

Christianity in Nachman Krochmals Philosophy of History¹

Andreas Lehnardt

I. Introduction

Nachman Krochmal (1785–1840) is known as one of the first Jewish philosophers of history in modern times.² While it has been described rather often that and how this Galician *Maskil* was influenced by Jewish thinkers³ and also by contemporary Protestant philosophers, his treatment of Christian sources and books, like texts from the New Testament and later scholarly Christian literature, has not been the object of particular interest. Krochmal nowadays is surely one of the most well researched Eastern Europe *Maskilim* so far.⁴ When I started to study in Jerusalem in the years 1985–86, however, his name was almost unknown to me, and in German introductions to Jewish philosophical and historiosophical thinking, his name was and sometimes still is almost absent.⁵ If this is the result of the fact

¹ Lecture presented at the *Fourteenth World Congress for Jewish Studies 2005* in Jerusalem. I am grateful to devote this to WALTER DIETZ, who served as dean of faculty for Protestant Theology in Mainz at the time of my appointment for professor of Judaic studies in 2004.

² For a short biographical sketch of Krochmal's life see ANDREAS LEHNARDT, Art. Krochmal, Nachman (ha-Kohen), in: BBKL 28 (2007), 941–952; Ders. Art. Krochmal, Nachman, in: *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* 15 (2017), 479–481.

³ See, for example, ANDREAS LEHNARDT, Maimonides in der Geschichtsphilosophie Nachman Krochmals, in: GÖRGE HASSELHOF/OTTFRIED FRAISSE (Hrsg.), *Moses Maimonides (1138–1204). His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, Würzburg 2004, 427–447.

⁴ See, for example, JAY M. HARRIS, *Nachman Krochmal. Guiding the Perplexed of the Modern Age*, New York/London 1991; KARL-ERICH GRÖZINGER, *Jüdisches Denken. Theologie – Philosophie – Mystik* 3, Darmstadt 2009, 444–476; YEHOYADA AMIR, *Renewal of Jewish Life in Nachman Krochmal's Philosophy*, Ra'anana 2018 [Hebrew].

⁵ See, for example, MICHAEL BRENNER/DAVID MYERS (Hrsg.), *Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung heute. Themen, Positionen, Kontroversen*, München 2002. Compare also the short remarks in MICHAEL BRENNER, *Propheten des Vergangenen. Jüdische Geschichtsschrei-*

that in the German edition of the standard work on Jewish Philosophy by Julius Guttmann the chapter on Krochmal is missing⁶ – and it is still missing in the reprint from the year 2000⁷ – it needs to be discussed in a broader context. Here I want to emphasize that despite all efforts in research on Jewish enlightenment and emancipation (*Haskalah*) in the past decades, especially in Germany, the Eastern European legacy of this cultural phenomenon can still be seen as neglected. Although there are a great number of studies on Krochmal in Hebrew, English and French – but, for example, a complete translation of his work into a modern western language has not been completed. If we compare the amount of literature and translations produced on subjects and writings connected and dealing with the so called ›Berlin *Haskalah*‹,⁸ studies on their later followers in Galicia, today's Poland, Ukraine and Russia are still rare.⁹

When I started to read the *More nevu'ke ha-zeman*, the Guide of the Perplexed of the time, a work of nearly 600 pages in a rather difficult Hebrew, I immediately realized the importance of a concise translation of this classic of Hebrew literature. Krochmal's work, extended and quoted today according to Simon Rawidowicz's edition of the ›Writings‹ of Nachman Krochmal,¹⁰ contains numerous

bung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, München 2006, 41–42 (Englisch: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁶ See JULIUS GUTTMANN, *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, München 1933. – In the Hebrew and English translations of this classical introduction, however, the original chapter on Krochmal was added. See Ders., *Filosofia shel ha-yahadut*, Jerusalem 1951, 289–308 and Ders., *Philosophies of Judaism*, New York 1964, 321–344. The original chapter missing in the German edition is preserved at the Archives of the National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

⁷ See JULIUS GUTTMANN, *Die Philosophie des Judentums. Mit einer Standortbestimmung von Esther Seidel und einer biographischen Einführung von Fritz Bamberger*, Berlin 2000.

⁸ See CHRISTOPH SCHULTE, *Die Jüdische Aufklärung. Philosophie, Religion, Geschichte*, München 2002.

⁹ Compare, for example, the studies on the eastern European Jewish enlightenment by SHMUEL FEINER, *Haskalah and History. The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, Oxford/Portland 2002; VERENA DOHRN, *Die Transformation der Haskala zum prosveščenie in der Überlieferung*, in: *Jud.* 61 (2005), 110–127; EADEM, *Jüdische Eliten im Russischen Reich, Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas 44*, Köln/Berlin/Wien 2008; STEFAN SCHREINER, *Isaak Ber Lewinsohn – der ›Mendelssohn der russischen Juden‹*, in: *Jud.* 47 (1991), 82–92.

¹⁰ *The Writings of Nachman Krochmal*, Hrsg. SIMON RAWIDOWICZ, Waltham ²1961 [Hebrew]. In the following, I will refer to this edition, including the *More nevu'ke ha-zeman* and some of his letters and other writings. For a translation see NACHMAN KROCHMAL, *Führer der Verwirrten der Zeit*, Hrsg. ANDREAS LEHNARDT 1–2, PhB 615 a–b, Hamburg 2012.

words and expressions which must be interpreted word by word on the background of traditional Hebrew literature as well as on the background of non-Jewish sources and scholarly literature. The short list of Hebrew terms invented or reinterpreted by Krochmal with a German translation added by Rawidowicz to his edition¹¹ clearly points to the fact that even Hebrew readers of his time could not have understood the *More* sufficiently without a broader knowledge of the development of connotations of some of the Hebrew terms used from biblical up to medieval times. Nevertheless Krochmal was a father of the Hebrew renewal movement and he coined many new philosophical terms for his traditional Hebrew readers.

Obviously, every study of the *More nevu'ke ha-zeman* has to deal with its sources – from medieval times up to the times of *Haskalah*, from the *More nevu'khim* of Moses ben Maimon (Acronym: Rambam)¹² until the *Bi'ur* of Moses Mendelssohn¹³, and even further on until the books of 19th century Christian scholars like David Eichhorn, Gustav Dähne and August Neander.

In this presentation I firstly want to shed some light on the Christian works used by Krochmal. Herewith I intend to clarify the strong influence of non-Jewish writers on one of the first ›Talmudic historians‹, a historian whose influence on scholars like Chanoch Albeck, Gedalyahu Alon and Shmuel Safrai should not be overseen.¹⁴ Secondly, I want to try to answer the question how Krochmal viewed the role of Christianity in his overall idealistic philosophy of Jewish history – a philosophy which refers immediately to dialectical concepts of Hegel and other Protestant idealistic German philosophers of his time.¹⁵ Did his view of the role

¹¹ See the introduction by Simon Rawidowicz in the edition mentioned above. For additional translations of philosophical expressions coined in Hebrew by Krochmal see JACOB KLATZKIN, *Thesaurus Philosophicus. Linguae Hebraicae et veteris et recentioris*, 4 Bde., New York 1968 [Hebrew].

¹² See the Latin title page: *More Nebuchim sive liber Doctor Perplexorum auctore R. Mose Maimonide traditio idiomate conscriptus, R. Samuele Abben Thibbone in linguam Hebraeam translatus, novis commentaris uno R. Mosis Narbonnis . . ., nunc in lucem editus cura et impensis Isaaci Eucheli*, Berlin 1795.

¹³ MOSES MENDELSSOHN, *Sefer netivot ha-Shalom we-hu ḥibbur kolel ḥamisha ḥumshe Tora 'im targum ashkenazi u-vi'ur*, 9 Bde., Wien 1846 ff.

¹⁴ See ISAIAH GAFNI, *Talmudic Research in Modern Times: Between Scholarship and Ideology*, in: AHARON OPPENHEIM (Hrsg.), *Jüdische Geschichte in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit. Wege der Forschung: Vom alten zum neuen Schürer*, München 1999, 133–148, hier 138.

¹⁵ On Krochmal's interest for and dependence on Hegel, whom he calls the ›great German philosopher‹ (KROCHMAL, *Writings*, 290) see SIMON RAWIDOWICZ, *War Krochmal ein Hegelianer?*, in: HUCA 5 (1928), 335–582. – The most recent attempt to describe this relationship is provided by MICHA BRUMLIK, *Hegels Juden. Reformen, Sozialisten, Zionisten*, *Jüdische Kulturgeschichte in der Moderne* 17, Berlin 2019, 118–127.

of Christianity influence his acceptance and use of books by Christian, mainly Protestant authors?

First of all, I want to remind some facts of Krochmal's astonishing life. He was a native of Brody, then a small town with nearly ninety per cent Jewish population.¹⁶ As a subject of the Austro-Hungarian empire he was witness of major political and cultural changes. Brody, then a major trading city, was inhabited mainly by a Jewish population, but since it once belonged to Poland, it was also influenced by Polish culture and its Catholic religion. In Podolia, the name of the district of Brody, at that time lived mainly Catholic Christians, but also Ruthenes, Huzuls, Kosaks and other minorities like Karaites, Sinti and Roma, and not to forget Russian and Greek orthodox Christians.¹⁷ Protestants lived or stayed, if any, only in towns like Tarnopol, Zołkiew or, more likely, in Lwiw (Lwów or Lemberg). Whether Krochmal, who spent most of his life in Brody, Zołkiew, and Ternopil (Tarnopol), ever met Protestants personally or not, is not testified. The small Protestant minority in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at that time convened in significant numbers only in cities like Vienna. Apparently, austro-hungarian Protestantism reached the outer edges of the k.u.k.-monarchy only occasionally.¹⁸

Under these circumstances, characterized not the least by a growing endeavour by various organizations for the Christianization of Jews in Poland, Russia and Galicia,¹⁹ it is all the more remarkable that Krochmal himself and some of his pupils and friends took notice of and documented the strong influence of books and newspapers written or edited by Protestant scholars. I will give here only a few examples. But they all underline Krochmal's significant interest in the criticism of the bible at his time. And this criticism was advanced mainly by German speaking protestant theologians.

As a first and very telling example, it should be mentioned that Krochmal, although he knew Hebrew very well from his early childhood on, mentions in his *More*, that he made use of the famous lexicon for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic by

¹⁶ See NATHAN GELBER, Art. Brody, in: EJ 4 (1971), Sp. 1396-1398. See also BÖRRIES KUZMANY, Brody. Eine galizische Grenzstadt im langen 19. Jahrhundert, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2011.

¹⁷ On religious minorities in Galicia, see WOLFDIETER BIHL, Die Juden in der Habsburgmonarchie 1848-1918, StudJuda 8, Eisenstadt 1980, 5-73; WOLFGANG HÄUSLER, Das galizische Judentum in der Habsburgmonarchie im Lichte der zeitgenössischen Publizistik und Reiseliteratur von 1772-1848, München 1979; JOSHUA SHANES, Die Genese einer Nation: Das galizische Judentum unter österreichischer Herrschaft 1772 bis 1918, in: JACEK PURCHLA u. a. (Hrsg.), Mythos Galizien, Wien 2015, 153-160.

¹⁸ See GERHARD MAY, Art. Österreich, III. Christentum, in: RGG⁴ 6, Sp. 741-743, hier 743.

¹⁹ See, for example, SIMON DUBNOW, History of the Jews in Russia and Poland. From the Earliest Times until the Present Day, Philadelphia 1946, 396-403.

the Lutheran theologian Wilhelm Gesenius, first printed in 1835.²⁰ Secondly, he is strongly influenced by the introduction to the Old Testament by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, published in Leipzig 1780–1783.²¹ Especially in his remarks on the so-called Second- or Deutero-Jesaja Krochmal relies on arguments and interpretations presented by Eichhorn.²²

One of Krochmal's famous critics and opponents, Shmuel David Luzzato (1800–1865) (acronym: Shadal), attacked him just for this reason.²³ Krochmal later consented in a letter to Shadal, that his critique on Jesaja might have been exaggerated.²⁴ Eichhorn himself, by the way, only has gathered in his introductory work the results of older investigations and analyses. But under the influence of Johann Gottfried Herder and in contradiction to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing he has developed the critique of single Biblical books into an overall model of the history of Jewish literature in biblical times. Probably, it was this overall picture of the development of the biblical books that impressed Krochmal much more than any of the detailed analyses of certain biblical books like Jesaja.

How problematic the study of a book like Eichhorn's introduction to the Old Testament must have been for Krochmal is witnessed also by Me'ir Letteris (1800–1871), a close friend and pupil. He became famous for his edition of the Hebrew Bible, still in use in many liberal Jewish communities today. In his *Zikkaron ba-Sefer*²⁵ (Memoires) he reports that Krochmal used to go out for a walk in the fields in the surroundings of Zolkiew, to study this book. Obviously, Krochmal

²⁰ See Krochmal, *Führer*, 345 referring to WILHELM GESENIUS, *Hebräisches und chaldäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, Leipzig 1834, 233. – On the reception of ›the Gesenius‹ among Jews, see YAACOV SHAVIT, Wann und wie verwendeten jüdische Gelehrte des 19. Jahrhunderts das Hebräisch-Deutsche Wörterbuch und andere Werke von Gesenius?, in: STEFAN SCHORCH/ERNST-JOACHIM WASCHKE (Hrsg.), *Biblische Exegese und hebräische Lexikographie. Das ›Hebräisch-deutsche Handwörterbuch‹ von Wilhelm Gesenius als Spiegel und Quelle alttestamentlicher und hebräischer Forschung, 200 Jahre nach seiner ersten Auflage*, BZAW 427, Berlin 2013, 548–565.

²¹ JOHANN EICHHORN, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 5 Bde., Leipzig 1780–1783; 4th edition 1823–1824.

²² See HARRIS, *Nachman Krochmal*, 160. – However, Krochmal's observations on Deutero-Jesaja are also inspired by remarks of Abraham Ibn Esra. On Krochmal as a critical reader of the Bible see also ANDREAS LEHNARDT, *Biblical Criticism in Nachman Krochmal's Writings. Between Rabbinical Tradition and Galician Enlightenment*, in: *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* 7 (2009), 65–76.

²³ See the letter published in KROCHMAL, *Writings*, 424–426, and see the translation of this letter in MORRIS MARGOLIES, *Samuel David Luzzatto. Traditionalist Scholar*, New York 1979, 159 f; BRENNER, *Propheten*, 43.

²⁴ KROCHMAL, *Writings*, 117.

²⁵ See MEIR LETTERIS, *Zikkaron ba-sefer. Memoiren. Ein Beitrag zur Literatur und Culturgeschichte im XIX. Jahrhundert*, Wien 1869, 34–73, v. a. 114 ff.

and his companions and visitors simply feared the attacks of the more observant Hasidic Jews in his neighbourhood. Reading non-Jewish or Christian books was despised in most of the Hasidic circles.²⁶ And out of fear for attacks by the Hasidim he preferred to leave his room and house, hiding in a field or in a forest studying all kind of scholarly and Christian literature. Of course, much more problematic must have been his interest in books from German philosophers like Hegel, Schelling or Herder later on. However, it is not known, if he went out with their books, too. It seems to be more likely that he studied their books in private libraries like the one of his friend Barukh Tzvi Neu from Zołkiew. Only later he seems to have been in the financial situation to order and buy books from Christian authors by himself.

Most remarkable in this regard is, of course, the list of book orders where he subscribed to buy the new books of Hegel.²⁷ But it seems that he also bought the books of Johann Wilhelm August Dähne ›Geschichtliche Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religionsphilosophie‹ (1834), a depiction of several Alexandrian philosophies, and, most interesting, of August Neander ›Genetische Entwicklung der vornehmen gnostischen Systeme‹ (1818), a history of Gnostic Philosophies. Krochmal has translated numerous passages from this book almost literally into Hebrew in Chapter 15 of the *More nevuḳhe ha-zeman*.²⁸

This is of interest for us as much as August Neander (1789–1850) was himself a Jew, born as David Mendel, who converted to Christianity and later became one of the most distinguished historians of church-history in Germany.²⁹ Despite the fact that already Letteris reports that Krochmal seems to have made use of the French history of the Jewish people by Jaques Basnage,³⁰ he never explicitly cites it in the *More nevuḳhe ha-zeman*. Though, obviously he read and adopted several

²⁶ See on this RAPHAEL MAHLER, *Hasidism and Jewish Enlightenment. Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Philadelphia 1985, 234. See also the introduction to my translation in KROCHMAL, *Führer*, XVII–XVIII.

²⁷ LETTERIS, *Zikkaron ba-sefer*, 44–45. See also JACOB LANDAU, *Nachman Krochmal. Ein Hegelianer*, Berlin 1904, 11, Anm. 3: »Pränumerationsliste, wo ausser drei Buchhändlern . . . K[rochmal] als der einzige Pränumerant aus Galizien ausgewiesen war.«

²⁸ See ISMAR SCHORSCH, *The Production of a Classic. Zunz as Krochmal's Editor*, in: LBYB 43 (1986), 281–315, hier 288. See also my translation of this chapter (*Derekh ha-hitzi'oni'im* ›Die Lehre der Abweichler) which contains almost literal translations of long passages of Neander's book into Hebrew: KROCHMAL, *Führer*, 624–658. See on this part of the ›More‹ also AMIR, *Renewal*, 262–270.

²⁹ See NICOLAUS HEUTGER, *Art. August Neander*, in: BBKL 6 (1993), 518–520. See also HILDE HÜTTMANN, *August Neander (David Mendel) in seiner Jugendentwicklung [Dissertation]*, Hamburg 1936.

³⁰ See JAQUES BASNAGE, *L'histoire des Juifs depuis Jésus-Christ*, 5 Bde., Rotterdam 1706–1707.

passages from the »Histoire« and it is again Me'ir Letteris, his close friend, who bears witness that he read the book in the French original.

How can we explain this remarkable openness towards non-Jewish scholarly literature? Firstly, one has to take notice that Krochmal also used to read and cite Christian sources in his *More nevukhe ha-zeman*. Just out of interest in history, it seems, he started to read the so-called Apocrypha, like the Books of the Maccabees, Wisdom literature and, most important, Josephus, the Jewish historian whose writings himself were handed down by Christians. Furthermore, and for our inquiry more important, is the fact that he also read the New Testament and other Christian sources. Two times in the *More nevukhe ha-zeman* he quotes or refers to the Gospels. Firstly, he writes that they (the Christians) have an old tradition of the sages on this [*mi-shlamnuta de-qadisha*], which means that the Gospel of Matthew transmits an old tradition that the washing of hands was also required after the use of *hullin*, the ordinary or profane.³¹

Another reference to the New Testament was not included by the editor, Leopold Zunz, into the *More nevukhe ha-zeman*, but in the original it must have belonged to it. This passage refers to the Gospel of Matthew 1,17, the genealogy of the house of Jesus from Abraham up to David.³² Even though this remarkable passage was not included into the *More*, it seems that it once belonged to a longer passage referring to the belief in Abraham, being in itself an important hint to the crucial question if Krochmal intended to formulate a theology of the three monotheistic faiths or not – a question recently raised by Yehoyada Amir in an article on the biblical figures Abraham and Moses in Krochmals thinking.³³ But we have to be cautious to draw quickly too far reaching conclusions from the fact that Ranaq mentions Christian authors and books relatively often. Was his attitude towards Christianity really positive?

II. References to Christianity in Krochmals *More nevukhe ha-zeman*

Let's have a closer look at the few passages in the *More* which might directly point to Krochmals thoughts on Christians and Christianity. As the title of Krochmals book suggests he strongly relies on Maimonides and his rationalistic and compre-

³¹ KROCHMAL, Writings, 215; KROCHMAL, Führer, 512.

³² See KROCHMAL, Writings, 207; KROCHMAL, Führer, XLVI.

³³ See YEHOYADA AMIR, *Ave ha-uma we-ha-emuna mul adon ha-nevi'im. Avraham u-Moshe bemishnato shel Ranaq*, in: MOSHE HALLAMISH/HANNAH KASHER/YOCHANAN SILMAN (Hrsg.), *The Faith of Avraham. In the Light of Interpretation throughout the Ages*, Ramat-Gan 2002, 205–227. See also Amir, *New Paths*, 217–227.

hensive view of Jewish law and religion.³⁴ Also concerning his attitude towards Christianity Krochmal relies on Maimonides, especially with regard to the fact that he mentions Christianity or Christians often only in comparison with other religions such as Islam. Maimonides assumed that both Christianity and Islam are polytheistic religions, not to be compared to monotheistic Judaism. Christianity is according to Maimonides a way of idolatry and deeply misled by its pure anthropomorphism. As in the older rabbinic tradition it therefore can be identified with Esau or Edom, the almost mythological enemy of Jacob or Israel (according to Genesis 25). Following the Rambam Islam (Yishma'el) in contrast should be ranked higher than Christianity since it preserved the monotheistic faith in a clearer sense.³⁵ Muslims therefore are – in contrast to Christians – in traditional Jewish theology not regarded as idolaters.³⁶ This harsh judgment of the Christian faith by Maimonides, especially with regard to the doctrine of trinity, was certainly known to Krochmal. He himself, however, tried to develop his own perspective.

The first time that Krochmal mentions Christians is in the context of his description of the different Jewish sects in Chapter 10 of his book. Here he compares the different Jewish groups within Judaism in the time of the Second Temple with the different Christian confessions and the Karaites. In this context he makes the observation that despite all the quarrels and fights between the Jewish sects like the Sadducees and the Zealots the differences between these Jewish groups and Christians and Karaites were much deeper.³⁷ Clearly, all Christian denominations are much more far away from a common ground with Judaism than all the other small groups within Judaism just mentioned. The Jewish sects were associated by their common religious practices despite of all political disputes. They kept on marrying members of the different groups, and they participated also in the common sacrificial cult in the temple. Not so the Christians!

On the other hand Krochmal keeps Christian sources especially for his reconstruction of dark ages in the time of the Second temple in high esteem. For example he mentions in a footnote in chapter 10, that the Christian translator of the Bible, the redactor of the Vulgata, knew something about the history of the *Megillat bet Hashmonai*, a book now lost, but which he might have seen in the Ara-

³⁴ See on this, for example, DAVID NOVAK, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification*, New York/Oxford 1989, 57–70; DANIEL J. LASKER, *Rashi and Maimonides on Christianity*, in: EPHRAIM KANARFOGEL/MOSHE SOKOLOW (Hrsg.), *Between Rashi and Maimonides: Themes in Medieval Jewish Thought, Literature and Exegesis*, New York 2010, 3–21.

³⁵ On Maimonides' attitude towards Islam see GERALD BLIDSTEIN, *Studies in Halakhic and Aggadic Thought*, Beer-Sheva 2004, 237–247 [Hebrew].

³⁶ Compare ABRAHAM HALKIN/BOAZ COHEN (Hrsg.), *Moses Maimonides. Epistle to Yemen*, New York 1952, 11–15; SYLVIA POWELS-NIAMI (Hrsg.), *Moses Maimonides, Der Brief in den Jemen. Texte zum Messias, Jüdische Geistesgeschichte 1*, Berlin 2002, 35–40.

³⁷ Compare KROCHMAL, *Writings*, 77; KROCHMAL, *Führer*, 181.

maic original.³⁸ Furthermore he mentions in Chapter 10 sources of Christians monks which correctly preserved the Name of Shim'on ben Kosiva or better known as Bar Kochva.³⁹ And finally he mentions in this chapter that Jerusalem was forcibly renamed after the revolt into *Aelia Capitolina*, but that it has been renamed »Jerusalem« again only in the time of the Christian emperors.⁴⁰

In this chapter of his book he also refers to Paul, who was according to Acts 22,3 a student of Rabban Gamliel I. and who studied with the rabbinical Sages and »sat in the very dust of their feet« (compare Mishnah Avot 1,4).⁴¹ Paul – like other figures known from the New Testament⁴² – is mentioned here only indirectly. Nevertheless the reference is clear and he is depicted as a disciple of the Rabbis of Second temple times.⁴³ Paul, the most learned among the followers of the new religion [Christianity], accepted one of the great teachers of Judaism as his own master.⁴⁴

Most interesting is a short remark in chapter 11: Here Krochmal describes the invention of the institution of gatherings of Rabbanim in different places, *knesiyot*, after the great revolt. This is compared by him with the Christian institution of assemblies, which are described in Christian books. And he draws the conclusion that the Christian institution of synods was directly inspired by the Jewish example of *knesset*.⁴⁵

In Chapter 12, which is in fact one long footnote to the chapter on the history of the Second Temple period, Krochmal acknowledges that some Jewish Hellenistic writings were preserved by Christians.⁴⁶ For example, the writings of Aristobul, the Alexandrian philosopher and commentator of the Tora, and of course the books of Philo, the celebrated Alexandrian Jew.

Most noteworthy with regard to his view on Early Christianity is a small remark on Jesus in his exciting Chapter on Aggada, chapter (*sha'ar*) 14: Here he mentions that the »founder of the Christian belief« (*meyased dat ha-notzri*)⁴⁷ used

³⁸ See the note in KROCHMAL, Writings, 66; KROCHMAL, Führer, 151.

³⁹ See KROCHMAL, Writings, 110; KROCHMAL, Führer, 253–254.

⁴⁰ Compare KROCHMAL, Writings, 111; KROCHMAL, Führer, 254.

⁴¹ Compare Krochmal, Writings, 97; Krochmal, Führer, 224.

⁴² See, for example, his reference to John the Baptist in KROCHMAL, Writings, 98; KROCHMAL, Führer, 228. And see on this AMIR, Renewal, 229.

⁴³ See on this also YEHOYADA AMIR, New Paths towards Christianity and Islam in the Thought of Nachman Krochmal and Elijah Benamozegh, in: GÖRGE HASSELHOFF (Hrsg.), Die Entdeckung des Christentums in der Wissenschaft des Judentums, SJ 54, Berlin/New York 2010, 213–238, hier 222.

⁴⁴ Compare Amir, Renewal, 243, Anm. 27.

⁴⁵ Compare KROCHMAL, Writings, 121; KROCHMAL, Führer, 282–283.

⁴⁶ Compare KROCHMAL, Writings, 167; KROCHMAL, Führer, 396–397.

⁴⁷ KROCHMAL, Writings, 246; KROCHMAL, Führer, 593–594.

to articulate his thoughts by *meshalim* (parables) like his Jewish contemporaries. Although he does not mention the name Jesus openly it is clear that he refers to the parables of the Gospels. There many *meshalim* are ascribed to the famous Galilean Jew. Interestingly, he connects this historical remark with the more literary observation that Jesus parables formalistically belong to a sort of parables which should be dated to the time after the destruction of the Temple. Jesus, however, was not »a superior creator of parables, but rather an unoriginal imitator.«⁴⁸ As other Jewish scholars in the 19th century Jesus is depicted here as an inferior and unoriginal copyist of his Jewish environment.⁴⁹

In another short note in chapter 15, titled *derekh hitzoniim*, Krochmal acknowledges the remarkable acquaintance with Gnostic teachings of some of the most »famous Christian priestly sages« (*hokhme kohane notzriim*⁵⁰) who lived in the time of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E. Several times he emphasizes that the Christian sources on the Gnostic sects in Egypt and elsewhere are much more reliable than rabbinic ones, who gave them the names *evyonim*, *notzranim*, and *yod'im*.⁵¹ Like Neander, whom he follows in this regard, Krochmal points out that all Gnostic sects like the ones of Malkhio [Basilides], Hizqia [Valentinus], Talmi [Ptolemäus], Marqa [Marcus], and Bar Ditzan [Bardesanes] stem from Jewish circles. He bluntly writes: »They all came out of our midst and converted to Christianity«,⁵² which means that all Gnostics sects once have been Jewish. But after Christianity had turned into the leading religion, all Gnostics became Christians. The Gnostic sects are the best example for Krochmal's view that the Christian belief is nothing but an offspring of Judaism – and not, as proposed by other scholars of his time, not mentioned by him explicitly, an offspring of Greek philosophy and idolatry.

One might go even one step further and say that Ranaq regarded Gnostic Christianity as a Jewish sect. For example, when he describes the perplexity in the thoughts of some of the Gnostic systems, he clearly points out that some of them were so confused that they started to believe in Greek idols and Godheads, too. The pagan background of Christian Gnosticism is not even mentioned by Krochmal.

These selected examples of his views on Christians and Christianity clearly point to a notable positive attitude towards the sister religion of Judaism. Although the Galician *Maskil* avoids mentioning the name of Jesus – possibly out

⁴⁸ HARRIS, Krochmal, 304, Anm. 23.

⁴⁹ On Jewish interest in Jesus in the early »Science of Judaism« (Wissenschaft des Judentums) see WALTER HOMOLKA, *Jewish Jesus Research and its Challenge to Christology today*, Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 30, Boston/Leiden 2017, 36–60.

⁵⁰ KROCHMAL, Writings, 258; Krochmal, Führer, 626–627.

⁵¹ KROCHMAL, Writings, 259; Krochmal, Führer, 627–628.

⁵² KROCHMAL, Writings, 259; Krochmal, Führer, 628.

of fear, but also because the mentioning of his name was traditionally avoided – no negative or pejorative statement on the Christian faith can be found in the *More nevukhe ha-zeman*. In contrast to Islam, the belief of the sons of Yishma'el, which he mentions only once, the Christian belief or the belief of Edom is not considered to be based on total idolatry. But with regard to Mohammed, whom he interestingly mentions frankly, he notes that before this leader stood up, his clan, the *Qoraysh* in the Arab peninsula, worshiped only idols.⁵³

Noticeably, here he makes a difference between the Christian religion and Islam, and it has been correctly pointed out recently,⁵⁴ that Krochmal constructs a hierarchy between the three monotheistic faiths which goes far beyond the traditional attitude as summarized by Maimonides. These religions are monotheistic but there is a clear diversity between them, inasmuch as they stand on different steps on the ladder of the true religion.

III. Conclusion

Let me summarize this survey with a few remarks on Krochmal's overall attitude towards other religions. No doubt, Krochmal's goal was not to write a history of religions, but a history of the Jewish people within the horizon of contemporary philosophy. His main interest was to prove the eternity of the Jewish people, the *'am olam*, despite all Christian philosophical models which tried to prove the opposite.⁵⁵ With regard to his overall positive attitude towards Christianity it is, however, interesting to note that he does not take into account the Christian and idealistic background of the philosophical models he adopts and modifies. Krochmal did not attack the negative consequences of these systems directly. Likewise, it seems that he did not want to realise the connection between the anti-Jewish resentments behind these philosophical theories. These resentments are deeply rooted in a Christian and Protestant belief due to the belief in the superiority of Jesus.

Why Krochmal held Christianity and Christian sources in high esteem, but sought on the other hand to refute the Protestant philosophical agenda of his time is not entirely clear. It seems to me as if he ignored the fact that those philosophers whom he tried to counter based their arguments on the same sources that Krochmal called reliable in the sense of historiography. Perhaps also with regard to this problem he tried to walk on a middle way, according to a famous saying in Talmud Yerushalmi *Hagigah* 2,1 (77a) which he quotes as a motto at the begin-

⁵³ KROCHMAL, Writings, 41; KROCHMAL, Führer, 108. See on this AMIR, Renewal, 160-161.

⁵⁴ Compare AMIR, *Ave ha-uma*, 226; AMIR, New Paths, 226-227.

⁵⁵ See on this ANDREAS LEHNARDT, Geschichte und Individuum – Nachman Krochmals More Nevukhe ha-Zeman, in: Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts 6 (2007), 363-388.

ning of the second chapter of the book, *sha'ar 2*, for his way of thinking. Shmuel Feiner gave Krochmal therefore the nickname ›middle-of-the-road Maskil‹.⁵⁶ However, Feiner related this nickname only to his way to persuade his readers of the correctness of the path of the ›true believer‹. In my opinion, though, Krochmal reveals also in his lenient and positive attitude towards Christianity – at least in comparison with Maimonides – this kind of ›middle-of-the-road‹ thinking. Even if Jesus was not a superior thinker and an ever-important master of Judaism, Christianity like Islam leans on Judaism. Christianity, however, more than Islam should be regarded as an offspring of Second Temple Judaism. In sharp contrast for example to his Hasidic coreligionists, Christianity can be valued positively.

On the other hand it is astonishing, that Krochmal does not take into account sufficiently how deep the philosophical models of his time which caused the perplexity of his contemporary Jewish fellows rooted in a belief that denied the right of existence for Jews.⁵⁷ This conviction was based on the historiosophical model which argued that the time for Judaism has run out. Implicitly, Krochmal's Jewish philosophy of history tried to cope with this challenge for the right of existence for Judaism. And he managed for his readers to pave ways for renewed Jewish self-perception among the nations. Explicitly, however, he avoided any direct critique or attack on this widespread philosophy and its masterminds – a philosophy which has left its impact on the dramatic events in Poland, Ukraine and Galicia a century after Krochmal's death in 1840.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See FEINER, *Haskalah and History*, 115.

⁵⁷ See on this, for example, HARRIS, *Krochmal*, 55–61.

⁵⁸ On the anti-Jewish (if not antisemitic) attitude and expressions in Hegel's writings and among his non-Jewish followers, see YIRMIYAHU YOVEL, *Dark Riddle. Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews*, Cambridge 1989, 21–45. – The remarkable interest of learned Jews in his philosophy is discussed anew by BRUMLIK, *Hegels Juden*, 16–27.