Eucharist and Torah: some reflections on John and Messianic Judaism

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The subject of our conference this year is Torah and Jewish Christianity. A year has passed since we last met. Last year I was rather negative about the prospect of Jewish continuity in the church, but this year I will try to be more positive. As a member of the Orthodox church, I am probably typical in not keeping Torah observances and so it would seem rather abstract to speak of the matter here. However, from time to time I do perform certain *mitsvoth*. And I would like to speak about this. It's almost a guilty secret, but the mitsva I most love and cherish from my time as an observant Jew is the laying of tefillin, and on occasion I still do lay tefillin.

Before I go any further, I'd like to think about what this might mean. There is a part of me, it's the Orthodox Christian part, which looks upon this practice as an aberration. Orthodox me says to tefillin-laying me with disapproval: is there something you lack in the Orthodox church, such that you look for another ritual outside of the Church? And what of the prayers that you pray when laying tefillin - the Amidah, and so on, which ask for the restoration of the temple? Are you not speaking directly, or at least indirectly, against Christ here? Well, I think Orthodox me has a certain point here: the laying of tefillin seems to be a Judaizing habit, and perhaps that habit is best crushed? Who knows what might follow?

All this is very individual and personal, but I offer it nonetheless as a phenomenological datum. And now I would like to ponder a bit on whether Orthodox me might be persuaded that Judaic me is doing something legitimate. Here I am going to refer to a recent experience I had in reading the book of John. A couple of weeks ago, I was asked to contribute to a conference on the Temple theology of Margaret Barker, a rather exciting new trend in Old and New Testament interpretation, which seeks to uncover the importance of a tradition of largely lost First Temple mysticism in Jewish sects of the Second Temple era, including for early Jewish Christianity. The talk I gave was called "John, Russian cosmism and the Eucharist" and here I would like to recycle some of my thoughts and apply them to this struggle that I have just talked of.

John is seen as the most supersessionist of the gospels. However, the perspective that Barker offers allows us to see that John is not so much arguing for the abolishment of Second Temple or rabbinic Judaism as such, but like some other sects of the time (whose views can be reconstructed from the various apocalyptic writings such as Enoch), is implicitly calling for a return to some of the mystical institutions of Solomon's temple. For example, Christ compares himself to the serpent that was raised up in the wilderness: that serpent was actually kept in Solomon's temple as a cultic object. He refers to his bringing a knowledge of the Name of the Lord to his followers: in First Temple times, pronunciation of the Name was known, and was gradually lost only after the destruction of the First Temple. Furthermore, Christ reproaches his listeners in John for never having seen the shape of Yahweh: in Amos, Ezekiel and Isaiah, as well as in the Yahwistic stories in Genesis, Israelite worshipers did indeed see an image of the Lord, but that intimacy, again, was lost during Second Temple times. Finally, Christ tells his followers "you shall be as gods," i.e. that you shall be deified: Margaret Barker has reconstructed several obscure passages in the OT masoretic Hebrew text to show that in the First Temple the high priest and king were believed to become Yahweh in the process of worship at the First Temple altar, and represented the presence of Yahweh amidst the people in a rather literal way.

In sum, there are many aspects of Christ's mission in the synoptics as well as in John, which really take on extra vivid meaning if one understands that Christ is linking himself to a First Temple mysticism that was lost or deliberately rejected by the Second Temple hierarchy. In many ways, Christ's divine-human message of salvation is a continuation of First Temple religion, though of course it goes even beyond that.

Now the aspect of John that I chose to focus on was Christ's call to his followers to "drink my blood and eat my flesh." Often, this has been seen as a very unJewish command and so as an import from a Hellenistic mystery religion. But I began to wonder whether the command to drink blood may not in fact have an overlooked Jewish meaning. If Barker (and other scholars for that matter) are right, John's high Christology - so high that some people have seen the Jewish Jesus being utterly eclipsed by a new Hellenic Christ - has real roots in an ancient Judaic mysticism going back to First Temple ideas of deification and divine-humanity, so that high Christology is in fact very Jewish. Perhaps then the central Eucharistic moment in John has a similar lineage - so that a Jewish Christian today can feel that a high Christology and Eucharistic theology are not a contradiction to his strivings to be faithful to his Judaism.

When I first toyed with the idea that the consumption of the godman's blood may have good Judaic lineage, I not surprisingly stumbled on an equally difficult paradox. The thinkers in my own Russian Orthodox tradition who had argued most convincingly for the existence of a mystical ancient Judaism which may have reverenced blood had used the notion for anti-Semitic purposes. They wanted to show that ancient Jews had consumed blood - human blood, and that their modern descendants still do so. This, of course, is the famous blood libel against Jews - which is not dead to this day. However, I began to realize that in pursuing the sort of Jewish-Christian theology of the sort I wanted to pursue, I would not be able to escape the blood libel. Among Catholics in Western Europe from the middle ages, it was also true that very often when gentile Christians began to deepen their appreciation of the Eucharistic mystery, giving it new dogmatic formulations and disseminating its meaning among ordinary believers, it all too readily became intertwined with corresponding attacks on Jewish blood. At first I thought this was coincidence, but a lot of good scholarship shows that there is something more mysterious involved here, which we could ponder about another time: heightened devotion to Christ's blood has often meant spilling of Jewish blood.

A result of the anti-Semitic use of blood symbolism by Christians has been that Jews have very often denied or overlooked the blood symbolism in their own tradition. But this is changing now, given that Jews live in more peaceful times. For example, contemporary scholar Lawrence Hoffman has boldly pointed to the almost sacramental meaning of *matsitsa*: this is the ritual whereby the mohel draws blood from the end of the child's penis to seal the wound, but also, Hoffman speculates, in order to partake of the blood of the covenant. To support this he points to how the *geonim* saw circumcisional blood as a sacred substance, encouraging male adolescents to wash their hands in water containing some drops of this blood. David Biale argues that early medieval blood libels may have had some foundation, not in the consumption by Jews of blood, but in the Jewish belief that martyrs' blood washes the cloak of God in heaven, and the enthusiasm with which Jews about to slaughtered by the mob killed their own children to preempt them and hurry on their martyr's death. More interestingly, I recently came across a passage in Shneur Zalman of Liady, the 18th century Hasidic master which is germane for

present purposes: he compares Jewish circumcisional blood to the blood sprinkled on the Temple altar. The latter was sprinkled seven times at the base of the altar, and an eighth time on the top of the altar. The eighth sprinkling is what allows the high priest's soul to unify with the divinity, and the eighth sprinkling of blood is given on the merit of the covenant of circumcision, performed on the eighth day. This is an extraordinary link with Margaret Barker's thinking: Shneur Zalman, centuries later, but drawing on intervening Jewish mysticism, also sees the Temple as a space where deification or divinization of the Jew occurs, and he also links it to blood, both human and animal.

Still, while all this shows that modern and medieval Jews continued to have a sacramental regard for blood, we are still some way away from the sort of consumption of blood that Jesus talks about. For one who does not believe in the divinity of Jesus, such a command looks simply like a command to drink human blood - and, indeed the mirror image of the Jewish blood-libel, was the Christian blood-libel, brought by Roman pagans and Jews, that followers of Christ were cannibals. Here I was helped in my thinking by the general logic that a certain anti-Semitic Russian thinker put forth, and I began to realize that though his aim had been to denigrate Jews, his original logic could be used to exonerate them, as well as to give Jewish Christians a deeper understanding of how they might combine traditions. This thinker argued as followers. On the face of it, Jesus' command to drink blood flies in the face of all the prohibitions against the consumption of blood which we find in Jewish halakha and practice. However, these prohibitions must be read in context: they regulate the consumption of blood on *secular* occasions, which is why they are so strict. On sacred occasions, however, this special substance *can* be consumed, and the prohibitions surrounding its casual use merely heighten its mystical importance on these occasions. Thus human and animal blood are forbidden outside the Temple, but inside the Temple they are allowed.

Of course, this logic seems to drip with anti-Semitic cunning - but in fact if used correctly it is an insight of genius. The thinker who invented this logic claimed that in the passage in Leviticus 10:16-18, where the priests are told to consume "it" outside the Holy of Holies, this "it" refers to the blood of the animal mentioned in the previous verse. He had thus discovered a proof-text for the idea that ancient Hebrews consumed blood in the Temple, but only on the Day of Atonement. In fact, "it" in both Russian and Hebrew reads much more naturally as referring to the meat of the sacrifice, drained as usual of blood - but, to give credit where it is due - I should point out that Barnabas, the Jewish Christian writer of priestly background who was probably a contemporary of John, also claimed that the priests consume the bloody parts of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, and perhaps he had a similar passage in mind. Thus, the claim is not so wild, nor need it be anti-Semitic. Perhaps priests did consume blood in the First Temple, and perhaps this was later prohibited as it may have seemed too close the practices of the surrounding nations, as well as to the widespread tendency in First Temple times for Israelites to imitate the Canaanite practice of child-sacrifice. After all, there were several elements in the original First Temple cult which were later abolished, discretely dropped or forgotten in the Second Temple: the serpent, which we already mentioned; the human faced cherubim; the bulls carrying the bronze sea; the anthropomorphic visions of Yahweh. And perhaps to that we could add sacred consumption of blood.

Still, at this distance of time it would be hard to prove this, and even if First Temple priests did consume blood, what was the meaning of this and why would Christ have been interested in it? Here I think Christ in John gives us a good idea of his "philosophy of blood", and while it does not resolve the question of the actual consumption of animal blood by the ancient priests, it rests on the same logic of secular/sacred, forbidden/sanctified that we just outlined. For the fact is that in John, Christ applies this logic with stunning audacity to the institution of the Sabbath. If we investigate his more explicit comments about the Sabbath, we can come back with an enriched understanding of his command concerning blood. In the synoptics, but especially in John, Christ highlights an oddity about the Sabbath: outside the Temple, it involves strict prohibition of work. But inside the Temple, these prohibitions are not only violated: rather, they must be violated; or, in other words, what is forbidden outside the Temple is commanded within it. So while it is forbidden to chop, cut, flay, carry and so on outside the Temple, inside the Temple all these activities are necessary - for the slaughter and sacrifice of animals must continue. Furthermore, the baking and preparation of the *lekhem tamid*, the shewbread or eternal bread, must carry on on the Sabbath. And not only that: on the Sabbath, the portion of sacrifices is increased: there is an additional, or *musaf*, offering of sacrifices, so labor is doubled inside the Temple on the Sabbath.

Christ in John refers to himself - to his own body - as a new temple, to "the temple that was his body". When healing on the Sabbath, he talks of how the Father goes on working at all times, through him. The Aramaic verb "work" (avadeh) is actually related to the Hebrew word for cultic service (la'avod), and this - as well as the fact that he performs his healings in the vicinity of the Temple - give the clear message that Christ's miracles and mission are a type of new temple sacred labor, which - as in the earthly temple - are permitted, nay commanded - on the Sabbath. And yet, the question is slightly more subtle. Christ, I believe, violates the Sabbath in order to drive home that he is the divine source of the Sabbath, who like his Father, works to sustain the world eternally, without Sabbath/weekday division. And yet his violations are only suggestive, they only cut round the fine edges of Sabbath observance - for example, through details such as picking grain. And the message of this is that while the Son of Man has all power given to him by the Father, while he is on earth he empties himself to such an extent that he keeps within the confines of the Law. That is, he both points to the limitations of the Law, while also underlining the power of the Law, the true meaning of the Law.

Now if we return to Christ's command to drink his blood, we will see that something of the same order is true. Christ commands us to drink his blood. In this way, he points to the fact that in mystical communion with God inside the Temple that is Christ's body, blood can be and must be consumed. But just as with the Sabbath, outside of communion the prohibition against blood must be observed - or at the very most, only symbolic blood communion can be tolerated, like *matsitsa*, or the geonic washing in blood, or the speculative tasting of blood by the priests on Yom Kippur. In the temple of Christ, that is, full blood communion is allowed; outside the Temple, the true meaning of blood must be established by abstention from blood. As our Russian theologian said, using antinomian logic, and as Christ himself makes apparent, the NO that is outside feeds the YES that is inside, and the YES that is inside feeds and sustains the NO that is outside. The true reconciliation of YES and NO, of positive and negative (of YIN and YANG, one might say) is already given in Christ, but before we are one with Christ, we cannot fully

participate of that complete sacralization of the world's existence - and therefore we are still bound by law, even though tasting partially of the antinomian paradise on earth.

However, Christ's shocking and explicit command to allow his Jewish followers to commune of his blood before the end of the world - and only of his blood, not of the blood of other humans, as the anti-Semites would have it, and as certain Molochite ancient Israelites also believed - also acts as deep exegetic impulse to return to the sacred texts of the Old Testament and to reread them in light of the new knowledge of blood that Christ gives us. And here we find why it is that blood is sometimes prohibited and sometimes - or, rather, on one occasion - commanded. When we read Jesus' words in conjunction with Leviticus and Genesis, we understand that in the most fundamental sense, the reason Yahweh desires the blood of creatures, human and animal, is because it is *his* blood. The blood comes from Yahweh, flows in the veins of creatures, and when the creature dies the blood flows back to Yahweh, from whom it came and to whom it always belongs. This is seen most clearly in Gen. 9.4. where we are informed why blood should not be eaten: *Akh basar* ***be-nafsho damo*** *lo tokhlu* - "the flesh with its **life-breath, its blood**, you shall not eat." “blood” is grammatically in apposition to “nefesh” here: nefesh *is* blood, dam-nefesh – or blood-breath, a point Philo makes incidentally. Gen 9.6 tells us further: “He who spills the blood of man, by man shall his blood be spilt, for in the image of God He made man.” That is: man’s sacred likeness to God is a blood-likeness. Mess with the blood, and you are messing with God. This ultimately takes us right back to Gen.2, where God breathed his *nefesh* into the nostrils of Adam, and Adam became a living creature – whereas before he had been mere earth or dead meat – *basar*. Gen 9 allows us to understand that it’s not just breath that God breathes into Adam, but more specifically blood-breath, blood-likeness.

The prohibitions in Leviticus also make the link between blood and *nefesh*, though seemingly less boldly: there blood is not the actual *nefesh* – but its container, and its symbolic substitute. Yahweh says: (my translation), “I have set my face against the nefesh (soul) who eats the blood, and I shall cut him off from his people: for the *nefesh* (soul) is *in* the blood and I have given it to you (to put) on the altar to cover up for *your nefesh* (souls), for it is the blood that will atone for the *nefesh*.” But in fact, here too, blood and *nefesh* are inseparable: the blood contains the *nefesh*, but it is also inseparable from the *nefesh*: to give animal blood to Yahweh is to give its *nefesh* for your own *nefesh*. You cannot have the *nefesh* outside of that which contains it. Giving the animal’s blood back to Yahweh really means to give its *nefesh* back to Yahweh, at the altar of creation where Yahweh gave his blood-breath to living things. (By the way, if we stop for a moment, we will realize that the writer of Genesis and Leviticus had anticipated nineteenth century science quite remarkably: it was only then that moderns finally understood the function of blood – to carry *nefesh*, or as we should say, oxygen round the body!)

Once we understand that blood and breath, or put otherwise, blood and spirit, are one divine substance, we will understand the antinomy just painted. To consume the blood of another being without that being's permission is to consume their spirit and life. And ultimately, the blood and spirit of every being is the blood and spirit of Yahweh. This is implicit in the OT, but not brought out fully. The OT is far more staccato and discontinuous than the NT cult instituted by Christ: man's blood-spirit is given him by Yahweh, and then returned to Yahweh after its use has been exhausted; along the way, he returns the blood-spirit of animals to Yahweh, ensuring continued possession of his own 'packet' of life-spirit. As it says in *Pirkei Avoth* 5.10 of the man

of average faith "what is yours is yours and what is mine is mine". What Christ proposes, though, is that man consume or be infused with Yahweh's blood-spirit without becoming separated from Yahweh, and so without the need to give the blood-spirit back, or bargain for its retention by offering the blood-spirit of other creatures. This resembles a sacrificial meal in which the worshiper turns into the animal he is consuming (in this case God), and in which the consumption never ends, for the sacrificial animal is ever self-regenerating. In other words the Israelite who consumes Yahweh-Christ's blood is like Adam constantly being given the kiss of life by his creator - and of course, Judaic tradition makes the connection when it holds that the Temple stood on the site of Adam's creation.

This, by the way, is how we should read Christ's further words in John in the same chapter where he has told us to consume his blood. There (Jn 6.63), he says: "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." If we think that blood is matter and spirit is something distinct, it would seem as if Christ is now disowning his whole bloody invitation to consume him, and positing the old flesh-spirit dichotomy, perhaps alarmed by the hostile reception his invitation caused ("many of his followers left him"). But as soon as we understand the meaning of blood in the sacral, temple sense given in Genesis and Leviticus we understand otherwise: one simply needs to read these words correctly: "It is the blood (blood-spirit) that gives life, the *basar* has nothing to offer. The words I *breathe* onto you...are life." What *basar* is Christ talking of? Well, the blood-drained *basar* of the animal that was eaten by the communicant in the Old Temple. The new *basar* that Christ's communicants are commanded to chew rigorously in the new temple precincts is a *basar* aflow with the quixotic, dynamic blood-breath of Yahweh, and so it is meat that is ever alive, ever self-renewing, and ever transmuting the consumer into the consumed. Christ quite literally overcomes the dichotomy between flesh and spirit - by offering us his blood, the blood-breath or blood-spirit of Yahweh.

Elsewhere in John, Christ also compares this sacrificial meal of creature and creator to the situation of a fetus in the womb. In John 6.56-7, he says: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person. As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me." In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that a man must be born again, and Nicodemus asks: "Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?" In fact, Nicodemus' question gets the point exactly, and Christ's words about the blood of the Father being in him, and his blood being in the one who consumes him point to the image of a placenta: in the placenta the baby's blood vessels and the mother's blood vessels are separate but so closely intertwined that nutrition passes from the mother's cells to the embryo's: the embryo's blood is thus separate but wholly dependent on the mother's blood. One could say their two bloods form one "higher" blood without mixing. Incidentally, this image of two bloods that are one but separate and unmixed corresponds fairly neatly with the later Nicene Christological formula for the unity in division of Christ's divine and human natures, and probably not accidentally. That is, the concrete Ancient Near Eastern/Semitic-Judaic blood-metaphor translates very well into Hellenic categories.

All of this finally brings me back to where I started, namely my "tefillin conundrum". What I hope to have shown is that John the great Hellenizing supersessionist, the self-hating Jewish Christian, is none of these things really. The rudiments of seemingly abstract Nicene

Christology that one finds in John have roots that stretch deep into the Jewish temple and the ancient theosis-mysticism that was known there in the times of Solomon. Furthermore, the dichotomy of mystery vs halakha, or "Christianity" vs "Judaism", need not be seen as a dichotomy. The Hasidic masters were very good on this: for them, observance of halakhah was a pathway into mystical cleaving (*dvekuth*) to God, and likewise for John the blood-mysticism of Messianic theosis that Christ is offering his believers is linked in a subtle way to a true appreciation of the law against blood-consumption. Indeed, to stop blood-mysticism becoming blood-racism and so forth, this link with the law and rationality must be constantly reiterated. While I was reading a different version of the theses I have put here in London two weeks ago, a fellow-speaker made a comment which convinced me still further of the correctness of this halakhah-mysticism unity. 'We no longer see,' the speaker said, 'just how thoroughly John propounds the idea that Jesus is the replacement of the old Temple, that he is the new Temple. We have lost a sensitivity to all the temple references in John.' And he then went on to outline several elements of Temple symbolism that give deeper meaning to our understanding of the context of Christ's words. But what struck me was that me that this was a bit of a rich complaint: after all, if John's vision is that Jesus *replaces* the Temple totally and utterly, then immediately after his death and resurrection, his followers should indeed forget about the old Temple and focus their spiritual energies entirely on the new Temple. And then it would make no sense to complain that readers of John very soon lost all ability to detect subtle references to the old Temple in his writings. Surely that would be a sign of his success! But evidently, such an outcome would hardly have helped John and Jesus in the propagation of their message: rather the continued existence of the earthly Temple as a backdrop for this message is utterly necessary for the deepening and appreciation of the message. When I pointed this out, the speaker agreed that John's Jesus is better seen not as replacing the Temple, but incorporating the still existent and appreciated Temple into the higher meta-Temple of Christ's body.

For Jewish Christians today, I believe this could be quite significant. Nowadays, because of the destruction of the Temple, we have lost much of our understanding of Christ. Scholars, therefore, who are uncovering Temple references in John and other NT writings refer abundantly to the Talmud, among other ancient writings, in trying to reconstruct the Old Temples. For them that is conceived as a scholarly exercise. But could not this reading of the Talmud be – especially for Jewish Christians – a liturgical, sacramental exercise? Put it this way: the book of John is, as I see it, a sacramental text: it lies at the root of Orthodox liturgy. The prayer for unity in Jn 17 is the heart of our Eastern Eucharistic tradition. Now in trying to enter deeper into the mind of the writer and original audience-community of this text, we encounter the Talmud, especially those parts of it which are soaked in the pain and love of the rabbis who loved the old Temple, and who folded it up into verbal form, so that its image may be passed lovingly down among their descendants. Just as Johannine Jewish Christians, I contend, must have continued to revere and love the Temple, seeing it as the imperfect image of the perfection being revealed to them, so we can reverence the verbal image of imperfection given in the Talmud, which causes the perfection of our new Temple to shine forth more clearly. The same can be said of prayers for the restoration of the Temple in the *Amida*, and of course, in the Psalms that every Christian reads anyway. Like other Jews – of a reform and conservative denominational orientation – we may experience ambiguity as to whether we would be pleased to see a third temple in Jerusalem, with animal sacrifices restored. However, we can to some extent shelve that ambiguity for a while: what we *can* feel is the painful regret for the loss of the Temple, the desire to know it fully, the

desire to reconstruct it at least in the form of a verbal sacrament. And so in reading the *Amida* prayer, in studying the Talmudic tractates treating the Temple, we would be performing the most important commandments of all: the *mitvah* of *Talmud torah* and the *mitvah* of *tefilla*. I believe that if we study the Talmud with *dvekut*, our study would not be merely academic, and it would inevitably produce its own *midrash*. Such midrashim would be different from that of other Jews – but remember that in Second Temple times the Temple played a similarly double-edged role among Jews: it was the edifice which united Jews in their religious life; and it was also the edifice which highlighted most sharply their profoundest differences and disagreements. In other words the ancient Temple both united and divided Jews: and our study of the ancient temple in our people's Talmudic unification with it in words would also evince deep unity, as well as deep difference. However, this is nothing new in Jewish history, or world history for that matter. Perhaps I might offer a little *midrash* of my own to get the ball rolling. In Middot 3.2.a we read:

"At the southwestern corner there were two holes, like two narrow nostrils, through which the drops of blood which are tossed on the western foundation and on the southern foundation descend and mix together in the channel and go forth to Qidron brook." The image of the Temple having nostrils portrays the Temple as having a face; we remember how Christ refers to the 'temple that is my body'; we read in the OT how buildings can contract leprosy and so are put in mind that man and the dwellings he builds, builder and built, are one. In this mishnah, therefore, we suddenly see how Christ the new temple and the old temple are fused: out of the old temple's nostrils blood flows; the blood from the south and west merges together in unity and flows into the brook of Qidron or Siloam: thus the bleeding face of the old temple is joined to the healing waters of Qidron; death is transmuted into life. The soil, Middot tells us further, that absorbed the blood was sold as compost. Again, there is an eschatological hint here: the blood-water of the temple's old face fertilizes mother-earth, and blood – from being an emblem of death – when joined to the water of life becomes the material out of which new life grows. Likewise, from Christ's side there flowed forth blood and water when he was pierced by the spear: this blood too flows out into the world and fertilizes the world, allowing it to grow towards God. And, of course, Christ's blood already flowed in Mary, to whom he says in John as she stands at the foot of the cross: woman, this is your son! Christ thereby begets for her a new blood-son to replace the son who is now ascending to the Father. We Jews bear the blood of Mary in our veins – a blood that has been tested on the stony soil of exile for two thousand years. Our Marian blood calls us towards the altar of the cross, and it calls us also towards the nearby brook of Qidron, that is, to the baptismal waters, with which our blood is intermingled, but not diluted. Rather, like the blood of Yahweh flowing in his Son and then in the sons of his Son, our blood is united without division with the waters of Qidron. Our Jewish ancestry flows on, bearing and being born(e) by the waters of Siloam.

Finally, what of the laying of tefillin? Does the Judeo-Christian halakhic mysticism I am reading out of John have anything to say to this conundrum? I don't want to enter into the debate about the place of halakha in Jewish Christianity. Rather, again, I want to keep things concrete, and in the spirit of my above suggestions. And so I will merely offer a comment - here in the space that Fr Antoine has tried to set up for Jews from the different churches - of my own experience of laying tefillin as a mystical Jewish Christian, and I would say that tefillin and Eucharist, in light of the above, need not be experienced as contradictions. In laying tefillin, the Jew faithful to the God of his fathers wraps the strap of the tefillin round his hand and middle

finger and in so doing recites: *Ve-arastikh li le'olam, ve'arastikh li be'tsedek uve-mishpat uve-hesed uverakhamim. Ve-arastikh li be-emunah, ve-yadata et adonai*. "I will betroth you to Me forever and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, justice, kindness, and mercy, and I will betroth you to Me with fidelity and you shall know the Lord." The wrapping of the strap round the finger symbolizes the donning of an engagement ring, and is reinforced by reciting the Lord's promise to Hosea that he would again take Israel as his groom. "And you shall know the Lord..." says God: the intimacy will be that of a wife and husband. Need one say more: both tefillin and Eucharist are mystical bindings to the Lord. With tefillin we are bound to the Lord in marriage; with Eucharist we are bound to the Lord as a child to his mother, and of course, also as friends of the bridegroom. Of course, the "you" that is bound to the Lord in the saying of Hosea is not just the individual, but the people of Israel as a whole - and that raises the problem of who is Israel, who is Jewry, who is the Church. However, I don't think these meetings, as far as I can see, are designed to provide the definitive answers, merely to engage with the problematic.

And so I restate my conclusion: the high Christology of John, the high eschatology of Johannine mysticism is not necessarily antinomian, in the sense of being incompatible with Torah observance. In the Temple of Christ's body, blood is sacred food and the Sabbath is a day of eternal sacred labor[1]. But Johannine Jews are still immersed in Judaic dialogue with the Hebrew Bible, and I think there is an obvious recognition that even Christ's chosen have not been completely transfigured into the heavenly Temple of Christ's body. Jesus' disciples both belong to the transfigured and already redeemed world, or *kosmos*, that is Christ's body, the Church triumphant. As such they are taken out of the unredeemed *kosmos*, which hates them. But John also contains a vivid sense that outside of the unified Christ-kosmos there is another unredeemed kosmos, which is moving towards the Christ-kosmos. And Christ cares for that kosmos that is outside his own temple precincts: that is why he leaves his mother there; that is why the blood and water from his side flow out into that kosmos to fertilize it. And we Jewish Christians are at the interstices of these *kosmoi*, finding different ways of living our life there.

Before I finish, I would like to give another report from that site in the form of two more midrashic readings of the blood-prohibition in the Old Testament. The prohibition in the Hebrew text of Leviticus 17.10, it occurred to me, can be read both in a tefillin-oriented way *and* in a Eucharist-oriented way. *Ki natati panai banefesh ha-okhelet et ha dam*...we read. Adopting the Jewish hermeneutic tool of Pardes (*pshat*, *remez*, *drash*, *sod*), we can discern a *pshat* and a *remez* or *sod* in these words. The normal, *peshat* or simple sense, translation reads: "For I shall turn my face against the person who eats the blood." The mystical (sod-oriented) translation translates it much more literally - linguistically speaking - to get a counter-intuitive result: "For I shall put my presence (*panim* is the glory or *doxa* - as it is translated in the Septuagint - of God) into the soul of the one who eats the blood." One phrase, two meanings, seemingly opposite and hostile - but from time to time for a rare moment united. Likewise, in the spirit of Messianic midrash one could go back and read Gen 9 in a similar spirit: *shofekh dam ha-adam be-adam damo yishafekh, ki be-**dmuth** elohim asah et-ha-adam*. Those of you who know Hebrew will be able to follow me in deriving this second sod-oriented translation: "Those of you pour forth the blood of Adam (Adam Kadmon, the Second Adam or Christ), into Adam will your blood be poured, for with the blood-likeness of God did God make Adam." Here I have just interpreted the prepositions a little

[1] (Incidentally, it is a repository of labor: the 39 tasks are incorporated in the walls of the tabernacle, as I see it, and continue to act like an engine, or like a pumping heart, to sustain the rest which creation outside the Temple enjoys).

differently, and I have substituted the word *demuth* (likeness) for the word *tselem* (image): ***dm****uth* and ***dm*** strictly speaking do not share a common etymology, but they share a phonetic structure which leads one to seek out semantic analogy. In addition, the whole verse resonates phonetically with the pun of *a-dam* being defined by *dam*; the addition of *dmuth* adds another phonetic and semantic beat to it. Such phono-semantic matching (as a linguist friend of mine dubs it) is at the heart of rabbinic *drash*, and in this case it provides another bridge between the antinomies of law and mysticism, Judaism and Christianity, providing a glimmer of something that we of Jewish blood can recognize as Messianic Judaism.

Of course, this is a small contribution, but for Jews in the churches, especially in the Orthodox and Catholic churches, whose life revolves around the Eucharistic blood of Christ, and whose life has so often been marred by the blood-libel brought against their blood-brothers and often themselves, perhaps it is a start towards clearing some things up...