career.[7] The event (Luke 2:22–40) derives from the Jewish requirement that firstborn sons be redeemed by making a payment to a priest. Mary and Joseph comply with this stipulation by coming to the Temple in Jerusalem. While they are there, an old and pious man named Simeon enters the Temple. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, this aged Jew, who had been told that he would live to see the Messiah, suddenly

60
Rembrandt, *Presentation in the Temple with the Angel: Small Plate*, 1630
Etching, 10.3 × 7.8 cm

Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (1943.3.7063; Rosenwald Collection)

61
Rembrandt, *Simeon's Song of Praise*, 1631
Oil on panel, 60.9 × 47.8 cm

The Hague, The Royal Cabinet of Painting, Mauritshuis

recognizes the infant Jesus as that promised savior and takes him into his arms. Simeon gives expression to his profound feelings with a Song of Praise, also known as the Canticle of Simeon (Luke 2:27–32):

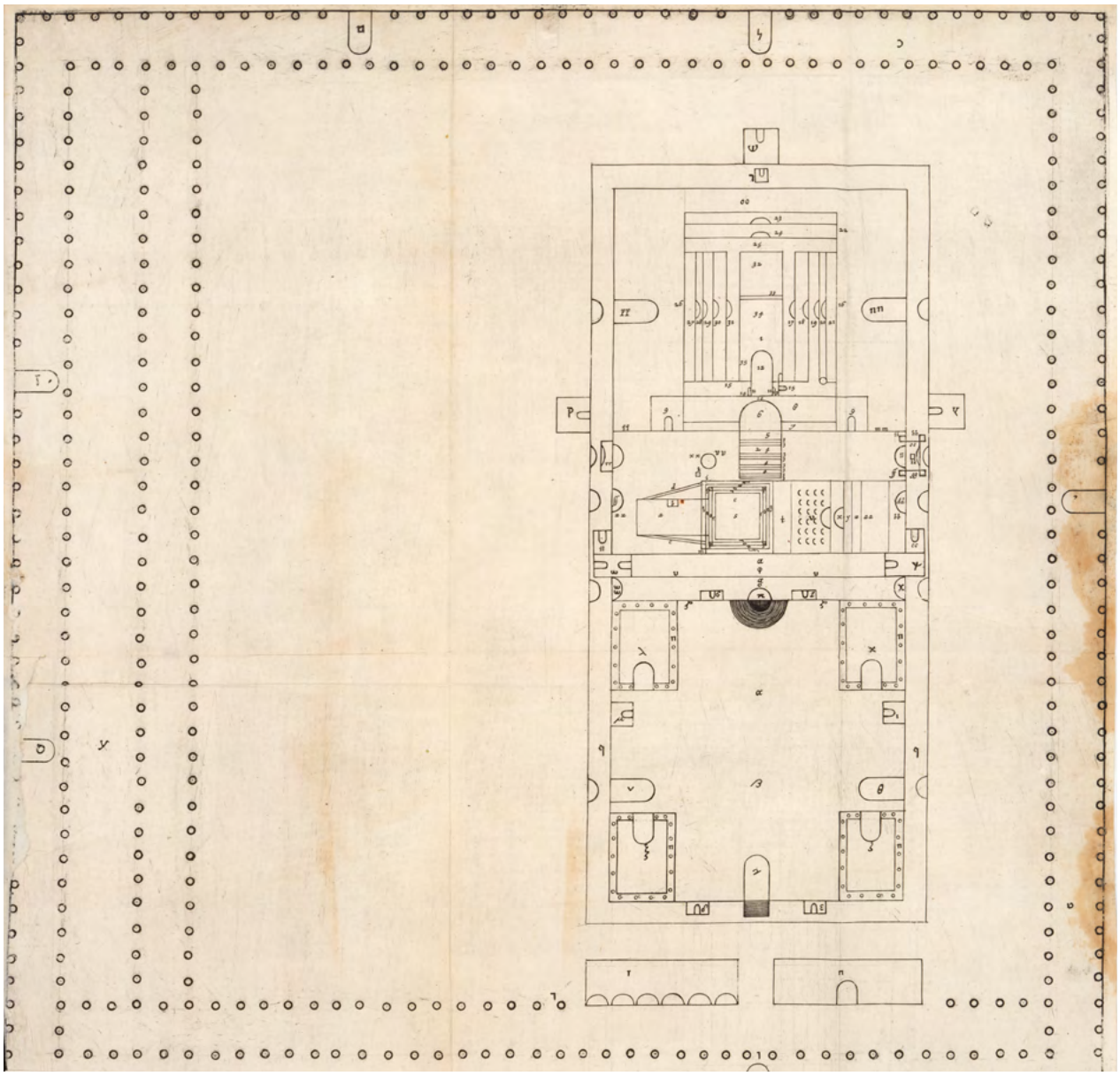
> Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory of thy people Israel.

Clearly the text supports an agenda of conversion and embrace of the Gospel for both Jew and Gentile, and Simeon provides a seamless and natural transition anticipating the apostles in his recognition of the new faith. In the narrative Mary and Joseph marvel at Simeon's words praising Jesus, and the prophet responds by blessing Mary, but he also prophesies that a "sword" [of pain] would pass through her soul and that her son would cause "the fall and rising of many in Israel" and would be "a sign that is spoken against" (Luke 2:34). The prophetess Hannah, who fasted and prayed in the Temple night and day for many decades, came to Simeon and the others "at the same hour," and "in like manner confessed the Lord and spoke of him unto all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Two highly detailed portrayals of this subject—Rembrandt's tiny etching of 1630 (fig. 60) and his painting entitled *Simeon's Song of Praise* of 1631 in The Hague (fig. 61)—focus upon the priests, rites and architecture of the Temple. In these works, Rembrandt sets up an opposition between the material splendor of Second Temple Judaism and the humility of the new faith, embodied in the infant Christ surrounded by his humble followers.[8] In this small print, half the size of a postcard, Simeon prophesies that a sword shall pierce Mary's soul and her son will be spoken against. We do not see Mary's face, but the sad reaction of one of the female auditors implies that Simeon is foretelling Mary's suffering. The Israelites at the right "speak" against Jesus as the promised messiah, and others scoff at this pronouncement, precisely as Simeon prophesied.

The print and the painting share details in common, especially their elaborate architectural settings, replete with long staircases, voluminous curtains and high, arched spaces. The sources for these and other details are found in Scripture and Josephus, and to a lesser extent in the Mishnah *Middot* and the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides. According to Aaron Katchen, *Middot* and the *Mishneh Torah* were sources of great interest for seventeenth-century Christian Hebraic scholars in the Dutch provinces.[9]

While Rembrandt was no Hebraist and had no direct knowledge of Jewish sources, he could have gotten information from scholars of Hebrew. The artist was born in Leiden and resided there until about 1630. For two years he was inscribed as a student at Leiden University, a major center for the study of Oriental languages, including Hebrew. Gary Schwartz notes that the artist could have turned for help with Hebrew to Antonius Thysius (1591–1648), professor of theology at Leiden University.[10] Schwartz relates how the stadholder's secretary, Constantijn Huygens, who knew Rembrandt, put another artist, Jacob de Gheyn, in contact with a Hebraist to compose an inscription for a painting of King David.[11]



62
Plan of Temple Complex, in Constantinus L'Empereur ab Opwyck, *Massechet Middot meTalmud Bavli, hoc est, Talmudis Babylonici codex Middoth sive De Mensuris Templi*, Leiden (Bonaventura and Abraham II Elzevier) 1630

Leiden University Library

Most important for Temple studies, in 1630 Constantijn L'Empereur, Professor of Hebrew at Leiden University from 1627 to 1646, translated into Latin the Babylonian Mishnah *Middoth*.[12] This Mishnah, which describes the architectural layout and functions of the Temple complex, was an influential Hebraic source on the Temple. L'Empereur's publication would have stirred up excitement among scholars, especially since it appeared with extensive notes and included an architectural plan.[13] The Christian Hebraist Adam Boreel, who later collaborated with Rabbi Jacob Judah Leon on the translation into Latin of all six books of the Mishnah and the construction of a model of the Jerusalem Temple, might have traveled to Leiden to confer with L'Empereur and may have served there as advisor to Rembrandt, although this remains conjecture.

L'Empereur's dedication of this publication suggests the Christian motivations that propelled contemporary studies of the Jerusalem Temple:[14]

> The book [*Middot*] had to rush away [be rushed into publication] and not be hidden any longer, [for] it sheds such important light on sacred things. And indeed, not only does it elucidate the religious ceremonies of the Old Testament, when it places clearly before our eyes the place and the several areas of that place where those ceremonies were performed, but it also holds up a bright light before the Gospel narratives, when it shows those who until now did not know these things, exactly in which section our Savior did each thing in the Jerusalem Temple, and where therein he taught.

Rembrandt's etching and painting of the Presentation accomplishes the goals of the dedication by situating the Presentation in the Temple. The two works share such elements as the vast curtain at the top of the steps, where figures kneel before a rotund, seated high priest.[15] Another Jewish source, the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides, describes the many curtains of the Temple gates in the Temple.[16] The figures on the staircases have come to the priest to atone for their sins, to settle disputes or to be purified, but their backs are turned away from the Christian savior who brings the gift of salvation. In the print a man, identified only by his crippled leg, hobbles out of the scene at the far left, watched by a young girl. Schwartz considers him the first Jew to reject Jesus.[17] Indeed, the disabled man, who was not healed by the high priest in the Temple, does not understand that Christ will accomplish this in the future, as he did for lepers (as in Luke 17:14).

The architectural setting for the print and painting is the Temple Court of Women. The foremost seventeenth-century Temple scholar, John Lightfoot, whose Latin texts on the Temple were highly popular, maintained in his publication of 1649 that the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple took place in the Women's Court.[18] The author also included a plan much like L'Empereur's in his book on the Temple (fig. 52).[19]

The court of women appears as a square on the lower part of L'Empereur's plan, the first space in the east on consecrated ground, reserved solely for Jews. Four corner chambers in the court each had a particular function, but the southwest chamber to the upper left of the court, used to store oil and wine, is most relevant to Rembrandt's etching. A detail in the print, just to the left and behind the young girl, shows three tiny

63
Rembrandt, *Presentation in the Temple: Oblong Print*, ca. 1639–41
Etching and drypoint, 21.2 × 29 cm

Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (1943.3.7103; Rosenwald Collection)

figures walking before a large receptable topped by an ornate flared object. The tallest man carries a censer on a long chain (cf. 1 Kings 7:50). These figures must be Temple attendants, collecting oil stored in this chamber for the golden incense altar (cf. Deuteronomy 33:10). The curved ornate object may be the *Corban*, the treasure box that may have been stored in the courtyard. Josephus describes this object as an upside-down trumpet, which may be the shape in the etching. Indeed, it would be easy for anyone to miss such minute details without intense magnification.

The Gate at the west end was reached by a semi-circular staircase, shown as a dark half-circle on the plan. This staircase of fifteen steps is also described by Josephus, Johannes Buxtorf, John Lightfoot and Samuel Lee.[20] The vantage point for both of Rembrandt's Temple court settings in these works is situated to the left of the staircase, with the steps on the far right, observed from an oblique angle. This viewpoint emphasizes the grandiosity of the Temple ceremonies in contrast to the intimacy of the group around Jesus.

The Court of Women in the Mauritshuis painting, with its elaborate, eccentric architecture, is ornate and majestic. The Women's Court is defined by a series of arches flanked by stately, fluted columns. Opulent floral forms embellish the "capitals" and the

walls surmounting the arches. The ornate beauty and scale of these columns may have been inspired by Josephus, who praised the excellence of the "very fine and large pillars" of the "cloisters" in the Women's Court (*Wars* 5.5.2). The columns in the painting with their elaborate fluted carvings, however, are fanciful and have nothing to do with Temple sources. They are fantastical creations, products of the artist's fertile imagination.

Thus, inspired by many sources, Rembrandt's conceptions nonetheless lack accuracy. The details that appear in these images were most likely suggested to him by Hebraic scholars but were adjusted to accommodate Rembrandt's own vision as an artist. The most influential sources for these two works of 1630 and 1631 are the Bible and Josephus.

The artist's later treatment of the subject, a large undated etching, *The Presentation in the Temple: Oblong Plate*, differs considerably from his earlier representations (fig. 63). The Jews of Amsterdam assume a major role in this print, which resonates with religious conflict.

Kneeling on the ground facing Mary, Simeon prophesies the tribulations she and her son will face. This precise moment of his prophecy is evoked by the somber reactions of the onlookers although two male witnesses turn away or scoff in disbelief. Situated within a space that is unrelated to textual descriptions of Temple architecture, the Jews are attired in garments traditionally worn in the synagogue, although not accurately observed. Some wear a prayer shawl known as a *talit*, such as the man conversing at the far left. Many witnesses around the infant Jesus don fanciful turbans; and the exceedingly tall, extravagant headgear worn by an aged, bearded man may signify his exalted status as a high priest. The widow Hannah, who lived in the Temple and bore witness to the infant Christ as the anticipated messiah, wears a prayer shawl with pendant fringes at the corners reminiscent of the *tzitzit* worn by Jewish men, although they are tightly wrapped, not dangling singly as is correct. Rembrandt never achieved the ethnographic accuracy of such Dutch artists as Jan Luyken (1649–1712) or Romeyn de Hooghe (1645–1708) in his portrayal of Jews; yet his renderings are nonetheless vaguely suggestive of garments he would have observed. His interests in evoking ritual dress may have been intended to emphasize Jewish adherence to the law, as asserted by St. Paul, who said that the burden of the law was assumed by Christ (Galatians 3:1–22).

The two doves that fly over Hannah's head are not mentioned in scripture, and have been ignored by scholars, even after Schwartz pointed out this detail for the first time. The two doves may inflect the two Dispensations; the dove in the shadows would refer to the Old Testament, veiled and darkened; and the dove filled with resplendent light would adduce Jesus and the onset of Christianity. Interpreted in relation to Covenant theology, the dove of the Hebrew past would signify the Covenant of works rooted in God's goodness (*bonitas Dei*), while the fully illuminated dove would embody the greater glory of the new Covenant flowing from God's grace (*gratia Dei*).[21] Here again the assumption that Christianity surpasses Judaism is asserted by the artist.

In the second state of the etching, Simeon, with a full, untrimmed beard, wears a dark skullcap or *yarmulka* that accentuates his presence in the scene, but also under-

64
Rembrandt, *Peter and John Healing a Cripple at the Gate of the Temple*, 1659
Etching and drypoint on Japan paper, 18 cm × 21.5 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (RP-P-OB-324)

scores his Jewish identity. Calvinist preachers, however, also wore such caps, so this addition may be a subtle reference to Simeon's initiation into Christianity.[22]

Despite Rembrandt's delving into Temple details in the 1630s, the artist never portrayed the structure accurately as a basilican plan. Consistently, he showed it as a round or polygonal structure. Focusing only on the Courtyard of Women, the artist ignored the longitudinal Temple plans of L'Empereur, Villalpando, Lightfoot and others.[23] Schwartz rightly observes that Rembrandt was not really devoted to Temple reconstruction, and oddly enough ignored the model of the Temple complex by Jacob Judah Leon, displayed in 1641 in the nearby house of the rabbi, as well as its accompanying print.[24] The sole feature that might tentatively be traced to the model and its accompanying print is the courtyard of the Gentiles, although the plans by L'Empereur and Lightfoot also included vast courtyards outside the Temple enclosure.

65
Rembrandt School, *Head of Christ*, ca. 1648–54
Oil on panel, 25.4 × 21.3 cm

Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts (30.370; Founders Society Purchase)

66
Rembrandt, *Supper at Emmaus*, 1648
Oil on panel, 68 × 65 cm

Paris, Musée du Louvre (1739)

In Rembrandt's etching of 1659, *Peter and John Healing a Cripple at the Temple Gate*, the two apostles at the left heal a disabled man at the Temple gate, while two officiating priests, oblivious to the miracle, occupy the porch of a large, round Temple (fig. 64). Before the priests stand two Solomonic columns and a round altar of sacrifice ablaze with billowing smoke. The space is difficult to reconcile with Temple plans, but Rembrandt makes sure to include details pertinent to the Christian message. After the miracle of healing, Peter is said to have converted five thousand to Christianity (Acts 4:4); the dense crowd of Jews within the courtyard and the presence of Gentiles in the far distance, where they look over the wall separating them from the Temple precinct, may allude to the conversion of Jews and Gentiles alike. Typical of Rembrandt's approach to the relation between the two faiths, the artist sets Temple rituals (the burning sacrifices) in opposition to the apostles' healing in Christ's name at the gate. Once again, Rembrandt devalues Judaism in favor of Christianity.

Always experimenting with new ideas, Rembrandt fostered a fresh image of the face of Jesus. His search was facilitated by sessions with students in his studio who painted after a living model or perhaps an oil sketch by their teacher. Indeed, Rembrandt's own inventory of 1656 itemizes two heads of Christ by the artist himself (nos. 115, 118), plus an unidentified artist's tronie of Christ from life (no. 326, "Een Christus tronie nae't leven").

At least eight study heads of Jesus formed the core of an exhibition in 2011 that opened in the Louvre and traveled to Philadelphia and Detroit.[25] A few years after the exhibition closed, Lloyd DeWitt discovered a *Head of John the Baptist on a Platter* in a private collection that strongly resembles the other heads of Christ produced in Rembrandt's studio.[26] The model for all these heads may have been a Jew in Rembrandt's neighborhood, although the evidence for this is just a likely surmise. Notwithstanding, the notion that the study heads portrayed a Jew as Jesus was dominant in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially among some Jewish collectors in Germany (see the article by Schwartz in this volume).

The heads of Christ clearly resemble each other in physiognomy and technique and offer an image of the savior which is different from others (fig. 65; see also fig. 57).[27] Schwartz quotes a poem by Jan Vos (published 1662) which proves that the practice of using a Jewish model did in fact exist. The poet describes a painting by Rembrandt's early pupil, Govert Flinck, and rails that the Jewish model for the picture would have denounced Christ himself:[28]

> All that lacks is speech, but Govert Flinck refused
> To paint an open mouth, despite de Wijze's plea.
> For this Christ would not speak of Christ except in blasphemy.
> The heart is not reflected by the face that shines on you.
> You ask how come? Because the model was a Jew.

Schwartz suggests that the heads of Jesus were based upon a description of Christ in a forged letter of Publius Lentulus, the governor of Judea before Pontius Pilate, which still circulated in Rembrandt's time. Samuel van Hoogstraten, a pupil of Rembrandt, quotes from the letter even though he seems uncertain of its authenticity:[29]

> His hair is of the color of a ripe hazelnut, parted on top in the manner of the Nazirites, and falling straight to the ears but curving further, with blond highlights and fanning off his shoulders. He has a fair forehead and no wrinkles or marks on his face, his cheeks are tinged with pink. His nose and mouth are faultless. His beard is large and full but not long and parted in the middle, […] his eyes are changeable and bright.

I agree with Schwartz that the study heads closely resemble this description; yet at the same time, they are more human and accessible than other images of Christ, such as Dürer's Jesus in *Christ in Emmaus* woodcut discussed below (fig. 67). Rembrandt's model, perhaps Jewish, may account for such differences. Notwithstanding, Schwartz is right—Rembrandt did not portray his Jewish neighbors directly from life but altered their appearance after the description of Lentulus.

The oil sketch of Jesus in the Detroit Institute of Arts most closely resembles the figure of Christ in the Louvre *Supper at Emmaus* of 1648 (fig. 66).[30] The recognition of the Resurrected Christ and the formation of the insider community of the faithful as distinguished from outsiders are major themes the artist pursued in his many interpretations of the Emmaus story. The biblical narrative in Luke 24 begins when two travelers, walking along the road to Emmaus, are joined by the resurrected Jesus, whom they do not recognize. In the conversation that ensues, the two men speak of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, expressing disappointment that Israel had not been redeemed. Jesus answers them by explaining how the savior had to suffer before he could be glorified as messiah, as foretold by the prophets. With the approach of nightfall, the two men invite the stranger to join them for dinner, and when he blesses and breaks the bread, the disciples recognize their companion as the savior, who miraculously disappears. Thus, the story itself dramatizes the metaphoric journey of the Jewish pilgrim from skepticism to faith.

The Louvre *Supper at Emmaus* follows visual tradition in showing a waiter, usually a Jew who brings food to the table but does not recognize Christ. In this case the waiter serves two goat heads for atonement on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16:15–34). The presence of two goat heads on the platter evokes the Temple custom on the Day of Atonement of offering one goat to atone the sins of the priest, the other as a "scapegoat" sent out into the wilderness to redeem the sins of the entire community (Leviticus 16; a biblical passage adduced each year in the litany of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement). But Jesus obtained salvation for all believers in one act of sacrifice and thus replaces the high priest and the two goats. Thus, the Jewish atonement of sin is compared with the atonement of Jesus.

As in the biblical narrative, the two disciples recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread. As was traditional, the Dürer woodcut shows a typical figure type of Jesus, with a long, narrow face, thin nose, and small mouth. In the woodcut Christ pulls apart a bread roll with a ritualized gesture invoking the eucharist. In Rembrandt's painting a more naturalistic Jesus tears off the end braid of *challah*, a bread especially used by Ashkenazim in Eastern and Central Europe on the Sabbath and holidays, and also used by Jews today.

67
Albrecht Dürer, *Christ in Emmaus*, *Small Passion* series, ca. 1509/10
Woodcut, 12.5 × 9.5 cm

Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (W-4277; Rosenwald Collection)

Usually round, it may be elongated with five braids, as it is here. One wonders how the artist came to know this typical Jewish bread.

Rembrandt would have been familiar with the annotation in the Dutch State Bible translation of 1637, which explains that Jesus broke the bread, "after the manner of the Jews in the beginning of their meals whose loaves were so baked, that they could easily be broken" (Luke 24:30). The artist may also have known braided challah from his contacts with Jews in his neighborhood; or perhaps saw loaves displayed in Jewish bakeries. Challah was in general use in Jewish communities, and with the great influx of Ashkenazi refugees from Eastern Europe into Amsterdam around 1648, the year in which the painting was completed, the bread would have been common in his neighborhood.[31] Thus Rembrandt here references Jewish customs he observed around him, as he imagined Jesus as a Jew breaking bread.

Thus, Rembrandt portrayed the physiognomies, ceremonies and dress of the Jews; these exotic details were essential to his picturing of early Christianity in relation to Second Temple Judaism. While Rembrandt had ample opportunity to observe contemporary Jews and Judaism in his neighborhood, he was no ethnographer. His renderings of Jews and Judaism offer only a semblance of authenticity; and even his depictions of the Jerusalem Temple fall short of accurate reconstruction. Yet the foregoing details were employed to signify the primacy of Christianity over the Hebrew Dispensation.

Rooted in the New Testament, this fundamental belief in the triumph of Christianity would have become more compelling in the 1640s and 1650s, with the rise of millenarianism. This movement, followed by Christians and Jews alike, anticipated the imminent coming of the Messiah and the reappearance of the Jerusalem Temple.[32] For Christians, the eschatological events of the thousand-year rule under Christ were predicated upon Jewish conversion. While Rembrandt was not a missionary, the anticipated ingathering of the Jews may have informed his images of them. But he was not a theologian. Rembrandt was entirely an artist who reached out to the world around him and reimagined it, as he formulated his own unique interpretations.

NOTES

1 On Rembrandt's use of Josephus see Tümpel 1984, 173–204, and more recently, Golahny 2003, 164–79.
2 Meier 1955, 91–104.
3 Hofstede de Groot 1906, 408.
4 Amsterdam 2006, 16–17.
5 The minyan is noted in Landsberger 1946, 79. Wischnitzer (1955, 160–61) counted only nine men. As revealed by digital magnification, an additional head may be discerned between the two figures walking at the far right.
6 Prado and Villalpando 1596–1605, unpaginated.
7 On Rembrandt's representations of the subject, consult Haverkamp-Begemann 1992–93, 31–40; Stechow 1940, 364–79. Zell (2002, 99–123) claims that Rembrandt's interpretations of this subject inflect a philosemitic mission to unite Judaism and Christianity into one faith. While I accept his emphasis on millennial thinking that I introduced in Perlove 1993, I do not interpret Rembrandt's reactions as philosemitic. See Perlove 1996, 84–113.
8 My study draws upon some material from Perlove and Silver 2009, 200–61.
9 Katchen 1984. Authors of Amsterdam 2006, 37–40, 47–49, agree that Rembrandt was influenced by Christian Hebraists.
10 Schwartz 2006, 132.
11 Ibid.
12 L'Empereur 1630.
13 On L'Empereur, see Schwartz 2008, 111–21; and van Rooden 1989.
14 Quoted in Katchen 1984, 80.
15 Some of these details are very difficult to discern in the painting, but the use of a magnifying lens and the lightening of the digital image reveal them.
16 Maimonides 1957, Book 8.
17 The Schwartzlist, 16 February 2022, "Good Jews and bad Jews in 1620 and 1630," no. 403, and response by Shelley Perlove.
18 See also Buxtorf 1603, 52–57.
19 Lightfoot 1649, insert.
20 The fifteen steps are mentioned in: *Mishnah Middot*, Perek II.5; Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 5.5.3; Lightfoot 1649, 117; Buxtorf 1603, 57; Lee 1659, 107, 351–52.
21 For discussion of the two covenants consult van Asselt 2001, 269.
22 On the aesthetic aspects of the second state consult White 1999, 44–45.
23 See the excellent treatment of the influence of Villalpando's plan on Dutch architecture in Schwartz 2008, 114–20.
24 Ibid., 111. Another good source on Jacob Jehuda Leon is Offenberg 1988, 95–115. For the print see Leon 1642.
25 Paris-Philadelphia-Detroit 2011.
26 DeWitt 2017, 223–29.

27 On technical studies, Mark Tucker, Lloyd DeWitt, and Ken Sutherland, "The Heads of Christ: A Technical Survey," in Paris-Philadelphia-Detroit 2011, 31–74.
28 Schwartz 2006, 284.
29 Ibid., 303, translating van Hoogstraten 1678, 105.
30 Stechow 1934, 329–41; van Regteren Altena 1948–49, 1–26.
31 *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1972, vol. 6, 839. The Ashkenazi population swelled when they fled from the Cossacks to escape the Chmielnicki massacres in 1648–49, and it continued to increase steadily; by 1674 the number of Ashkenazim was about five thousand.
32 On Rembrandt and millenarianism see Perlove 1993 and 1996, and Perlove and Silver 2009, 41–42, 44, 60–67, 105–7, 315–16, 330. For a discussion of millenarianism in the 1650s in the Dutch Republic see Perlove 2021, 234–60.

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