

**Old and New Covenants:
Historical and Theological Contexts in
Scribe's and Halévy's *La Juive***

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“Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in distress; rescue me from the hands of my enemies. Lord, keep me from shame, for I have called upon you” (Psalm 30 [31]: 10, 18).

Précis

Jacques-François-Fromental Halévy had already attained the age of thirty-six when his masterpiece, *La Juive*, a grand opera in five acts, was produced at the Opéra (23 February 1835), where it was hailed with enthusiasm, and at once secured for its author a European reputation. The opera was presented with unprecedented scenic splendour, the stage-setting alone having cost, it was said, 150,000 francs. Ten months after the first performance of *La Juive*, Halévy's musical comedy *L'Éclair* appeared; and, although in spirit the exact antithesis of *La Juive*, it immediately became a favourite with Parisian audiences.

La Juive (1835), with Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (1836), marked the defining expression of French Grand Opera. Both operas used highly controversial and sensitive historical material as the very fabric of their artistic medium. The explosive themes of religious and racial bigotry, leading to execution and massacre, were devised and sustained impressively by the librettist Eugène Scribe, whose fables of intolerance and death seized the public imagination. They presented parables for reflection on contemporary times and the dangers posed to humanity by politics and religion, woven into themes such as Orthodoxy and Purity, Justice and Mercy, the Fire of Truth. In terms of historical background, theological implication, and purely human tragedy, the scenario of *La Juive* provides a depth and richness of semiotic discourse, a sustained exploration of a complex and many-faceted subject, whose caveats on social intolerance become only ever more topical and pertinent

I. Historical Presuppositions and Perspectives

II. The Operatic Scenario

Introduction

La Juive is one of the most remarkable and affecting operas ever written. As Richard Wagner observed, it captures perfectly the spirit and atmosphere of antique times. But this is not only because of Fromental Halévy's beautiful music; it is to a great degree thanks to Eugène Scribe's wonderful story. Scribe's skill as a story-teller and dramatist were exceptional, and his influence on the history of opera immense. His work is concerned with fundamental human situations where his characters are faced with life-determining choices demanded by the exigencies of history, religion and politics. While responding to the challenges of topical concerns, his scenarios also pose problems and questions that are of perennial concern to life.

Today more than ever the essential role played by Scribe in making grand opera a successful medium for the communication of ideas to the thinking man is understood. It is recognised that he had liberal Voltairean beliefs, supported a political centre-ground and the concept of *le juste milieu*, and opposed the repressive censorship of the reactionary reigns of the Restoration monarchs Louis XVIII and Charles X. In all the genres of his work he regarded the theatre as a medium for the promotion of social change, even for the betterment or transformation of society. He defended the right to make controversial and provocative statements, free of government restraint and interference. He also has to be seen fully in the context of the Romantic movement, as one alert to the forces of political idealism informed by a sense of historical scholarship (in the manner of Sir Walter Scott), but also responsive to nature and the pictorial influence of the plastic arts. He travelled in Germany and Switzerland (1826), experiencing the impact of sublime mountain scenery, and the weight of historical witness palpable in cities such as Constance and Geneva.

Nothing could typify these concerns more than the question of freedom, both personal and communal, in conflict with the demands of faith and political ideologies. The tumultuous times after the French Revolution and during the long years of the Napoleonic Wars were the background to Scribe's childhood and youth; and the period of restoration and reaction that followed on the Congress of Vienna formed the milieu of his early professional days. He had established himself as one who perceived the pulse of his own society with acuity: his social comedies and work in comic opera had proved him not only an astute commentator but a moulder of fashion himself. But it was his work in the area of grand opera that showed him exploring the deeper issues that shape society in the choices imposed by the imperatives of fundamental freedoms.

His work with Auber, Meyerbeer and Halévy, essentially completed between 1828 and 1838, against a background of restoration, revolution and compromise, provides an essential blueprint of his concerns, and seen as a whole, constitutes a remarkable reflection on the nature of freedom and choice in the context of the great social forces of politics and religion. If *La Muette di Portici* portrays the struggle to freedom against the forces of political oppression, then *Robert le Diable*, *La Juive*, *Les Huguenots* and *Le Prophète* bring religion into the equation and place it firmly at the forefront of fundamental options, with *L'Africaine* (first conceived in 1838 in the wake of the French entry into Algeria in 1830) adding prescient perspective on the drive for empire in the colonial enterprises of the later century, where both politics and religion are contextualized in a global context.

If *La Muette*, with its consideration of the 1647 rebellion in Naples, provided a political topos, then *Robert le Diable* established a religious frame of reference in terms of a medieval and mythological era of faith and magic. But with *La Juive*, *Les Huguenots* and *Le Prophète*, Scribe's attention became focused on a remarkable period of one hundred and fifty years (1414 to 1572) that witnessed the upheaval, pain and change that surrounded the emergence of both the Renaissance and the Reformation, and which provided him with crucial material for his themes. The three operas constitute a sustained exploration of the nature of faith, politics and freedom with registers of imagery and concern remarkable for their thematic unity and sustained effectivity as vectors for reflection.

—*La Juive* is set during the Council of Constance which sought to deal with the crisis in Church government and the growing criticism of the structure and sacramental practice of the Church (1414-18);

—*Le Prophète* is set during the Anabaptist uprising and subsequent theocracy in the city of Munster (1534-5);

—*Les Huguenots* is centred around the Massacre of St Bartholomew's Day on 24 August 1572 which marked the climax of the Wars of Religion in France.

Seen within the context of the social and political history of France in the early 1830s, therefore, *La Juive* takes on a significance far greater than its storyline. Napoleon, revered by Jewish circles, had created a self-governing Jewish consistory twenty years earlier, and in 1831 the liberal regime enacted new legislation recognizing Judaism as a state religion (rabbis were to receive government salaries). Jews were now officially accepted by Christians. But anti-Semitism in France was as old as anywhere else in Europe. It had manifested itself in the eighteenth century, and was still vestigially present in the Paris of Scribe and Halévy. Indeed, the liberalism that had its origins in Voltaire and the Revolution was aimed not only at the Catholic Church, but at the medievalism of Rabbinic Judaism. The opera touches on frictions current in France at the time, not only between Jews and Gentiles, but between Reform Jews and Traditional Jews, between conservatives, reactionaries and liberals. All three of these currents are reflected in the opera. All these issues have been examined by Diana Hallman in her recent study of the opera.¹

But the scenario is deeply interesting on a wider and more enduring level for its more perennial values: the thoughtful recreation of an historical milieu and all its issues as a vector for the consideration of religious and humanitarian values, and the subtle detail of its religious and theological allusion and subtexts, which give the scenario a uniquely dense texture, and serve an enduring artistic function.

¹ Diana R. Hallman. *Opera, Liberalism, and Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France: The Politics of Halévy's 'La Juive'*. (Cambridge Studies in Opera.) Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

I. The Historical Presuppositions and Perspectives

The Atmosphere of Antique Times

La Juive is famous for its evocation of times long ago in its story of religious altercation and moral conflict. It is permeated by a sense of melancholy and sadness, the mood of the action exultant yet desolating. It is much to the credit of the composer who intuitively responded to the atmosphere of Scribe's rich scenario and to its innate charge of emotional tension. The personal story at the centre of the plot is affecting and distressing in itself, but is given even greater poignancy and purposefulness by the vividness of the historical re-creation of a particularly stirring event and the many issues of faith, tolerance, justice, mercy and death arising from it.

1) The Period of the Late Middle Ages: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century and its Sorrows²

It is small surprise that at the close of the Middle Ages a melancholia seemed to weigh on men's souls.³ An impression of immense sadness pervades the chronicles, poetry, preaching and even legal documents. It is as though the period had known only unhappiness, violence, covetousness and moral hatred, as though only pride, indifference and cruelty had prevailed. No other age had laid such an emphasis on mortality, questioning the passing of splendour and the decay of beauty, as death dragged all people of all conditions and ages to perdition. It was a time of violent contrasts and impressive forces, which lent a tone of excitement and passion to everyday life and produced an oscillation between despair and joy, cruelty and tenderness, passionate piety and mocking indifference, resulting in a sense of contradiction and sudden change.⁴ Only the Church offered an organizing principle in the disjointed and clashing elements of society, but even here there had been serious disillusionment. When the Vicar of Christ, Pope Boniface VIII, was humiliated by the agents of the King of France in the Outrage of Agnani (7 September 1303), and the See of Peter was removed to Avignon (1309-77), a confusion of purpose arose, since the pope must be the Bishop of Rome. This period of French residency (and occupation of the papal throne) came to be known as the Babylonian Captivity, since, as in its Biblical precedent, when the Jews were deported to Babylon (587-38 B.C.), the pope lived away from his see, the centre of Western Christendom, for just over 70 years. It looked like the beginning of the end of an ideal of Christian unity.

In the wake of the disastrous fourteenth century, with the Hundred Years' War, the Black Death, the Babylonian Captivity and the subsequent Great Schism, matters of life and death, of faith and despair, of hope in the future and faith in God's providence, were given a tragic pointedness by problems with leadership of, and within, the church, culminating in the scandal of no fewer than three claimants to the papal throne in 1408. The Great Schism (1378-1417) marked a period when there were rival popes in Rome and Avignon. It arose less from dogma than from the political rivalries of Italy and France, and brought about the rise of the Conciliar Movement in the Church when the bishops in unison tried to end the scandal of papal schism, and in the process, weaken the centralizing power of the papacy. This movement found its highpoint in the Council of Constance (1414-18), which aimed to reform the Church. It not only ended the Great Schism with the deposition of the rival popes (Gregory XII, Benedict XIII, and John XXIII), and election of Martin V, but condemned the teachings of John Wycliffe and executed the Bohemian dissenter John Hus (1415). The period was noted for the growth in new spiritualities, many of which were either implicitly or overtly critical of

² Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: the Calamitous 14th Century*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

³ John Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: a Study of the Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries*. Trans. F. Hopman (1926) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p. 30.

⁴ Huizinga, pp. 10, 172.

the established church.

In spite of the perceived faults of the Church, towards the end of the Middle Ages a religious atmosphere penetrated all areas of life. Individual and social life in all their forms were pervaded by the concepts of faith. No object or action, however trivial, was unrelated to Christ and salvation in his name. Indeed, there was an enormous unfolding of religion in daily life. The underside of this was a commonplace vulgarity, a startling worldliness, a hardening of religion into mere externals of form and speech.

The colossal strains in society, the failures of the ideals of Christendom, both in Church and chivalric code, were given literary expression in the writings of an obscure English cleric, William Langland (*1332), who wandered from place to place, and, in one of the great allegories of the Middle Ages, *The Vision of Piers the Ploughman* (1370-90), by asking the fundamental question "How can a man be saved?", provided an inquiry into the nature of the Good Life in the context of the whole of medieval society, which is vividly conjured up in the light of an apocalyptic destiny. And yet ordinary people in their confusion and despair sought for spiritual values and peace in faith more than ever before. They found this not in the Universities or the Curia, or even among the members of the monasteries and religious orders, but among poor and obscure priests and among the laity themselves, who were touched by a great upsurge of popular pietism. Its manifestations amounted to a new movement in religion, something its contemporaries called a *devotio moderna*, as in the communities known as the Brethren of the Common Life, founded by the disciples of the Flemish mystic, Gerard Groote (1340-84). He gathered together a small circle of the younger clergy and teachers, so that his house became the model for other such gatherings in the little towns of the Low Countries and Germany, whose members, for the most part, were pious laymen, living a communal existence; following a rule, but one originating in a personal and introspective religion which never needed the formal framework of a religious order. Perhaps the most famous example to emerge from this school was Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) whose *Imitation of Christ* (1425) had an enduring influence; the little book depicts man's complete dependence on God, and the futility of living apart from the only source of life and light. It is about the love, mercy and holiness of God, and the reflection of his love in the lives and writings of his saints.

2) The Contemporary Crisis—Finding the True Way: Orthodoxy or Freedom? Liberty in Martyrdom: John Hus and the Early Reformers

Although he does not feature among the characters of *La Juive*, the figure of John Hus is germane to the issues involved in this scenario. The reformer's stand was not in the final analysis one of dogma, but one of freedom—the freedom of the individual to choose for himself in his God-given dignity and independence.

John Hus advocated a moral reform of the Church, a return to its primitive purity, and the removal of what he saw as abuses. He condemned the wealth of the Bohemian Church and advocated the abolition of clerical property. In his belief that the Church must return to poverty and purity, he had many forerunners inside and outside Bohemia, including the English reformer John Wycliffe. He borrowed heavily from the ideas of these men, but he did not adopt their system. He rejected Wycliffe's views on transubstantiation, but persisted, in spite of ecclesiastical censure and papal excommunication, in preaching the clearly heretical Lollard doctrine that the individual could find in the Bible a simple means of salvation without recourse to theologians or church organizations. He had no intention of setting up a separate Bohemian Church and of breaking with Rome. He was supremely an academic theologian who preached in Czech.

The Conciliar Movement, which caused a split in the Bohemian clergy, increased religious and political confusion. Hus was given mass support in 1412 when he attacked the sale of papal indulgences in support of a war against Naples waged by Pope John XXIII (a historical detail referred to by Scribe, and germane to the link between Eleazar and Brogni in the libretto of *La Juive*). Hus's action led him to be perceived as challenging the Pope's claim to be head of the Church. In 1414 he went to Constance to defend his beliefs before a general council of the Church armed with a safe-conduct of King Sigismund, in the belief that he was still an orthodox Catholic. In November 1414 he was arrested and imprisoned in Gottlieben on the Rhine, and in June 1415 he was condemned to death and was burned on 6 July. He was mistaken in his belief that the council was an assembly of theologians ready to debate his ideas with him; in fact it was a court investigating heresy. To the end Hus remained unrealistic. During his public trial he displayed a markedly argumentative temperament

similar to that of Marsiglio di Padua (1275-1343) who had claimed that in temporal matters the Church should be subject to the State. Although Hus insisted that his views were not heretical, he stubbornly refused to submit them to the judgment of ecclesiastical authority. The consequence was that he was condemned by his judges, handed over to the civil authorities, and burned at the stake in Constance in 1415. A year later, Jerome of Prague, an associate of Hus and one who had introduced Wycliffe's writings into Bohemia, met a similar fate. Hus's death rather than his life gave rise to the most spectacular results in the emergence of the Hussite movement in Bohemia, which however, soon encountered problems in its efforts to maintain unity and adherence to the truth. The Hussite movement soon divided into several rival sects—in a manner that anticipates the experience of later Protestantism—and civil war raged in Bohemia from 1421 to 1436, with no clear outcome. The movement nevertheless represents one of the earliest successful revolts against the medieval religious establishment. It was also the first withdrawal of an entire territory from unity with Rome.⁵

Scribe adds to the emotive quality of the setting by inventing Jewish characters whose religious status and whose decisions about freedom, love and the pursuit of justice raise questions about orthodoxy, tolerance, justice, vengeance and mercy. They also postulate ideas about higher spiritual truths and allegiances, the meaning of life and death, the place of belief, integrity, and counter-concepts like martyrdom. Rachel and Eleazar become other John Huses in their allegiance to their perception of truth, their fierce and defiant independence, and their fearless choice of death over perceived falseness. Their stand before Brogni resembles that of Hus, and just as he refused to compromise, and rejected all attempts at dissuading him from his course of action, so Rachel and Eleazar decline Brogni's efforts to save them. Their deaths by condemnation to boiling reflect at a remove Hus's by burning

3) Justice and Mercy: Heresy and its Suppression in the Middle Ages

La Juive is thus dominated by themes of menace, violence, torture, pain and death. The threat of crowd violence is a manifestation of the spirit of the pogrom, of racial cleansing and extermination. Foreignness, especially when associated with alternate beliefs or perceived violations of the moral code that threaten the purity of race and creed, presaging heresy and miscegenation, is to be rejected with cruelty, violence and extirpation. Rachel and Eleazar are hauled before the crowd; Leopold before the tribunal of Eleazar's righteousness; father and daughter before the President of the Council. The savagery of their condemnation, sentence and mortal punishment is numbing, while their ghastly

⁵ In 1414 John XXIII convoked the Council of Constance, which deposed him. This same Council of Constance, in 1415, condemned Hus as a Wycliffite heretic and he was burned at the stake. Thereupon, at the Bohemian diet, 2 September 1415, 452 nobles signed an indignant manifesto addressed to the council in which they defended Hus as a righteous and good man who had lived an exemplary life among them for many years, and who had been an honest and good preacher and teacher of the Gospel. They advised the council that they would defend, if necessary, to the point of bloodshed the freedom of their preachers to preach the Gospel. Jerome of Prague, another critic of the sale of papal indulgences, and a friend of Hus and a supporter of Wycliffe, was condemned by the Council of Constance in 1416 and also burned at the stake.

Martin V was elected pope at the Council of Constance. After the council, on Feb. 22, 1418, he issued his bull *Inter cunctos* in which he ordered all who followed "the pestilential doctrine of the heresiarchs, John Wycliffe, John Hus and Jerome of Prag" to be punished as heretics. Further, Martin called Europe to a crusade against Bohemia, promising indulgences to the 150,000 participants. However, these invaders were driven back 5 times by the Bohemian Hussites. The issue was eventually resolved by negotiation at the ecumenical Council of Basel in 1431, attended by 300 Bohemian delegates. The Bohemians at the council praised the memories of Wycliffe and Hus, and all ecclesiastical censures against the Bohemians were lifted. A primary article conceded to the Bohemians the partaking of the cup by the laity. In 1462, this concession was declared void by Pius II, who threatened to excommunicate priests who offered the cup to the laity. Upon the resistance of the King of Bohemia, Pius called on the King of Hungary to take away his crown, which he set out to do. However, the Bohemians maintained their right to the cup until it was taken away in 1629 by Ferdinand II of Austria.

It is known that the Bohemian Brethren had some measure of relationship with the Waldenses. At the synod of 1467 they sent Michael, pastor of Senftenburg, "presbyter and bishop", to the Waldensian bishop Stephen for sanction or consecration. Frederick Reiser, a leader of the Waldenses, attended the Council of Basel in 1435 as "the bishop of the faithful in the Romish church, who reject the donation of Constantine." He was burned at the stake, with Anna Weiler, at Strassburg, in 1458.

deaths remain the enduring image of the opera.

How could society, Christian society, have behave liked this? To comprehend it, we must picture a stage of civilization in many respects wholly unlike our own. Passions were fiercer, convictions stronger, virtues and vices more exaggerated than in our colder and more self-contained time. The age, moreover, was a cruel one. The military spirit was everywhere dominant; men were accustomed to rely upon force rather than on persuasion, and habitually looked on human suffering with indifference. The industrial spirit, which has so softened modern manners and modes of thought, was as yet hardly known. We have only to look upon the atrocities of the criminal law of the Middle Ages to see how pitiless men were in their dealings with each other. The wheel, the cauldron of boiling oil, burning alive, burying alive, flaying alive, disembowelling, tearing apart with wild horses, were the ordinary expedients by which the criminal jurist sought to deter crime by making frightful examples which would create a profound impression on a not over-sensitive population.⁶ In France women were customarily burned or buried alive for simple felonies, and Jews were hung by the feet between two savage dogs, while men were boiled to death for coining. In Milan Italian ingenuity exhausted itself in devising deaths of lingering torture for criminals of all descriptions. The Carolina, or criminal code of Charles V, issued in 1530, is a hideous catalogue of blinding, mutilation, tearing with hot pincers, burning alive, and breaking on the wheel. In England poisoners were boiled to death even as late as 1542, as in the cases of Rouse and Margaret Davie.⁷

The imagery of death in *La Juive* is associated with miscegenation and heresy. It is particularly shocking because it is directed at a young woman, who must die most terribly. But it fits into a pattern of behaviour seen in the evolution of our society.

Boiling and cooking of human beings, popular in a number of civilizations, was most classically used in Ancient Rome, where large human frying pans were used to slowly cook to death those Christians who would not renounce their religion; alternately they could be boiled in a cauldron of oil. Another popular form of roasting involved a chair made of iron with a fire pit underneath it. A victim would be bound to the iron chair and then slowly roasted in the open air as the coals heated the iron chair. Pomponio Algerio (1531-56) was a civil law student at the University of Padua whose radical theological beliefs attracted the attention of the Roman Inquisition. After refusing to conform to Church doctrine, he was sentenced to prison and asked to reconsider his beliefs. After a year behind bars he still refused to reconsider. Because the Venetian authorities would not consent to an execution, Pope Paul IV sent officials to extradite Pomponio to Rome. On 21 August 1555, a monk from the brotherhood of St John the Beheaded visited Pomponio in his cell urging him to repent. If he repented he would be strangled before burning. The 24-year-old student refused. One year later, on 22 August 1556, he was executed by the the civil authorities in the Piazza Navona. Maintaining his composure

⁶ An Anglo-Saxon law punishes a female slave convicted of theft by making eighty other female slaves each bring three pieces of wood and burn her to death, while each contributes a fine besides; and in mediæval England burning was the customary penalty for attempts on the life of the feudal lord. In the Customs of Arques, granted by the Abbey of St. Bertin in 1231, there is a provision that, if a thief have a concubine who is his accomplice, she is to be buried alive; though, if pregnant, a respite is given till after childbirth. Frederic II, the most enlightened prince of his time, burned captive rebels to death in his presence, and is even said to have encased them in lead in order to roast them slowly. In 1261 St. Louis humanely abolished a custom of Touraine by which the theft of a loaf of bread or a pot of wine by a servant from his master was punished by the loss of a limb. In Frisia arson committed at night was visited with burning alive; and, by the old German law, the penalty of both murder and arson was breaking on the wheel. The barbarous penalty for high treason - of hanging, drawing, and quartering - is well known, while that for petty treason was enforced no longer ago than 1726, on Catharine Hayes, who was burned at Tyburn for murdering her husband. By the laws of Christian V of Denmark, in 1683, blasphemers were beheaded after having the tongue cut out. As recently as 1706, in Hanover, a pastor named Zacharie Georg Flagge was burned alive for coining. Modern tenderness for the criminal is evidently a matter of very recent date. So careless were legislators of human suffering in general that, in England, to cut out a man's tongue, or to pluck out his eyes with malice prepense, was not made a felony until the fifteenth century, in a criminal law so severe that, even in the reign of Elizabeth, the robbing of a hawk's nest was similarly a felony; and as recently as 1833 a child of nine was sentenced to be hanged for breaking a patched pane of glass and stealing twopence worth of paint.

⁷ See George Riley Scott, *A History of Torture* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1940), 164-6; Brian Innes, *The History of Torture* (London: Blitz Editions, 1999), p. 61.

while he was boiled in oil, he stayed alive for 15 minutes before dying and becoming a Protestant martyr.⁸ "I say that the Church deviates from the truth in so far as it says that a man could do anything in any way good on his own, since nothing praiseworthy can proceed from our corrupt infected nature except to the extent that the Lord God gives us his grace... the Roman Catholic Church is a particular Church and no Christian should restrict himself to any particular Church. This Church deviates in many things from what is true." Such practices were not confined to the Latin countries. Henry VII of England, notorious for his sadism, was also a keen fan of boiling victims alive boiling was the death penalty for prisoners. This was abolished after Henry's son took the throne. In mid-17th-century Silesia, more than two thousand girls and women were cooked in the oven at Neiss during a nine-year period. Such criminal codes remind one more than ever that the period known as the Middle Ages was the product of Pagan civilization, of Germanic barbarism, and of Christianity (Benjamin Guerard). It took many centuries for the full moral implications of the Gospel to affect concepts of law and justice.

The nations thus habituated to the most savage cruelty, moreover, regarded the propagation of heresy with peculiar detestation, as not merely a sin, but as the worst of crimes. Heresy itself, said Bishop Lucas of Tuy, justifies, by comparison, the infidelity of the Jews; its pollution cleanses the filthy madness of Mahomet; its vileness renders pure even Sodom and Gomorrah. Whatever is worst in other sin becomes holy in comparison with the turpitude of heresy. Thomas Aquinas is less rhetorical but equally emphatic when his merciless logic demonstrates that the sin of heresy separates man from God more than all other sins, and therefore is the worst of sins, and is to be punished more severely. Of all kinds of infidelity, that of heresy is the worst. So sensitive did the clerical mind become on the subject that Stephen Palecz of Prague declared, in a sermon before the Council of Constance, that if a belief was Catholic in a thousand points, and false in one, the whole was heretical. The heretic, therefore, who laboured, as all earnest heretics necessarily did, to convert others to his way of thinking, was inevitably regarded as a demon, striving to win souls to share his own damnation, and none of the orthodox doubted that he was the direct and efficient instrument of Satan in his warfare with God. The intensity of the abhorrence thus awakened can only be realized by those who recognize the vividness of mediæval eschatology, the living horror which all men felt as to the possibilities of the dread hereafter.

That this view of heresy and of the duty of its suppression was not accepted at once by the mediæval Church and peoples is evident in the hesitation and vacillation which characterized the proceedings of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and this shows that the idea of solidarity in responsibility before God, while it undoubtedly had a share in exaggerating the persecuting spirit, cannot by any means wholly account for it. It stimulated the masses, who snatched the sectaries from the hands of protecting priests, but had less influence on the educated clergy. As heresies increased and grew more threatening, and milder means seemed only to aggravate the evil, the minds of earnest and enlightened men brooded over it, and, contemplating the awful possibilities of the future when the Church of God might be overthrown by the conventicles of Satan, grew inflamed, and fanaticism inevitably followed. When this point was reached, when people and pastor alike felt that the Church Militant must strike without pity if it would prevail against the legions of hell, no firm believer in the doctrine of exclusive salvation could doubt that the truest mercy lay in sweeping away the emissaries of Satan with fire and sword. God had wonderfully raised the Church to fight this battle. It had become supreme over temporal princes, and could command their implicit obedience. It had full power over the sword of the flesh, and with that power came responsibility. It was responsible not only in the present, but also for the souls of the faithful yet unborn through countless generations, and, if weakly untrue to its trust, it could not plead inability in extenuation. In view of the awful possibilities of neglected duty, what were the sufferings of a few thousand hardened wretches who, deaf to the solicitations of repentance, were hurried, but a few years before their time, to their master the Devil?

We must also bear in mind the character which Christianity had assumed in the gradual development of its theology and its consequent influence on those who guided the policy of the Church. They knew that Jesus had said "I have not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it" (Matthew 5:17). They also knew from Holy Writ that YHWH ('Jehovah') of the Old Testament was sometimes depicted as a God delighting in the extermination of his enemies. They read how Saul, the chosen

⁸. At his trial Pomponio Algerio wore his academic hat and gown to remind the tribunal that, as a student, he had the right to freely express his ideas.

King of Israel, had been divinely punished for sparing Agag of Amalek, and how the prophet Samuel had hewn him in pieces; how the wholesale slaughter of the unbelieving Canaanites had been ruthlessly commanded and enforced; how Elijah had been commended for slaying four hundred and fifty priests of Baal; and they could not therefore conceive how mercy to those who rejected the true faith could be anything but disobedience to God. Moreover, 'Jehovah' was a God who was only to be placated by the continual sacrifice of victims. The very doctrine of the Atonement assumed that the human race could only be rendered eligible for salvation by the most awful sacrifice that the human mind could conceive that of one of the members of the Trinity. The Christian worshipped a God who had subjected himself to the most painful and humiliating of sacrifices, and the salvation of souls was dependent on the daily repetition of this sacrifice in the mass, throughout Christendom. To minds moulded in such a belief, it might well seem that the extremity of punishment inflicted on the enemies of the Church of God was nothing in itself, and that it was an acceptable offering to him who had commanded that neither age nor sex should be spared in the land of Canaan.

4) Jewish-Christian Questions in the Middle Ages. Miscegenation, the Right of Choice and Innate Human Dignity

Sexual relations and intermarriage between Jews and Christians have always met with strong opposition from both Christians and Jews. As early as 329 the Emperor Constantine declared that marriage between a Jew and a Christian was a *Turpis Consortium* and was subject to capital punishment. In 338 Theodosius proclaimed that a Jew was forbidden to marry a Christian. Anyone involved in such a relationship was considered an adulterer. Civil law thus endorsed episcopal and rabbinical efforts to control marriage and the choice of marital partners. This Theodocian law was taken into the Justinian Code, and also adopted by the Visigoths and Burgundians. As late as the seventeenth century, intermarriage was considered a very serious crime. In fact, it was recorded that a young Jewish girl was burned in her home because she had had an affair with a young Gentile nobleman.⁹

The thirteenth century saw continuing Papal legislation limiting the rights of Jews; cross-marriage and even cross-contact between Jews and Christians was forbidden, with Jews living in walled-off areas. The Catholic Church led the world in creating new, innovative ways of dehumanizing the Jews, removing every possible right. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 decreed that Jews and Moslems must wear distinguishing clothing.¹⁰ The most common of this kind of clothing was the Jewish hat, which was already worn by many Jews as a self-identifying mark, but was now often made compulsory.¹¹ The Jewish badge was introduced in some places; it could be a coloured piece of cloth in the shape of a circle, strip, or the tablets of the law (in England), and was sewn onto the clothes.¹² Elsewhere special colours of robe were specified. Implementation was in the hands of local rulers but by the following century laws had been enacted covering most of Europe.

Various proclamations were made by Christian leaders against the violation of these rules against intermarriage and miscegeany. King Alphonsus stated that "If the law that provided for capital punishment of Christian adulterers, how much more for carnal intercourse of Jews with Christian women".¹³

Even so, relationships between Jews and non-Jews were still not common. The Italian-Jewish

⁹ Cecil Roth, *The Jews of the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1959), pp. 44-46.

¹⁰. *Medieval Jewish History: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Norman Roth (London: Routledge).

¹¹. Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages* (Yale UP, 1997), p. 138.

¹². Heinz Schreckenburg, *The Jews in Christian Art* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 15,

¹³. S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd ed., New York, 1952), 7:80. Mencham M. Brayer, *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature* (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1986), p. 18.

Conference in Forli in 1418 declared that sexual relations between Jews and Christians was a very serious offense. Sometimes even lynching was condoned for those caught committing the crime.

It is therefore interesting that Scribe emphasizes the ferocity of the denunciation and execution of Rachel and Eleazar. He conflates issues of illicit love, fornication/adultery, miscegenation and treason, and arrives at the terrible sentence. This could be based on records of heresy, like that of Pomponio Algerio. But it is also connected with the sentence of burning passed on Rebecca in Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), and on the image of the appalling end to the sensational career in crime of Barabas, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1592), who plummets to his death into a cauldron of boiling water. The concept, relating to both burning and boiling, is in any case an ancient folk motif.¹⁴

See Stith Thompson, *Index of Folk Motifs: Burning: as a punishment for breaking a taboo* (C 927); **the punishment of burning alive** (Q 414); **Boiling; a in pitch or oil** (S 112); **in oil as punishment** (Q 4141).

5) Later Protestantism and the Jewish Question

Since the opera is set during the Council of Constance, at which the witness of John Hus is prophetic of the actions of Martin Luther 100 hundred years later, the themes relating to this proto-Reformation figure are crucial to Scribe's scenario. Religion and freedom are seen as intertwined questions of vital consequence for the development of society and the role of the individual. Scribe's fictional construct around the core of historical actuality, in the manner of Sir Walter Scott, adds an additional and emotive factor in the Jewish dimension to the tale. Any religious issues considered in terms of the Protestant Reformation are echoed even more strongly in the perennial factors and problems concerning the Jews and their vital but uncomfortable relationship to Christianity.

The Protestant Reformation was founded on a revolutionary egalitarian belief that every individual has a direct relationship with God, and the right to choose whether to obey God's will or resist authority. Protestantism liberated God from the grip of the Church and brought the holy into the everyday world: to the home and workplace, the market and the city street. In the decades after Martin Luther made his stand, religious dissent triggered political revolution.¹⁵

Protestantism unleashed a continuing cycle of rebellion and reaction that gripped Europe and would eventually cross the Atlantic Ocean, giving rise to the American Revolution. The British historian Tristram Hunt points out that the Protestant challenge to authority would make itself felt in many other spheres as well. Protestantism exalted marriage and family life, and changed attitudes toward sexuality. It fostered a revolution in art, led to the birth of the modern novel, and ushered in a new scientific age. It helped to launch the industrial revolution, and shaped modern ideas about work and business. We live today in the world that Protestantism made.¹⁶

What is so interesting, and indeed prophetic about the story of *La Juive*, however, is the fact that while the Reformation brought an assertion of fundamental human freedom realized in terms of religion, it did not do this universally. Such freedom was still not accorded to the Jews. The history of

¹⁴. Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature : a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends. Revised and enlarged edition.* 6 vols. (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1955-1958).

¹⁵. By the early 1500s, the Catholic Church was at the height of its power. But many in Europe had grown hostile to the authority of the Papacy and sought to reform Catholicism. Among them was Martin Luther, an obscure German monk. Passionate and stubborn, Luther publicly challenged many of the doctrines and practices of the Church, not least the sale of "afterlife insurance" in the form of letters of indulgence. When he nailed his famous Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church in 1517, Luther sparked a movement whose impact would exceed his wildest expectations.

¹⁶. See William G. Naphy, *The Protestant Revolution: From Martin Luther to Martin Luther King Jr.* (London: BBC Books, 2007). A fascinating history of the Reformation and its continuing impact on the modern world.

Europe into the twentieth century was to prove that.

In the late Middle Ages and early modern period, throughout Western Europe, although in some countries later than others, the general pattern was the same. The springtime of Christian usury and the pillaging, burning and looting of Jewish property "led eventually to them becoming financially useless and being expelled by the Christian rulers. In England, France and Germany Jews were expelled as Christian commerce finally caught up with the historical Jewish experience of trade which they'd gained before Christianity shattered their communities. And from Spain and Portugal, too, where Jewish prosperity lasted longer than in the North, all Jews who refused to convert to Christianity were finally driven out in the last decade of the fifteenth century [so that] the main bulk of the European Jews had been pushed eastwards into Poland and the European provinces along the Russian border."¹⁷

Martin Luther (1483-1540), who initiated the main Protestant Reformation with the publication of his 95 theses in 1517, was also one of the most famous Christian anti-Semitic writers during this time, and in 1543 listed seven horrible, unjust and inhuman ways in which Jews should be treated, effectively stripping them of most their rights within (what were to be) Protestant territories. The impact of Martin Luther's anti-Jewish writings, the persistence of anti-Jewish ideas in Christian theology and the efforts of the Lutheran Church to fight the scourge of anti-Semitism and racism are explored in the new issue of *Interfaith Focus*, a magazine published by the Anti-Defamation League.¹⁸ "He made his famous recommendation that rebellious peasants should be 'killed like mad dogs' [and] that synagogues be burned—Jews were 'poisonous bitter worms'. [...] The Bohemian Protestants also turned on the Jews and expelled them from Prague. Indeed, most of the new sects were as intolerant as the old ones."¹⁹

Scribe was well aware of these historical factors, and of the implications for religious and political freedom elicited by the treatment of the Jews in Europe. His trip to Constance in 1826 impressed upon him the nature of the town and its special burden of history. He must have been aware of Ulrich de Reichental's *Manuscript Chronicle of the history of the Council*, from which he would have learned that the medieval Jewish community was as large as it was powerful in this old city. This factor is underscored by a miniature in the manuscript depicting the arrival of Pope Martin V at the Council of Constance in 1417. It shows the Jewish community coming to him in great state to present him with a book of the Law. The Holy Father received the Jews kindly, and prayed that God would open their eyes and bring them back into the bosom of the Church. (The popes on the whole showed great charity to the Jews.)²⁰

So it is interesting to see how Scribe in his scenario invented a story that conflated the particular critical reforming stance of John Hus with the wider general implications of the treatment of the Jews in the late Middle Ages. For him, the issues had a vital relevance that had resonated powerfully and urgently down through the centuries.

For Scribe the position of true civil freedom in the France of the 1830s, heir to both revolution and reformation, restoration and reaction, was highlighted by issues of religion, both Christianity and Judaism. For all the progress towards freedom and genuine liberty of conscience, the nation would still have to live through the Dreyfuss Affair and the Nazi collaboration of Vichy France, where no one objected to the anti-Semitic legislation of Marseilles, the *Statut des Juifs* (1940-41).²¹

¹⁷. McCall, Andrew, *The Medieval Underworld* (1979) (London: Sutton Publishing, 2004), pp. 283-4.

¹⁸. Anti-Defamation League (New York, 20 April, 1999 or 2000).

¹⁹. Oliver Thomson, *A History of Sin* (Edinburgh: Canongate Press, 1993), p. 161

²⁰. Paul Lacroix and Sir Robert Naunton, *Manners, Custom And Dress During The Middle Ages And During The Renaissance Period* (London: Kessinger Publishing Co., 2004), p. 294.

²¹..After the defeat of France, the Vichy government promulgated antisemitic legislation, including the "Statut des Juifs" (Law of the Jews) passed in two parts in October 1940 and June 1941. This comprehensive statute excluded Jews from public life; required their dismissal from positions in the civil service, the army, commerce,

The Council of Constance is therefore the determining semiotic principal of the scenario of *La Juive*, on a religious, social and symbolic level. Although remaining in the background, the presence of the Council, the issues at stake in its deliberations, and their implications for the individual, are pervasive. So by implication, therefore, is the figure of the proto-Reformer John Hus.

*Eh! Ne savez-vous pas qu'aujourd'hui
Sigismund arrive dans Constance
Pour ouvrir un concile où princes et prélats
Vont de la chrétienté les débats,
Décerner la tiare, éteindre l'hérésie,
Et du fougueux Jean Hus juger le dogme impie?*

[Do you not know that today
Sigismund is arriving in Constance
To open a council at which princes and prelates
Will move to end the disputes of Christendom,
Crown a new pope, exterminate heresy, and judge
The impious doctrine of the firebrand John Hus?]

II. The Operatic Scenario

Faith, Religion, Dissent and Retribution in *La Juive*.

The action of the opera takes place against a backdrop of the interplay of public ceremony and private ritual, both arenas consistently underpinned by a subtext of sacramental reference. The major theme of the relationship between the Old and New Covenants is exemplified in the figures of Eleazar and Cardinal Brogni, and the tragedy that results from the choices they make under the influence of their cultural and religious imperatives.

The first section of this second part of the paper examines the interplay of ceremony and ritual in the opera, the second the sacramental subtext, and the third the clash between the Old and New Covenants, in particular as personified in the relationship between Eleazar and Brogni.

The principal way in which the main themes are unfolded—and enmeshed in the central register of concerns and the imagery generated from them—is thus through a subtle presentation of both the Old and New Covenants of faith. This presentation is contextualized within depictions of symbolically crucial events.

1) Ceremony and Ritual

Act 1 Public Ceremony

The opera is dominated by depiction of great colourful and sublime events. Act 1 begins and ends with the great *Te Deum*, a public act of Christian worship and thanksgiving. It moves from Church to the city square, from the religious to the secular spheres, which are nonetheless intimately related.

*Hosanna, plaisir, ivresse,
Gloire a l'Éternel!...
Et que nos chants d'allégresse
Retentissent jusqu'au ciel!*

[Hosanna, pleasure, delight,
Glory to the Eternal God!...]

and industry; and barred them from participation in the professions (including medicine, law, and teaching).

Let our songs of joy
Resound to heaven above!]

The irony of the situation is that the anti-Semitic crowd use a the Hebrew word of joyful praise (“Hosanna!”) to express their worship and joy. This is the way the crowd greeted Jesus on Palm Sunday as he entered Jerusalem. So the irony of the relationship between Jew and Christian is cryptically averred to from the very beginning. In the centre of the act is the public celebration, a revelry of dancing and drinking that turns into a frightening demonstration of demagoguery, prejudice and crowd justice. At the end is the glittering procession marking the entry of the Emperor Sigismund, and the symbols of the power and pomp of the Council, the Church and the State working in powerful unison.

In between these manifestations of worship and celebration, personal relations are explored: the relationship between the father and daughter, Rachel and Eleazar, in the wider context of interaction between Jews and the Christians, and at the heart of the act the illicit association between Rachel and Leopold. The love between father and daughter is balanced by the loving-kindness of the intervention of the President of the Council, and his action of clemency and attempted reconciliation.

Act 2 Private Ritual

The secret celebration of the rituals of Passover opens act 2, a private counterpart to the great Christian prayer of public rejoicing in act 1. The action moves to the entry of the generous Princess Eudoxie who wants to buy a gift for her betrothed. The meeting of Rachel and Leopold, and then the trio with Eleazar examines the nature of love and commitment in terms of choice and religion. What should be the celebration of betrothal (and by implication matrimony), becomes a failed sacramental opportunity determined by deception and betrayal.

Act 3 Public Ceremony

The public Court celebrations of the nuptials of Leopold and Eudoxie are destroyed by the irruption of secret betrayal and miscegenation. They are succeeded by the frightening public face of inexorable law as the Cardinal pronounces his Malediction and condemns the guilty.

Act 4 Private Rituals

The act is devoted to enclosed and secret moments of colloquy, interview and reflection, as three attempts at intercession and reconciliation, in the atmosphere of sacramental confession, take place. All of them are doomed by personal intransigence, the recall of past injustice, and the demonstration of crowd hatred.

Act 5 Public Ceremony

The crowd celebrate the holiday and anticipation of public execution in the first part. The second is dominated by the obsequies of death and the ghastly ceremony of execution. Reconciliation and forgiveness are eschewed, submerged and swept away in the maelstrom of violent punitive death.

2) The Sacramental Reference

A substratum of sacramental reference underlies this interplay of public ceremony and private ritual.

Act 1

The ceremonies of the Church and celebrations of the Catholic populace cast into relief the representatives of the Jewish people with their precarious relationship to the Christian world. Seeing Eleazar and Rachel on the steps of the church, the provost seizes the opportunity to further his

persecution, ironically turning the place of universal welcome and refuge into a terrifying place of heresy and denunciation (“What blasphemous audacity! A Jew seeking refuge at the portals of the Church!”). The crowd wish to dunk them in Lake Constance in a parody of the Sacrament of Baptism. Seizing on a travesty of Jesus driving out the money-lenders from the Temple, the mayor and people embody the attitude of unthinking instinctive hatred and rejection, based on the caricature of the greedy money-grabbing Jew:

*Suivez l'exemple
Du Dieu saint qui chassa
Tous les vendeurs du temple!
Au lac, oui, nous plongeons dans le lac
Cette race rebelle et criminelle!*

[Follow the example
of our holy Lord who drove
The money-changers from the Temple!
To the lake, yes, let's throw
This rebellious and criminal race into the lake!]

Very quickly the desire to humiliate and punish is ratched up into a murderous intention, and even a desire for extirpation—the age-old desire, from Haman the Persian in the Book of Esther to Hitler the Nazi in the twentieth century, to accomplish the extermination of the Jews.

*Que de cette race
Le nom détesté
S'efface et périsse,
Il faut leur supplice
Au ciel irrité!
Au lac, oui, plongeons dans le lac!*

May the detested name
of this tribe
Be expunged and perish!
They must be punished
for insulting Heaven!
To the lake, yes, throw them into the lake!]

The Cardinal's gracious intervention in saving them is redolent of the Sacrament of Reconciliation: as minister of the Sacrament of Ordination, and private man, he tries to loosen the bonds of hatred and prejudice. He is able to overlook Eleazar's crude rejection of peace in the strength of his ministry.

BROGNI: Je suis son serviteur, son ministre et son prêtre!

ELEAZAR: Pour nous persécuter!

*BROGNI: Pour vous sauver peut-être!
Et cependant je lui fais grâce entière!
Sois libre Éléazar; soyons amis, mon frère,
Et si je t'offensai, pardonne-moi!*

ELEAZAR: Jamais!

*BROGNI:
Si la rigueur et la vengeance
Leur font haïr ta sainte loi,
Que le pardon, que la clémence,
Mon Dieu, mon Dieu,*

Les ramène en ce jour vers toi!

[BROGNI: I am His servant, His minister and His priest!

ELEAZAR: To persecute us!

BROGNI: Perhaps to save you!
And yet I grant him full pardon!
You are free, Eleazar; let us be friends, my brother,
And if I have offended you, forgive me!

ELEAZAR: Never!

BROGNI:
If harshness and vengeance
Make them hate Thy holy law,
Let forgiveness and clemency,
My God, my God,
Restore them to Thee on this day!]

His words and actions have a palpable effect of pacifying and consoling, as Rachel finds to her surprise.

*Tant de bonté, tant de clémence
Désarmement mon coeur malgré moi,
Et les chrétiens et leur croyance
Ne m'inspirent plus tant d'effroi!
Dieu! Dieu! Quelle clémence!
Son bonté vient calmer mon effroi!*

[So much kindness and compassion
Soothe my heart in spite of myself,
And these Christians and their beliefs
No longer frighten me so much!
God, O God such clemency!
His voice begins to calm my fear!]

It is a moment of grace and peace, of beauty and benediction, a call to unity and peace.

Act 2

The depiction of the Seder Supper conjures up the majesty of the Old Covenant, in its core celebration of redemption from slavery and its re-consecration to the covenants of Abraham and Moses. This is the supreme moment of perfect peace and beauty in the opera. The simple prelude establishes a sense of remoteness and far-off times. It carries a weight of sadness and melancholy, of a despised people, who are striving in hostile circumstances to remain faithful to their God, capturing the alienation of a culture despised by others. There is an intensity of religious devotion without the employment of commonplace piety of expression.

*O Dieu, Dieu de nos pères, parmi nous descends!
O Dieu, cache nos mystères à l'oeil des méchants!
Toi qui nos éclaires, parmi nous descends!*

[O God, God of our fathers, descend among us!
O God, conceal our mysteries from the eyes of the wicked!
O Thou who enlighten us, descend among us!]

Eleazar reaffirms the covenant, its election and its promises, the central saving concept of Judaism. He blesses and distributes the unleavened bread, the symbol of covenantal purity untainted by the yeast, symbol of earthliness, malice and corruption:²²

*Et vous tous, enfants de Moïse,
Gage de l'alliance à nos aïeux promise,
Partagez-vous ce pain par mes mains consacré
Et qu'un levain impur n'a jamais altéré.*

[And all of you children of Moses,
Token of the covenant made with our forefathers,
Partake of this bread blessed by my hands
And untainted with unclean leaven.]

The ceremony is given greater symbolic power in the tacit understanding that this is the origin of the central Christian act of worship, the Eucharist. It is, like the Cardinal's prayer in act 1, a call to unity and peace. The point is underlined by Samuel's secret and sacrilegious rejection of the blessed bread, the forerunner of the consecrated Host. Leopold's presence at the Passover is an act of deception, like his behaviour towards Rachel. In his selfish passion, he is prepared to violate any sanctity, any prohibition. His rejection of the blessed bread is a violation of communion, trust and peace, and in these actions he becomes another Judas, a traitor at the sacred meal at the table of the Loved One.

*Si trahison ou perfidie
Osait se glisser parmi nous,
Sur le parjure ou sur l'impie,
Grand Dieu, que tombe ton courroux!...*

[If treason or treachery
Has dared to steal among us,
Let thy wrath, great God,
Fall upon the perjurer or unbeliever!]

The cruel dramatic irony is that this terrible ritual curse will ricochet back on the suppliant himself, and not on the traitor. Scribe uses the transferred symbolism of the Last Supper in a magnificent symbolic correlative that underscores the spiritual and social implications of both Passover and Eucharist. He brilliantly links them together in a way which identifies their historical kinship and sacramental significance. Eleazar's presiding at the ceremony is furthermore a variation on the Sacrament of Ordination, already considered in the Cardinal's actions in act 1. Here, Eleazar, as head of his house, fulfils the Law of Moses in his fatherly role, the priesthood of all believers rather than the ordained ministry. This issue would become crucial in the Reformation, and was also an aspect of John Hus's critique of current ecclesial practice which denied the chalice to the laity, as if excluding them from full participation at the Table of the Lord.

Eleazar also brings the age-old plight and suffering of the Jewish people to God in his prayer:

*Dieu, que ma voix tremblante
S'élève jusqu'aux cieus,*

²² Leaven was not to be used at the Passover (Exodus 12:15; 13:7). This is an indication of the conservative ritualism that dominated Ancient Israelite society, preserving as it did the racial memories of a nomadic race who were accustomed to feast on unleavened bread. The exclusion also implied an anagogical interpretation of fermentation: in a measure this suggested corruption of the dough which could therefore not be offered to an incorruptible God. Jesus used this very image to suggest the intransigent and harmful effects of Pharisaical legalistic interpretation of the Law (Matthew 13:33; 16:3; Luke 13:21). Paul also refers to this concept in his letters (1 Corinthians 5:6). Jewish tradition continued to use the metaphor in discussing the significance of the "Exodus" according to the Kabbala: see the Zohar II, 61B and Zohar II, 183A,B (courtesy of Prof. David Faiman, Sede Boquer, Israel).

*Étends ta main puissante
 Sur ses fils malheureux.
 Tout un peuple succombe,
 Et Sion dans la tombe,
 Implorant ta bonté
 Vers toi s'élève et crie
 Et demande la vie
 À son père irrité.*

[O God, may my faltering voice
 Rise up to thee on high;
 Stretch out thy mighty hand
 To thy suffering children.
 A whole nation is perishing,
 And Zion from its tomb,
 Imploring thy benevolence,
 Rises up and cries out
 and begs for life
 From its angry Father!]

This is the language of exile, sorrow and loss, of servitude and suffering, the submerged analogy being the Israelites enslaved in Egypt, or the people of Judah deported to Babylon, the holy city of Zion having been reduced to ruins.²³ This powerful imagery is crucial to the fundamental Jewish register in the symbolic landscape of the scenario, one that becomes ever more oppressively tighter and constricting as the opera progresses, until martyrdom must be embraced (act 4), and the ancient burden of suffering revisited and the age-old debts to the “Père irrité” repaid in death (act 5). The end of this first part of act 2, before the explosive revelation of Samuel’s treachery, is marked by another orchestral piece, a postlude in which a simple woodwind melody is passed from one instrument to the other in a variation on a wistful theme of great longing and sadness, that speaks to the heart as a correlative of the age-old burden of sorrow carried by God’s Chosen People. With the prelude, it frames an inclusion around this most special part of the opera and its evocation of a lost world, filled with tragic historical and religious intuitions.

This burden of sorrowful premonition is carried across into Rachel’s anxious soliloquy, with its portentous horns. The second part of the act is tacitly dominated by the Sacrament of Marriage and its defilement by the deception of Leopold, the reckless love of Rachel, and fury of Eleazar. Leopold’s treachery involves the dishonour of Rachel’s womanhood, the besmirching of her love, the flouting of the laws of society. Rachel sees the matter clearly.

*Mais ta loi nous condamne
 Et défend que je vive;
 La juive amante d'un chrétien,
 Le chrétien amant d'une juive,
 Sont livrés à la mort, le sais-tu bien?*

[But your law condemns us
 And forbids that I should live;
 A Jewess in love with a Christian,

²³. The Seder Supper has a Biblical quotation with bearing on the Scribe/Halévy ceremony in *La Juive*. At a certain place in the ceremony, Jews, recalling thousands of years of persecution, recite Jeremiah 10:25 (or its parallel in Psalms 79). Many people who do not realize that it is a Biblical quotation, and consequently do not know that the context is ‘Why do You always single us out!’ feel uncomfortable about reciting these words: “Pour out thy wrath upon the nations that know you not, and upon the peoples that call not on your name; for they have devoured Jacob; they have consumed him, and laid waste his habitations”. Scribe’s reference to the “Père irrité” relates particularly to the psalm: “How long, O Lord? Will you be angry for ever? Will your jealous wrath burn like fire? Pour out your anger on the nations that so not know you, and on the kingdoms that do not call on your name! For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation” (Psalm, 79:6-7).

A Christian in love with a Jewess
Are put to death, you surely know that?]

For Leopold it is a matter of realizing his passion. In the process he violates the Christian Sacrament of Marriage, and abuses the Jewish hospitality and faith he has dishonoured. For Eleazar, marriage could at least make some restitution for Leopold's treachery, and be a source of forgiveness.

*...que le Ciel en courroux
Comme moi te pardonne et qu'il soit ton époux!*

[...may wrathful Heaven
Pardon you as I have and let him be your husband!]

The depth of Leopold's duplicity and desecrating behaviour is revealed in his rejection of any such idea:

*Mais cet hymen
Vois-tu, c'est un crime, un blasphème,
Ne m'interroge pas, je dois fuir, je le dois!*

[But this marriage,
You understand, is a crime, a blasphemy;
Do not ask me more, I must flee, I must!]

Eleazar's role changes from loving father and ministering head of the synagogue to a lofty, formal intransigent upholder of righteousness and law. His earlier prayers of blessing are changed into ferocious denunciation and anathema.

*Chrétien sacrilège,
Que l'enfer protège,
Je connais tes projets!
Désespoir! Anathème!
Que Dieu qu'il blasphème
Le maudisse à jamais!
Fuis de ces lieux pour jamais!*

[Sacrilegious Christian
Whom hell protects,
I see through your schemes!
Despair! Anathema!
May God whom he blasphemes
Damn him forever!
Begone from this place forever!]

Act 3

The parody of marriage continues in the ruination of Eudoxie's nuptial feast by Rachel's impassioned and reckless denunciation of Leopold and her own self-accusation.

*Le plus épouvantable,
Celui que votre loi punit par le trépas!
Chrétien, il eut commerce avec une maudite,
Une juive, une Israélite...
Et cette juive, sa complice,
Qui comme lui mérite le supplice,
C'est moi, c'est moi!*

[The most heinous,
Which your law punishes with death!
A Christian, he had relations with a woman accursed,
A Jewess, an Israelite...
And that Jewess, his guilty partner,
Who like him deserves execution,
Is I, is I!]

When the Cardinal intervenes this time, it is in the very different public persona of his ordained office, and as custodian of the laws of the land and the Church. The kindness of act 1 is swept aside in the terror of crime and punishment, anathema and retribution. He echoes here the formal rage and condemnation of his elevated office as President of the Council. The blessings of act 1 are now turned into curses.

*Vous qui du Dieu vivant outragez la puissance,
Soyez maudits!
Vous que tous trois unit une horrible alliance,
oyez maudits!
Anathème Anathème!
C'est l'Éternel lui-même
Qui vous a par ma voix rejetés et procris!*

[You who outrage the power of the Living God,
A curse be upon you!
You three, who are united in an unholy alliance,
A curse upon you!
Anathema! Anathema!
It is Eternal God Himself
Who through my voice has rejected and condemned you!]

Act 4

The various encounters, interviews and soliloquies are modelled on the actions and intentions of the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Euxodie pleads with Rachel, as does the Cardinal.

*Ah! que ma voix plaintive
Fléchisse votre coeur!
Ô vous, mon ennemie,
Accordez-mois sa vie
Et prenez mon bonheur!*

[Ah, let my plaintive voice
Move your heart to pity!
O you, my enemy,
Grant me his life
And take all my happiness!]

Rachel's action in taking all the blame on herself in order to save Leopold from death is of the high order of self-offering, the supreme sacrifice of self for love, a theme dear to Scribe's heart. Rachel's assertion to the Cardinal is a sublime statement of her visionary perspective:

BROGNI: Vous n'avez donc plus d'espérance?

RACHEL: Il m'en reste une encor: le sauveur et mourir!

[BROGNI: Have you no other hope?

RACHEL: I have but one: to save him and then die!]

The Cardinal also beseeches Eleazar's help. The latter 'confesses' events from the past to Brogni, but all in a futile exercise, since no sacramental breakthrough is possible because of Eleazar's hatred and desire for vengeance.

*Mais je veux avant tout,
Et sur quelque chrétien, me venger,
Et ce sera sur toi!*

[But first I want to avenge myself
on a certain Christian...
And that is you!]

The Cardinal continues to show commitment to possible reconciliation and to saving the lives of both father and daughter. Of course, this would mean conversion to Christianity, something unacceptable to Eleazar, his vision of faith disfigured by the cruelty of the adherents to the supposed religion of love.

*L'ai-je bien entendu?
Que me proposes-tu?
Renier la foi de mes pères?
Vers des idoles étrangères
Couber mon front et l'avilir?
Non, jamais, plutôt mourir!*

[Did I hear rightly?
What you are asking me to do?
Renounce the faith of my fathers!
Bow my head to strange idols,
And, in so doing, dishonour it?
No, never, I would sooner die!]

The irony is that all Christian belief springs from its Jewish roots. Far from worshipping alien idols or another God, Christians revere the same Lord, "the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of all mercies and God of all comfort" (as St Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 1:3). His followers do not evince the mercy and comfort he embodies and promises, however. So both Jews and Christians are depicted in a way which suggests the benighted human condition, the contingency and limited apprehension of our understanding of even the greatest mysteries of revelation. These things take centuries of development and growth in understanding to comprehend properly. To kill each other over ideas that are only partly formed and understood is therefore folly of the highest order. It will require Valentine in *Les Huguenots* for Scribe to make this point clear. Hatred, prejudice, torture and persecution are all essentially futile, and dishonour the image and likeness of God to be found in every single human being as integral to the theology of creation (Genesis 1:26).

In the meantime the ideal of martyrdom seems all-consuming. For Eleazar God's apparent abandonment of his people is nonetheless strengthened in historical memory of a glorious past where suffering has been consecrated in a truth greater than life itself. This is the path of martyrdom.

*Si de leurs fronts vainqueurs les palmes sont tombées,
Dieu qui dans les combats guidait les Machabées
Rendra bientôt ses fils libres et triomphants!*

[The palms may have fallen from their victorious brows,
But God who led the Maccabees into battle
Will soon make his sons free and triumphant!]

Issues of conviction and righteousness (Rachel), intransigence and vengeance (Eleazar) work against any reconciliation. All these matters are crystallized in Eleazar's crucial soliloquy at the highpoint of the act: it captures the dilemma generated by the demands of faith and humanity, and re-

emphasizes eventually a vision of martyrdom as the solution. His love for Rachel is incontrovertible, her adopted status notwithstanding. Scribe's words in their potent compression and powerful metonyms, the tension between *berceau* and *bourreaux*, achieve a high poetic order.

*Rachel, quand du Seigneur la grâce tutélaire
A mes tremblantes mains confia ton berceau,
J'avais à ton bonheur voué ma vie entière,
Et c'est moi qui te livre au bourreaux!*

[Rachel, when the Lord's protecting mercy
Entrusted your cradle to my trembling hands,
I dedicated my entire life to your happiness.
And now, it is I who deliver you to the executioners!]

But the blind hatred of the crowd impresses upon him a higher calling, a nobler witness. Martyrdom is the ultimate form of witness, and this can in fact be seen as a variation on the Sacrament of Confirmation, whereby through the gift of the Holy Spirit the individual is imbued with the courage and strength to witness to the fullness of faith and the demands of the Kingdom.

*Dieu m'éclaire,
Fille chère,
Pres d'un père
Viens mourir.
Et pardonne
Quand il donne
La couronne
Du martyr!*

[God enlightens me,
Dearest daughter.
Come to me
Beside your father
And forgive him
When he gives you
The crown
Of martyrdom!]

Act 5

This act sees the ceremonies and rituals of the earlier acts turned on their heads. Celebration of the victories of orthodoxy and faith become demonstrations of prejudice and bloodlust; the holy rituals of salvation are transformed into the ghastly rites of torture and execution, finding their supreme irony and almost blasphemous transmogrification in the mode of execution: boiling in oil, which in both immersion and chrismation become a parody of the Sacrament of Baptism. The disjunction of trite celebration with gruesome torture presents the saddest of paradoxes, given a searing overtone of the sacrilegious to the sacramental subtext.

*Quel plaisir! Quelle joie!
Ce spectacle nous enchante!
Des juifs nous serons donc vengés!
On dit que dans l'onde bouillante
Vivants tous plongés!*

[What pleasure, what joy!
This entertainment is delightful!
We will have revenge on those Jews!
It is rumoured they will all

Be plunged alive into boiling oil!]

It is left to Rachel to make the final existential decision, flawed as this is by her ignorance of her birth. Her decision is nonetheless filled with a radiant idealism of faith.

ELEAZAR:

*Ils veulent sur ton front
Verser l'eau du baptême.
Le veux-tu, mon enfant?*

RACHEL:

*Qui? moi? chrétienne? moi?
La flamme étincelle, venez!*

BOTH:

*C'est le Ciel qui m'inspire,
Je choisis le trépas!
Oui, courons au martyre,
Dieu nous ouvre ses bras!*

[*ELEAZAR:*

They want to pour
Baptismal water on your brow.
Do you want that my child?

RACHEL:

Who? I? A Christian? I?
The flame is burning brightly! Come!

BOTH:

It is Heaven that inspires me,
I choose death!
Yes, let us hasten to martyrdom,
God is opening his arms to us!]

3) The Clash of the Old and New Covenants Selfhood and Faith, Identity and Allegiance

There is polarity established between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, each embodied by Eleazar and Cardinal Brogni respectively. This is not, however, a situation loaded in favour of one or another. Both are tempered by the detail and realism of characterization, partially determined by crucial elements of a shared past and factors concealed in the present that emerge only in course of narration. This might be considered a flaw in the total effectiveness of the dramaturgy, but these elements in fact are derived not so much from coincidence and narrative opportunism as from the utilization of archetypal folk-motifs as structural devices.

Rachel: resolution and independence

The motif of the foundling either lost or abducted in infancy brought up as the child of the enemy or opposition is the principal one of these. This child then becomes the unwitting instrument of vengeance or of glorious restitution. It is germane to *Oedipus Rex* (400 B.C.) (where a son ends up marrying his mother), and recurs regularly in literature like Miguel Cervantes' *Gitanella* (1605). It was later central to the plot structures of Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) and Verdi's *Il Trovatore* (1853). The new dimension Scribe brings to bear is the mimesis of the characterizations of those involved in the determinism of the folk motif. Rachel is really the daughter of Brogni from his early secular days, and Eleazar is both the victim of the former magistrate and then saviour and tacit executioner of his child. Brogni is the victim of circumstance and of his own achievement.

La Juive focuses on questions of universal import: faith, organised religion, politics, culture

and race. But the plot also turns on the question of identity in the personal romantic relationship at the heart of the opera which is the mainspring or catalyst for the unfolding of the tragic events that lead to the final denouement. There are ambiguities surrounding the identity of both of the people in this relationship. The problems are somewhat different, though; Rachel thinks she knows who she is, although in fact she does not, and she acts with complete honesty and openness towards Leopold/Samuel; he on the other hand, knows who he is but deliberately deceives Rachel as to that fact. This raises questions about the nature of love and personal identity, and to what extent love is genuine when it depends on an identification of interests, be they religious, ethnic or ideological.

Rachel believes she loves Samuel, and gives herself to him. In act 1 she says she cannot but love Samuel because 'we follow the same creed, the same God blesses us both'. This raises the question of whether she would have committed herself so thoroughly to him had she not believed he was Jewish—and therefore free to marry her. But he has deliberately misled her as to his identity, and is not only not free to marry her, but their association is punishable. He claims to love her, but through deception leads her into a highly dangerous situation. When the truth is revealed to Rachel in Act 2, her reaction is that she has offended against God; yet despite the fact that he has deceived her as to his identity she still loves him and is willing to marry him. Her love, therefore, does not rest on the religious and ethnic identity of Samuel, as she earlier seemed to suggest; she rallies from the enormous shock, forgives him and is prepared to marry him. Interestingly, Eleazar eventually agrees to the marriage, saying that Rachel has been inspired by God in this, suggesting that his later readiness to sacrifice Rachel may be driven more by vengeance than by considerations of religion. Rachel herself goes to her death with one hope - 'to save him and die'. Her love for Samuel/Leopold is authentic and survives the shocks of the revelation of his real identity and his deception. She loves the person he is, regardless of his creed or racial affiliation.

However, although Rachel thinks she knows she is a Jewess, Eleazar knows she was born a Christian. Eleazar loves Rachel as his daughter, but he allows her to go to a horrific death. He gives her the opportunity to be baptised and save herself, but does not reveal to her the truth that she was not born a Jew. Rachel believes that, as a Jew, in being baptised she would be betraying her faith, her people, her heritage, her God: 'let us hurry to our martyrdom, God opens his arms!'. Would she have made the same choice to die had she known she was born a Christian? Eleazar, it appears, sacrifices Rachel, whom he loves, by not telling her the truth about her identity. He also uses her death to wreak vengeance on Brogni; he admits to himself that: 'to avenge myself it is you I am sacrificing to my fury!' Yet he does undergo agonies of indecision, and his reiterated plea 'Appalling doubt, should I leave her on earth, and deprive heaven of her?' suggests another possibility; that Eleazar believes that in saving her life by encouraging her to be baptised he might be depriving her of eternal life, that as a Christian she would never enter heaven. Eleazar believes firmly that 'the stake will lead us to heaven'. However, in concealing Rachel's true identity from her to the last, even when it would save her, and revealing it only to Brogni, to inflict a dreadful revenge on him, Eleazar appears to be using Rachel's identity as a tool for his own purposes despite his love for her.

Rachel is the victim in the middle of this symbolic realignment of natural and spiritual fatherhood. She exercises a strong degree of personal independence in all her decisions, and the conundrum of the story remains of what she would do if she knew the truth. Would she choose to become Christian and embrace Brogni? Or would she still persist in rejecting the invitations made by both fathers to save her life by becoming a Christian? She and Brogni feel a strange sympathy, not to say an affinity, at their private meeting. It was the same in act 1 at the Cardinal's gesture of pardon.

*Quelle est donc cette voix secrète
Qui dans mon coeur s'élève et la défend?*

What then is this mysterious voice
That touches my heart and defends her?

The basic situation is an ancient folk motif. Her devotion to Eleazar as her supposed father, and indeed their mutual family love, gives its overriding strength and power to the scenario. Their shared anxiety and support of each other in act 1 is of sublime beauty, as is Eleazar's anguished grief in his great act 4 soliloquy when he contemplates how his actions affect Rachel's fate. But Rachel is intransigent in her forceful decisions to conduct a full and illicit liaison with Samuel/Leopold, her fearlessness in exposing him regardless of the cost to herself and her father, and her resoluteness in the closing moments to choose death rather than conversion. In this she is like Rebecca in Scott's *Ivanhoe* who,

in her unswerving love for Ivanhoe, is certainly a model for Rachel's characterization.

See Stith Thompson, *Index of Folk Motifs*: **child mystically recognizes parent** (H 175.2).

Interlocking triangles: Eudoxia, Leopold and Eleazar—Eleazar, Leopold and Rachel— Rachel, Leopold and Eudoxia

Apart from his secret words to his officer in act 1 (and the subsequent intervention of the soldiers to protect Rachel), all Leopold's appearances are connected with his false identity and his deceptions. At the heart of act 1 and act 2 are his love music for Rachel—his high-lying, almost hysterical, serenade and *duettino* with Rachel, and followed by the love duet with her. The latter is also characterized by high-flown *tessitura* and beguiling lyricism, alongside with a forceful urgency as he presses forward from seduction to abduction. He reveals something of his deceit (the truth about his religion), but nothing of his true intentions (to keep Rachel as his mistress), or his true identity (as prince).

The two big trios that dominate act 2 are the occasions for extended lyrical consideration of the various types and crises of identity. In the first (Eudoxia-Eleazar-Leopold), Leopold is literally in double hiding, concealed from his real fiancée, and pretending to be Samuel with Eleazar. Likewise, Eleazar conceals his contempt and hatred, defrauding the Christians he is supposed to be serving. The only sincere expression comes from Eudoxia in her beautiful love music for her fiancé and would-be-husband whom she seeks to honour though generous acts of love (such as choosing his costly gift). The Princess's beautiful line is the only truthful utterance in the trio, given a tragic irony by Leopold's repetition of it. He expresses regret but has no intention of giving up Rachel and so ending his betrayal of Eudoxia.

The second trio (Eleazar-Rachel-Leopold) is at the nub of the exploration of identity, as Eleazar comes upon the lovers about to flee. Rachel who loves Samuel/Leopold now knows about his real religion, but is still ignorant of his full identity. But Eleazar is also concealing from Rachel the older and deeper truth about her real origins. So there is both a surface and deep notion of deception at work in this confrontation as the lovers attempt to flee, in which Rachel remains deceived at differing levels by Eleazar and Leopold. She is the person most completely deceived in this cruel play of identity, ironies and lies—a Chinese box of deceptions. Eleazar is just as much caught up in false identity as Leopold, in fact at a much profounder level. His act 4 soliloquy is full of anguished love for Rachel, but this love is tempered by his religious convictions. These will ensure that he sustains the lie of Rachel's true origins until the end. The force of his dilemma and the genuine crisis of love and loyalty (to both Rachel as a person and Judaism as the path to salvation) generates the power of characterization both in the act 2 trio and the act 4 *scena*.

In both trios the female character is the innocent and deceived party in a layered sequence of hidden identity and duplicitous motivation. Eudoxia is cheated by Eleazar while both goldsmith and princess are deceived by Samuel/Leopold. Later, Rachel is also the immediate victim of Leopold's duplicity, but also more profoundly of her supposed father who keeps the truth of her origins from her.

Eudoxia and Rachel share experience of betrayal at differing levels, and form a kinship of sopranos. They are held in a dramaturgical tension as the chief victims of deception, and become representatives of pure love and untarnished emotion. Their two duets (in acts 3 and 4) become expressions of a community of interest based on genuine love for the same man, and manifestations of deflected friendship. The act 4 duet in particular, with its plangent melodies and melancholic intimations, becomes an expression of belief in purity of action, a gesture of selflessness (in Eudoxia's approaching her rival) and prodigal generosity (in Rachel's enduring love for her betrayer and taking the blame on herself to save his life).

Leopold: failed heroism and the vortex of passion

The question of real heroism is explored in the unusual double-tenor casting of both *La Muette de Portici* and *La Juive*. Both the fisherman Masaniello and goldsmith Eleazar stand out in the nobility of their sacrificial family love, public heroism and strength of character, against the scheming seductions and deceptions of the compromised noblemen Alphonse and Leopold, who use love and manipulation of identity for their own selfish and ultimately destructive purposes. The fallibility of both Masaniello and Eleazar strengthens their projection and adds a depth of human resonance to their characterizations.

Leopold thus emerges in the most unsympathetic light, as the hero who betrays heroism, chivalry, faith and love (and social expectation) in the pursuit of his illicit passion. He, the conquering warrior, does not hesitate to seduce, using imposture and blasphemous pretence to secure his ends. This is another important aspect of Scribe's assimilation of the Romantic literary heritage: the appropriation of the so-called 'Waverley' hero. This type was established by Sir Walter Scott in his great cycle of historical novels (1814-31), where the central protagonist of all the stories is a very ordinary young man, a passive, approachable figure, down to earth, a sentimental hero in chivalrous dress. He often suffers exclusion or rejection, and may come across as misguided or weak. But this passivity is not simply insipidity. For Scott this kind of hero becomes the central experiencing consciousness, committed to prudence and the superiority of civil society.²⁴ Many important roles in Scribe's stories are modelled on this type of figure, where his weakness or lack of resolution are used by Scribe to highlight major social or political issues, brought into focus by the love interest and the courageous, committed and loving women characters. Many of the tenor heroes are depicted in this way, often in the context of a tripartite relationship with a powerful mentor or even frightening villain figure who is a source of disruption, and a noble and self-sacrificing heroine who sees the way forward very clearly. In this instance, like Alphonse in *La Muette di Portici*, Leopold's weakness and vacillation are reprehensible. He is saved only by Rachel's extraordinary vision of unconditional love, and like Vasco da Gama in *L'Africaine*, peters out ignominiously before the action is ended.²⁵

See Stith Thompson, *Index of Folk Motifs: seduction by disguise or substitution* (K 1310); *seduction by imposter* (K 1315); *seduction by posing as a saint* (K 1315.6.4).

Brogni: grace, law and fate

Brogni emerges from all this as duped and deceived. He is far from being a two-dimensional character. He was seventy-two years of age at the opening of the Council of Constance, and, although his habits were simple and modest, the greatness of his train and the number of his attendants give an idea of the luxury and magnificence with which the prelates and cardinals lived in that age. "Jean de Brogni," says the historian Reichental, an ocular witness, "repaired to the council in a rich equipage, with an escort of eighty-three mounted attendants. He constantly presided over that illustrious assembly during the vacancy of the Holy See, and evinced the greatest zeal for the extinction of the schism and of heresy."

The biography of the historical figure is filled with folk motifs of incredible discovery in poverty and obscurity, and a rags-to-riches advancement. Cardinal de Brogni (Jean Allarmet) rose from the lowest condition to the highest rank of human greatness. He was born in 1342, of a family of poor peasants, in the village of Brogni, near Annecy, on the road to Geneva, and was a swineherd in his boyhood. He was guarding his pigs one day, when some monks, who were going to Geneva, asked him the way. Struck with his animated and intelligent physiognomy, they proposed to him to follow them, and they would give him the means of studying. The boy accepted the proposal, and ran to buy a pair of shoes. As he wanted two pence of the price, the shoemaker gave him credit, "in the hope of being paid," he said, "when his customer was a cardinal."

When he arrived at Geneva, he applied himself with great zeal to his studies, and made rapid progress: he afterwards went to Avignon, where Clement VII was residing: he there studied canon law under able professors, was received as a doctor, and acquired such a reputation that he was consulted from all quarters. Clement VII, hearing of his merit and his talents, confided to him the education of Humbert de Thoire, his nephew, and soon after, charmed with the progress of the young man, he

²⁴. See Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963). The present author has treated the issue from his own perspective in *Sir Walter Scott and the Gothic Novel* (Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Romantic Reassessment, 113) (Lewiston, NY and Queenstown, Ont.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 172-9. Scott's special development of the young hero is an aspect of his "notable contribution to the process by which Romanticism turned bourgeois" (Mario Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction* [London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1969], 54). The idea is germane to Scribe's development of the type in his *grands opéras*.

²⁵. Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, U.S., 2006), 111.

loaded his tutor with benefits: he named him cardinal, gave him the bishopric of Viviers, and afterwards the archbishopric of Aries. Benedict XIII, the successor of Clement VII, appointed Jean de Brogni bishop of Ostia; and Alexander V at last put the finishing touch to his fortune, by joining to all his dignities that of Chancellor of the Roman Church. The new Bishop of Ostia was, however, always called Cardinal de Viviers, from the name of his first bishopric. He was as famed for his integrity as his learning, and he consecrated a great part of his revenues to acts of charity, and objects of public utility.

After the council had concluded, this cardinal followed Martin V to Rome, and the pope transferred him from the archbishopric, which he still administered, to that of Geneva, the revenues of which were far inferior. Jean de Brogni, nevertheless, consented with joy to this translation, which, in his old age, brought him back to the country where he was born. His great age did not, however, permit him to take possession of his new see; he died at Rome, in 1426, but he desired to be buried at Geneva, in the chapel of the Maccabees, which he had founded. Jean de Brogni never blushed for the obscurity of his birth; in that same chapel where his body reposes, he had himself painted, young, with naked feet, tending pigs, under an oak; and to perpetuate still more the remembrance of the adventure to which he owed his elevation, he had represented all round on the walls of the chapel, swine, acorns, and oak-leaves. He paid his debt to the shoemaker generously, by giving him the place of steward in his household, and he proved "still more by his alms that he did not forget his origin. He founded the hospital of Annecy, supported manufactories in order to clothe the poor with their produce, portioned a number of young girls, and, in the latter part of his life, he supported thirty poor persons each day. He had attained the highest fortune, and yet, when he visited the village of Brogni, his birthplace, he made all the old men assemble at his table; and, in a word, by a crowd of excellent acts, and by touching conduct towards the poor, he appeared most anxious to show that he remembered having been poor like them."

See Stith Thompson, *Index of Folk Motifs*: **high honours as reward** (Q 113.01); **high position as reward for piety** (Q 113.3); **appointment to priesthood as reward** (Q 113.4).

Brogni's conduct of the Council during the papal interregnum was sagacious, and he is thought to have shown sympathy to John Hus.²⁶ As the operatic character he is initially magnanimous in act 1, and full of concern for both Rachel and Eleazar in act 4. Indeed, he would seem to represent a variant of the Lessing's eponymous Jewish hero in *Nathan der Weise* (1779) in his visionary, ecumenical idealism. Eventually, however, he is not able to alter the law and order that he comes to represent. In the end he becomes a victim of circumstance and vengeance rather than of fate.

Eleazar: fatherhood, faith and fury

Eleazar is the only one in the story who is in total command of all the facts of the past and present. The character is derived from prototypes by Marlowe and Shakespeare, and like these models, combines an amalgam of folklore and realism, being the archetypal grasping Jewish businessman out to derive financial profit from his Christian enemies.

*Chez moi, chez moi des écus,
Des ducats, des sequins, des florins,*

²⁶. Did Cardinal de Viviers show himself favourable to John Hus? The opinion that he did has been adopted on the strength of the headings of some letters from the Bohemian martyr. But it has been forgotten that these headings were not written by John Hus; they are attributed to Luther, who himself could have been led in error by a passage in the fifty-fourth letter, in which Hus speaks of a cardinal, named Jean, "who wished him well". Jacques Lenfant, in his *Histoire du Concile de Constance*, has clearly established that he, of whom it was in question in this letter, was not Cardinal Jean de Brogni, but a doctor named Jean Cardinal, a friend of John Hus, and who acquired some celebrity after his death. Luther was, without doubt, in composing the headings of John Hus's letters, struck with this passage, and confounded Doctor Jean Cardinal with the president of the council. No solid proof establishes that Jean de Brogni, who was distinguished amongst the most illustrious members of the clergy by his virtues and his learning, showed more respect than any of them for the sincerity of religious convictions out of his own church. (Ulric de Reichental, Manuscript Chronicle in the Library of the Mansion House in Basle; Cantil. dt Com. fol. 12. J. Hus. Epit, xxlviii. xxlix in J. Lefant, *Histoire du Concile de Constance*, Vol. I. p. 313, and following.)

*Chez moi bientôt vont revenir!
 Ce bons écus, cet or que j'aime
 Chez moi, chez moi vont revenir!
 Des ducats des sequins, des florins
 Quel plaisir de tromper ces chrétiens!
 Je les hais tous, ces ennemis
 De mon Dieu et de moi foi!*

[Mine, mine are the ecus,
 The ducats, the sequins, the florins,
 They will soon belong to me!
 These lovely ecus, the gold which I love.
 Will soon belong to me!
 The ducats, the sequins, the florins,
 What a pleasure to cheat these Christians!
 I hate them all, these enemies
 Of my God and my religion!]

Scribe touches here on deep wells of folklore in the atavistic dislike and distrust of the Jews, the fact that they were regarded as outcasts wherever they went and denied citizenship throughout Europe, until the early nineteenth century, when the Napoleonic reforms gave impetus to Jewish emancipation. In the light of the distressing position the Jews occupied, it may be asked what practical considerations led them to live among nations who treated them like enemies, and under sovereigns who seemed interested only in oppressing and plundering them. Perhaps it is sufficient to remember that their undoubted aptitude for earning and hoarding money in an age when financial dealings were regarded as demeaning and usurious, allowed them hope of a means of compensation and helped them to forget the servitude to which they were subjected.

Scribe picks up on the point made by Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596). And just as he increased actual plausibility of characterization in having Jessica say that her father's house was full of treasures, so Scribe does the same here, introducing the jarring discordancy of juxtaposing the sublime Passover with the evidence of Eleazar's mercantile and mercenary attitudes. This is facilitated by the interruption of Princess Eudoxia's arrival to buy one of Eleazar's famed pieces of jewelry, a chain that reputedly belonged to the Emperor Constantine, for her errant and erring husband. Successful Jewish moneylenders often accumulated quantities of unredeemed pledges, especially jewels. In Venice local sumptuary laws were enacted to prevent them wearing such spoil, and indeed the Jews themselves practised their own sumptuary regulations to avert "the envy, and hatred of the gentiles, who fix their gaze on us".²⁷ Eleazar is also unforgiving, spurning Brogni's appeal for reconciliation in act 1, unyielding in his hatred and obduracy, and prepared to use his relationship with Rachel as a means of vengeance. In this he comes to represent an interpretation of the Mosaic Law of Leviticus 24:20 ("an eye for an eye") as he allows Brogni's daughter to pay the price for his murdered sons (the analogies of love and vengeance in *Il Trovatore* in Azucena's revelation to Di Luna on Manrico's execution are exactly the same). Unlike Isaac of York in *Ivanhoe*, who is torn between his love of shekels and love of his daughter, Eleazar's motivation is very nuanced. His genuine love for Rachel causes his crisis of conscience and soul. The inflexible nature of anti-Semitism, however, eventually steels his resolve, and allows him to exult in the concept of martyrdom.

O God do not keep silent,
 do not be dumb and unmoved, o God,
 for your enemies raise a tumult.
 Those who hate you lift up their heads.

They plot against your people,
 conspire against those whom you love.

²⁷. Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (1987) (London: Orion Books, 1993), p. 237.

They say: 'Come, let us destroy them as a nation,
Let the name of Israel be forgotten.'...

As fire that burns away the forest,
as the flame that sets the mountain ablaze,
drive them away with your tempest
and fill them with terror at your storm.
Cover their faces with shame,
till they seek your name, O Lord.
Shame and terror be theirs for ever,
let them be disgraced, let them perish
Let them know that your name is the Lord.
The Most High over all the earth. (Psalm 82:1-6, 15-19)

While usually associated with Christian saints, Scribe brings an interesting variation into the scenario again by tuning into the even more ancient Jewish model of martyrdom established in the Second Book of Maccabees chapters 6 and 7. Scribe even gives Eleazar the name of "one of the scribes in high position" who chooses to die rather than betray the faith of his fathers ("It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that though I might have been saved from death, I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body...but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him. So in this way he died, leaving in his death a memorial of nobility and memorial of courage, not only to the young, but to the great body of his nation" [2 Maccabees, 6:30-31]).²⁸ Scribe was to do the same in *Les Huguenots* where the focus is on Protestant suffering rather than the witness of the martyrs of the Catholic Church. There it is the mystical perception of suffering of Agrippa d'Aubigné that forms the literary source. The situation is an ancient one derived from ancient tales. The sorrow of both Eleazar and Brogni relates to the Biblical injunction that the children are punished for their fathers' sins.

See Stith Thompson, *Index of Folk Motifs: death and revenge preferred to life* (J 494); **children punished for fathers' sins** (P 242); **God punishes man by killing his child** (A 1335).

4) The Search for Truth and Freedom

The whole comes down to perceptions of truth and freedom. These dominate the scenario just as they did the deliberations of the Council of Constance. Is Eleazar right to hide the truth of Rachel's birth from her and from the Cardinal? Is the nature of his trust in the faith of his fathers a truth of such consequence that it can allow the sacrifice of another's life? Are people more important than ideas, even cherished concepts of faith? It must always be remembered that this depends on one's perspective, and on the historical and social aspects of upbringing. It is a question that seemed to concern Scribe deeply, and one he would explore even more ruthlessly in *Les Huguenots*. For Marcel and Raoul their Protestantism is worth dying for. For Valentine, the principal reality is the love she shares with Raoul; she is prepared to make the sacrifice of principle and forego her own religious obligations in the interests of her human commitment. Rachel shows a similar profligacy in her generosity, although she is betrayed and must pay the ultimate price alone. For her, race, religion and personal choice become the fundamental options in defining her independence of thought and action. Like Eleazar, she sees more to life than simply living. This independence of thought is revealed in her fearless embracing of love with the supposed Samuel, and continues even when he is revealed as Leopold. She exercises a right of *epikeia* in choosing to love against the rules of religion, state and society, and is as fearlessly determined to carry this through in exposing the truth when she is betrayed, and yet works to save her lover from death by taking all the blame on herself. It requires great moral conviction and fortitude, and like John Hus before the Council, she has no regard for herself or her safety. How do law, freedom, justice, and mercy coexist? What are mercy and love in this equation?

²⁸. See George Ridley Scott, *A History of Torture*, 164-6.

But the freedom to choose for oneself must be a personal matter of conscience and not a moral dictate. The vested interests and forces of society think differently, and it is a question with no easy answer. Mercy is essential, but so is the need of society to protect itself. The problem is on the one hand individual, and on the other collective, a situation examined in various levels through out the opera, from the weightiest judgement of the Cardinal to the most repellent manifestation of atavism and brutal prejudice from the unthinking majority of the crowd. And as history shows, attitudes and opinions change, and what might have seemed heinous in one age is no longer thought so; what might have been thought as worth dying for is no longer so important. The freedom and integrity of the human heart is what matters. Scribe poses the problem, but does not give any obvious or easy answers. What kind of truth must it be if it is indeed going to set you free (John 8:32)?

The waves of death rose about me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;
the snares of the grave entangled me;
the traps of death confronted me.

In my anguish I called on the Lord:
I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came to his ears.

You, o Lord are my lamp,
my God who lightens my darkness.
With you I can break through any barrier,
with my God I can scale any wall. (Psalm 17[18]: 2-7, 29-30)

One must pose then the question of why, at a time of a great secular drive in France, did Scribe and his collaborators Meyerbeer and Halévy focus their grand opera collaborations almost exclusively on essentially religious/spiritual themes. Perhaps he felt a disillusionment with established faiths and attempts to reform the Church (internally, through Protestantism, and other religious movements)? Perhaps he sought a more ideal faith, reflected in the ideals of personal spirituality, morality and the essential nobility of humanity? In this, though, secularism is rejected and a unified Church seen as preferable to anarchy and total individualism. While the established faiths cannot provide a suitable solution, there is an almost prophetic recognition of the dangers lying ahead on the secular paths that were eventually followed in continental Europe. The Romantic ideal of the power of reconciliation and intercession seem foiled in *La Juive*; *Les Huguenots* is presented as a critique of a failing Church, while individual nobility wins through. *Le Prophète* posits the dangers of excess in attempts to reform, and again promotes the role of the individual in intercession and mediation, and of course repentance/atonement. *L'Africaine* provides the ultimate goal for the illustration of personal love and sacrifice, a path already suggested in *La Juive*. Today this opera's message of tolerance—its authors' indication of what happens when society is intolerant, or is unduly preoccupied with ideology above human worth—is still most topically and chillingly relevant.

NOTES