

### **Religious Knowledge and Position Taking in the 19th Century: The Case of Educational Media**

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The expectations towards religious education began to transform at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Especially the „explosion of knowledge“ and differentiation in historically oriented scholarship affected all institutions and media of religious education. On the one hand, scholars extended the knowledge about the many different denominations and groups in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, scholars analyzed traditional religious knowledge with higher criticism and other scientific methods. These debates led to the question, besides many, which knowledge was relevant as base for one's own religion. The conference „Religious Knowledge and Position Taking in the 19th Century: The Case of Educational Media“ took place within the framework of the Hessian Ministry for Science and Art funded LOEWE research hub „Religious Positioning and Constellations in Jewish, Christian and Muslim Contexts“ ([www.relpos.de](http://www.relpos.de)). The conference took an international and interdisciplinary approach to analyze educational media, by combining perspectives ranging from Tel Aviv to Princeton and from History, Jewish Studies, Education and Theology. Further, the conference was an opportunity for the LOEWE research hub to exchange findings with the project „Innovation through Tradition? Jewish Educational Media and Cultural Transformation in the Face of Modernity,“ that is based at the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. and the Tel Aviv University (<http://innovation-through-tradition.ghi-dc.org/>). Finally, sponsors helped to keep down the costs for all participants, especially the German Research Fund (DFG), the Friends of the Frankfurt

University (Vereinigung der Freunde und Förderer der Goethe-Universität) as well as the Foundation for the Promotion of Science and International Exchange at the Goethe University (Stiftung zur Förderung der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Beziehungen der Goethe-Universität).

The first panel was dedicated to introducing major questions and methods. CHRISTIAN WIESE (Frankfurt am Main) outlined the development of the relationship of Jewish thinkers towards Christians in Germany and the transfer and use of religious knowledge. He focused on Samuel Hirsch, a Jewish philosopher and his systematic philosophy of Judaism. Wiese argued that there was a dialogical turn within in the community of Jewish thinkers that mostly was not answered or even observed by Christians. Hirsch and others were seeking a place for Judaism in the society of modern Europe and its compatibility with modernity. Hereby they argued that the chosenness of the Jews did not necessarily equal exclusivism. Comparing the US and Germany, the example of Samuel Hirsch is especially interesting as he immigrated to the US and the focus of his work shifted away from systematic philosophy and the question of Jewish emancipation towards other questions due to the altered political and social situation.

The second paper approached the topic of the conference by studying illustrations in educational media. Only within the last twenty years pictures have been seriously taken into account when studying textbooks. DAVID KÄBISCH (Frankfurt am Main) traced depictions of the „Good Samaritan“ from the post reformation era to images used in contemporary textbooks. Analyzing these images throughout time, many findings are remarkable. First, biblical Jews are often depicted as Turks or Muslims. Second, pictures from Christian books were reprinted in Jewish media, an indicator for entangled knowledge. David Käbisch proposed applying a History of Knowledge approach and the methods of translation studies to get a better understanding of how pictures were used and what religious knowledge they conveyed. In analyzing educational media multiple layers of translation can be detected, ranging

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from cultural, linguistic and visual to didactical translation. Also the question of agency and where knowledge production takes place can be taken into account. An interesting case study are Hübner's selected biblical stories, first published in the eighteenth century and translated into fifteen languages. The Old Testament stories eventually were also used by Jews. This one example alone shows how entangled religious knowledge can be and how it is transferred into different contexts. The approach of translation studies therefor seems very promising.

The second panel focused on Jewish and Christian Sermons. SIMONE LÄSSIG (GHI Washington, D.C.) highlighted the role of religion in the shaping of the middle class and „Bürgertum“ within the framework of Koselleck's „Sattelzeit.“ Sermons and religious spaces were important ways of learning and covering knowledge. When comparing Christian and Jewish Sermons, both refer to biblical/Thora texts but Jewish sermons show, according to Simone Lässig, less religious positioning and stronger social dynamics. The Jewish community was professionalizing religious leadership at the time and within this group the idea of preserving Judaism through reform grew very strong. One new development were sermons in German. These were not only performed within Shabbat services but also published for several reasons. Many rabbis and preachers did not just wanted to promote their ideas and positions within their local community but also shape a larger Jewish community and thereby a new literary genre emerged. The sermons were often deliberately held and published in German to communicate to the outside. Sermons had a strong social and cultural impact on the Jewish community. While older research overstated the copying of the Christian model, Simone Lässig confirmed this interaction but also highlighted how the transformation and presentation of „bürgerliche“ ideals were presented as essentially and originally Jewish values without questioning Jewish tradition.

URSULA ROTH (Frankfurt am Main) questioned if sermons can even be understood as educational media as protestant sermons have a strong devotional character. In many

cases, on the other hand, the quality of sermons is measured by how much listeners can recall afterwards. Looking at sermons from this perspective makes them instruments of knowledge transportation. Thus, sermons can be taken as educational media, but they have to be reflected critically. Ursula Roth based her paper on Schleiermacher's concept of effective and performing action. Secondly, she emphasized the significance of the performative turn for the study of sermons. Based on these two strands, the paper concluded that printed and performed sermons have to be seen in their different contexts and intentions. Especially printed sermons are usually devotional literature and not so much educational media. Nevertheless, sermons can often influence position taking. The panel showed that sermons can be analyzed as educational media that had a social and cultural impact. However, sermons have the difficulty that they were primarily spoken or performed but have to be analyzed as written texts today.

The third panel was dedicated to Catechisms. KERSTIN VON DER KRONE (GHI Washington, D.C.) demonstrated how at the beginning of the nineteenth century a new kind of Jewish religious instruction was established. At the time, multiple Jewish catechisms and manuals were published. Most intended to form useful citizens. The paper focused on two examples, a manual by Samuel Herxheimer and a catechism by Salomon Plessner. Each have an own history through their reworking and are based on the practical experience of the authors as teachers. Interestingly, both claim to present the ultimate textbook that had not existed before. Both books were written to be used at the side of bibles or prayer books and had teachers or parents, and not so much children as readers in mind. Kerstin von der Krone argued that both books, and many other manuals and textbooks, position Judaism as ethical religion against a persistent negative perception of Judaism as „morally inferior“ in the Christian society. The catechism format is clearly influenced by the protestant model but the dimension changes as the educational media should be seen as part of a larger project to reclaim the Thora and ethics for Judaism and the making of Jewish religious knowledge.

JOHANNES WISCHMEYER (Mainz) displayed how the nineteenth century was a time of confessional position taking and divide. A closer look reveals that the Protestants were divided into enlightened, awakened and pietist. University theologians tried to win the upper hand within these groups. Out of this situation, countless catechisms were written and can roughly be divided into two groups, enlightened, modern textbooks and reworks of sixteenth century catechisms, following the wording of the Enchiridion or the Heidelberg Catechism. Describing these developments the „Theologische Realenzyklopädie“ (1901 edition) did not even mention the numerous Jewish catechisms although there were similarities. The 1840s were a time of revival for confessional catechisms and anti-modern ideology, but nevertheless these catechisms used modern pedagogical structures. The government efforts to unify different protestant denominations with unified catechisms could erupt in violence as the case study of Hannover shows. Many territories aimed to standardize catechisms and textbooks against the adverse circumstances. Where this was successful, books often stayed compulsory well into the twentieth century.

The last panel analyzed different aspects of the probably best known educational media textbooks and children's bibles. TAL KOGMAN (Tel Aviv) introduced Maskilic textbooks that combined moral and biblical stories with scientific knowledge. One example for this type of book was the „Israelitischer Jugendfreund“ (Moda le-yalde Bnei Israel). The observation of nature to understand God's creation and the studying of science became a basis for the renewal of Judaism. The Maskilic physical-theological model promoted knowledge and science as enlightened framework for religion. An important research question is from where the Haskala movement drew its sources for the natural history framework. One source seems to have been Georg Christian Ruffs „Naturgeschichte für Kinder“ what again shows how intertwined Jewish and Christian knowledge was at the time.

DOROTHEA M. SALZER (Potsdam/Princeton, N.J.) focused on Jewish Children's bibles. Due to a reform of the Jewish educational system, the Hebrew bible

was moved back into the canon while the Talmud became less important. One aim was to make Jews useful members of society and construct Judaism routed in reason and universalism. Dorothea Salzer presented Peter Beer's biblical storybook for Jewish children. His book paraphrases and retells the stories and does not translate the Masoretic text. This becomes very visible in the story of the tower of Babel that is strongly rationalized. In addition, Beer spells out his ideas even clearer in the commentaries by highlighting universal morals and norms in the biblical texts. These are presented as old and part of Judaism, and can be understood as translations into Jewish tradition. There is a clear tendency of stressing universal values on the cost of Jewish traditions. Also the Christian influence is obvious, the Old Testament part of Hübner's above mentioned bible is reworked and printed in Hebrew letters but without the pictures. Dorothea Salzer argued that the Hebrew bible is promoted as basis for an identity without rabbinic tradition.

GORDON MIKOSKI (Princeton, N.J.) focused on Christian children's bibles. First, he showed how the stories are not primarily or exclusively for children but also their parents. Nineteenth century American children's bibles can be understood as revivalism put into print. Most bibles had three main goals: conversion through wrath and mercy, to foster social attitude and influence moral formation and last but not least appetite for more biblical readings. It is important to take the production context of children's bibles into account. The cultural and religious framework, the individual religious background of the producer or author and in many cases the social standing of the target group play a big role. In this elaborate network, biblical teachings were used to form good citizens. One example were stories and pictures in thumb bibles that conveyed the message to obey parents and God, and thereby strengthened the social order. Gordon Mikoski emphasized that there is no neutral ground in children's literature and how important it is to understand spaces and agents of knowledge production and circulation.

In conclusion the conference showed that educational media so far have only been studied very selectively. Sermons often were not

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even valued as educational media at all and also catechisms have only been studied in a preliminary way. Many details of knowledge transfer and dynamics of transformation can still be studied. It was established that a history of knowledge approach, translation studies and spatial analysis can be helpful tools to gain better insight into religious knowledge and position taking in the nineteenth century when it comes to the case of educational media.

### **Conference Overview:**

#### *Panel 1: Welcome message and Introduction*

Chair: Andreas Brämer (Hamburg)

Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main): Position Taking. A Systematic Approach to the Entangled History of Religions

David Kabisch (Frankfurt am Main): Christian Educational Media and Translation Studies: What knowledge must a person have learned in order to position oneself vis-à-vis other confessions and religions?

#### *Panel 2: Sermons*

Chair: Heiko Schulz (Frankfurt am Main)

Simone Lässig (Washington, D.C.): Sermons as an Instrument of Social Transformation: The Remaking of Jewish Life in Nineteenth-Century Germany

Ursula Roth (Frankfurt am Main): Christian Sermons and Position Taking. Performative and Liturgical Perspectives

#### *Panel 3: Catechisms*

Chair: Paul Schweitzer-Martin (Heidelberg)

Kerstin von der Krone (Washington, D.C.): Jewish Catechism and Manuals and what to know about Judaism

Johannes Wischmeyer (Mainz): Christian Catechism and Confessional Position Taking

#### *Panel 4: Textbooks and Children's Bibles*

Chair: Jürgen Overhoff (Münster)

Tal Kogman (Tel Aviv): Religious and Scientific Knowledge in German-Jewish Maskilic Textbooks

Dorothea M. Salzer (Potsdam/Princeton, N.J.): Religious Knowledge and Position

Taking in Jewish Children's Bibles

Gordon Mikoski (Princeton, N.J.): Religious Knowledge and Position Taking in Christian Children's Bibles

#### *Conclusion*

David Kabisch (Frankfurt am Main)

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