



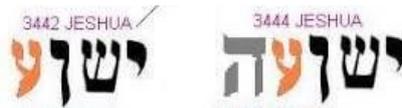
51. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION: MARTIN LUTHER

In 1482, Johan Reuchlin, one of the first German humanists, travelled to Italy, specifically to Florence and Rome, to receive a more thorough education on the new ideas of the time. There he had contact with the Neoplatonic Academy which influenced greatly his studies, in particular with the Marquis of Mirandola. From that moment he became fascinated with the Christian Qabbalistic view, rather than the Hermetic one. It was also in Italy that Reuchlin studied Hebrew with Obadiah Sforno, a Talmudist rabbi from Cesena. His first work to stand out was the *De verbo mirifico* (1494): a dialogue between a Greek philosopher¹, a Qabbalist and a Christian. In order to assure the “initiatic” orthodoxy of the text, Reuchlin makes the Jewish rabbi the main character, thus placing both the Platonic philosophy and the Christian religion under the protection of the Qabbalistic magic². In fact, although effective, the Platonic and Neoplatonic magic did not provide sufficient spiritual guarantees due to the unclear standing of the pagan powers.

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1. The alleged tetragrammaton with the *shin* in the centre

The *Qabbalah*, on the other hand, based on the evocation in Hebrew of angels and of the names of Yehovah, assured the positive nature of the forces called into action. Therefore, Christians were able to find in it the proof of the divinity of Christ and the confirmation of the Christian revelation. As a matter of fact, with the addition of a *shin* in its centre, the tetragrammaton became Yehshuah, Jesus³.



2. The name of Jesus in Hebrew and Aramaic

However, the dialogue between the three sages eventually comes down to a mere description of a ceremonial magic to summon “angels”. In 1517⁴, Reuchlin published his major work: *De arte cabalistica*. In this treatise he demonstrates a better knowledge of the Jewish *Qabbalah*, as evidenced by the numerous sources cited. This was probably due to the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492⁵. On that occasion,

¹ The Greek philosopher is used here to exalt Plato and devalue Aristotle. However, this is only a façade. In reality, behind the figure of Plato we find the celebration of Hermetic magic opposed to the medieval Scholasticism represented by Aristotle.

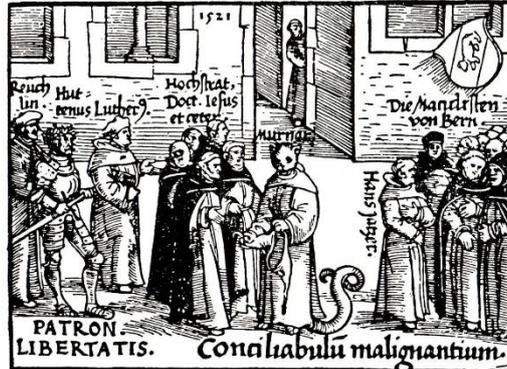
² We want to remind the reader, in case the content of previous articles has been forgotten, that neither the Christian *Qabbalah* nor the Renaissance Hermetism cannot claim any initiatic derivation of any nature. In fact, they were only profane reconstructions based on books. In both cases the definition of pseudo-initiation is entirely adequate.

³ Both Reuchlin and Giovanni Pico referred to the authority of Saint Jerome, who allegedly would have endorsed, with his excellent knowledge of Hebrew, the existence of the version of the tetragrammaton with the *shin* in the centre, thus forming the name of Jesus. Frances A. Yates, sympathizer of the Judaizing Christians, confirmed that the tetragrammaton with the inner *shin* was indeed attested in the works of both Saint Jerome and Nicholas of Cusa. The latter does not come as surprise, although we have not been able to verify the existence of such a pronouncement in his writings. Such notion, however, does not appear in any of Saint Jerome's writings that deal with the tetragrammaton (*Breviarium in Psalmos*. Psalm. VIII). As proof of the deception orchestrated by these Renaissance occultists, it suffices to say that the name of Jesus in Hebrew and Aramaic ends with an 'ayn, which makes all their attempts a simple mental construction. The educated Renaissance men, albeit keen to dismantle with philological rigour the medieval falsifications such as the donation of Constantine, shamelessly falsified the texts whenever they needed to support their ideas. This was done not for the sake of truth, but simply to undermine the Church. It is certainly not a coincidence that this is also the starting date of Luther's anti-Catholic activity.

⁵ This edict is regarded as a turning point by western historiography, especially by the sensitive Protestant souls who still have their finger pointed at the Catholic Kings. It is curious, however, that they are conveniently oblivious to the fact that the Jews had already been expelled from England in 1290. In 1657, Oliver Cromwell allowed the Jews to return. However, the expulsion decree was never officially withdrawn. The Jews were also expelled from the kingdom of France in 1394, by order of Charles VI. His successor, Charles VII and the *puelle* d'Orléans, were careful not to revoke the decree, which was abolished only in 1789 by the Revolution. In non-



many Qabbalists moved to Italy bringing their libraries with them. Also *De arte cabalistica* is structured around a dialogue between three wise men: a Qabbalist, a Pythagorean (*de facto*, an Hermeticist) and a Muslim. The Catholic is clearly no longer among the sages. The Pythagorean replaces the Platonist of his previous work, thus showing Reuchlin's intent to have the Qabbalistic numerology coinciding with the Pythagorean one¹. There is no doubt that Reuchlin had influence on Martin Luther through his nephew Melanchthon, who was the closest collaborator of the Protestant reformer.



3. Reuchlin and Luther

However, this influence did not properly concern the intellectualist approach of the humanist to the *Qabbalah*. Luther was a rustic commoner, not very inclined to cultural abstractions. Nevertheless, he was also well aware that his desire to eliminate the Catholic priestly tradition led inevitably to a return to the Jewish origins of Christianity. Initially, in fact, Luther preached a reunification of the two Semitic religions, convinced as he was that, in this perspective, the Jews would have easily accepted Jesus as their Messiah. In fact, this also explains the renewed importance of the Old Testament for the Protestant reform which, in the long run, overshadowed the Gospel itself. However, within fifteen years, this Lutheran pro-Jewish feeling led to unexpected results. The Jews maintained their refusal to recognize the Christ as their Messiah and, more importantly, many of Luther's followers began to get circumcised and to convert to Judaism. This prompted Luther, a man of uncontrollable outbursts of anger, to adopt increasingly severe positions against the Jewish, so much that in 1543 he published the book *About the Jews and their lies* (*Von den Juden und ihren Lügen*), which sparked a real anti-Semitic persecution². Martin Luther was born in 1483 to a peasant family. The father, who became a miner, took advantage of the climate of social confusion typical of the time of communes and quickly managed to climb up to the lowest ranks of the new bourgeoisie. This allowed Martin to access Law studies, thus carrying on his father's plan of social

national states, such as Italy and Germany, it was the single fiefdoms or communes that, in different times and manners, expelled the Jews. In Italy the states that took such measures were the Papal State, the Kingdom of Naples, the Republic of Genoa, the Duchy of Milan. At the beginning of the 16th century, out of 2500 German cities, only Frankfurt, Worms and Prague had not forced the Jews out of their walls (Claudio Pozzoli, *Vita di Lutero*, Milan, Rusconi, 1983, p. 35). In large part, the expulsion of the Jews was not motivated by religious reasons. As a matter of fact, it was a convenient way to extinguish the debts by exiling the usurers. The expulsion of the Jews by the Catholic Kings is still one of the main arguments of the *leyenda negra* exploited to humiliate Spain and, by reflection, the entire catholicity. On the contrary the Jews were welcomed in the Netherlands, where they became the most fervent supporters of the Orange. They were also accepted in the Ottoman territories, especially in the city of Thessaloniki. In Italy they found refuge in Venice and Livorno. In short, the Jews were welcomed anywhere there was hostility against the papacy.

¹ Johannes Reuchlin, *L'Arte Cabalistica*, by Giulio Busi e Saverio Campanini, Firenze, Opus Libri, 1995, pp. 84-136. In this book Reuchlin maintains that "he who willingly believes in the word shall easily become a Pythagorean" ... the word of a Qabbalist! (*Ibid.* p. 10).

² The book was also extensively used by the National Socialists for their anti-Jewish propaganda (Martin Lutero, *Degli ebrei e delle loro menzogne*, by Adelisa Malena, Torino, Einaudi, 2008).



climbing. Nonetheless, Luther's cultural education remained rather superficial. Because he was a follower of Ockham's nominalism¹, he excelled in dialectics rather than in doctrine.



4. Martin Luther portrait by Lucas Cranach the Younger

Tormented by an inconstant nature, he fluctuated between visionary exaltations and dark depressions, fearful of God and tempted by the devil. And as a result of a sign from heaven², Luther became an Augustinian monk in search of a little cloistered peace. For a brief time, he was able to repress his lustful temperament and his intolerance for authority³. However, he found the theme of divine justice, which he hated and feared, unbearable. He eventually found a solution to his annoyance: the divine justice implies that God justifies everyone indiscriminately⁴. A sense of hatred for tradition began to arise in him. Tradition requires obedience and, hence, he was under the obligation to continuously repress the centrifugal forces of his own individualism. Thus, between 1517 and 1518⁵ Luther conceived the idea of a "return" to early Christianity⁶. Early Christianity could only be imagined by reading the Gospel; consequently, he

¹ However, it is emblematic of those dark times that at the University of Erfurt were taught Ockham's heretical doctrines instead of Scholasticism.

² Throughout his life, Martin gave credence to a large number of superstitions. The event leading him to monastic life, of which he made only mysterious allusions, seems to have been the striking of a lightning bolt while he was walking in the countryside.

³ Even so, he was able to conclude his studies and eventually taught theology at the new, but not very prestigious, university of Wittenberg, which became the centre of the Protestant revolt.

⁴ The dogmatic basis of Protestantism was that not actions, but only faith leads to salvation. We shall soon see what Luther meant by faith. Also the latest Catholic popes seem to have converted to this theological aberration by declaring that everyone is already saved. Such an affirmation renders religion fundamentally meaningless and purposeless and, therefore, it devoid of any reason to exist anymore.

⁵ The "sale" of indulgences was only the pretext for severing relations with Rome. This practice was the standard *dakṣiṇā* given to priests in exchange for prayers to release the souls of the deceased from their purgatorial sufferings. This custom was not mandatory, and it contributed only to the maintenance of priests, monks, friars and nuns of all orders and ranks. At that time, the other source of livelihood for ecclesiastics and civil authorities was the obligation of the tithes, or the tenth part of the net income of a family, to be delivered annually to the parish priest or to the tax collector. The Protestants, who first invented the modern secular society, are still outraged by such "despicable" practice but they forget the suffocating direct and indirect taxes that currently suffocate the citizens, defrauding them of more than half of their gross profit.

⁶ All ideas regarding an alleged "return to origins" actually hide a subversive intention. In fact, the "origins", due to the lack of regular teaching through direct transmission, are merely conceived on the basis of the inclinations and mental impressions of the "reformer". Similarly, the reformed pauperistic medieval orders like Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians (reformed by Alexander IV) and all the heretical and "communitistic" movements to them related, such as the Waldensians, Dolcinians, Wycliffians, Lollards, Hussite etc., they all preached a miserable and wretched life as indicated by Gospel, or so they believed. This is absolutely false. In fact, the Gospel teaches to have mercy and help the poor, not to live a wretched beggar's life (Giorgio Tourn, *I valdesi*, Torino, Claudiana ed., 1977; Mariateresa Beonio-Brocchieri Fumagalli, *Wycliff, il comunismo dei predestinati*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1975).



rejected any transmission of ritual and doctrinal order¹. By amputating fifteen centuries of completely autonomous tradition, Luther placed his “true” Christianity back in the bosom of Judaism. This is the origin of the fictitious Judeo-Christianity that from that moment on has greatly gained ground up to today’s culture. At the same time, the Old Testament became predominant thanks to the “Protestant Bible”. Undoubtedly, Luther was not fully aware of this pro-Jewish turn, that was instead controlled by more sharp and dangerous minds, namely Reuchlin and his nephew Philip Melancthon. The consequences of this “return to origins” were as follows:



5. Protestant "Eucharistic" ceremony

1. Protestantism abolished any reading, prayer, invocation or praise instituted by the Church since its foundation, validating instead only passages taken from the Bible. Due to its hatred towards tradition², it fiercely opposed the Latin language in favour of the vernacular, in this case German.

2. The repealed traditional liturgical (ritual) and theological (doctrinal) teaching was replaced by the free examination of sacred texts. Since no authority was recognized, everyone had the right to interpret the texts at his own discretion, leaving no room for rebuttal or correction.

3. Actions (ritual or not) do not lead to salvation, only faith does. Faith is now seen as an emotional and mental transportation towards one's individual beliefs, as it appears clear from point 4. Faith is a free gift of the divine grace; therefore, salvation is somehow predestined.

4. The arbitrary interpretation could become a sort of “spontaneous prayer”, and in the ceremonies it replaced the ancient consecrated formulas of the Catholic tradition. This allowed the use of free anathemas against anyone and anything that opposed Protestantism.

5. Thus, the rite was altogether replaced by the “liturgy of the word”, with readings of biblical passages in vernacular translation, by “spontaneous prayers” that became sentimental outbursts of anyone who belonged to the community, and by sappy songs that reinterpreted in a moralistic sense the Old Testament passages. The liturgy of the gesture was completely replaced by signs of community aggregation, “greetings of peace” etc.

6. The seven sacraments of Catholicism were first reduced to three, then to two. In fact, the confession without penance was soon abolished, favouring instead some sort of public admission of sin. Only the Baptism and the Eucharist survived. The Baptism with water became a symbol of aggregation to the community of believers. The Eucharist lost any sacrificial meaning: it was no longer the ritual repetition of the sacrifice of the cross, but simply the commemoration of the last supper. However, Luther kept

¹ In similar fashion, due to Protestant influence, has developed the neo-Hinduism current of the *nāstika*, known as *ārya samāj*. This current refuses any written text or oral transmission that does not appear in the *Vedas*. By preaching the return to the origins, it divulges a monotheistic, evolutionary and anti-caste religiosity, in full contradiction with the very Vedic texts. Thus, according to its followers, the *Vedas* must be reinterpreted to grasp their true meaning!

² Translation always involves an interpretative filter. Therefore, the biblical passages central to the religious practice appear strongly distorted by Protestantism.



claiming that the body and blood of Jesus Christ were still present in the bread and wine of the communion. But how was it possible to justify the presence of the Christ in the substances offered in sacrifice if there was no consecration? Could possibly the mere presence of laymen consecrate the bread and wine in any way?

7. The abolition of the sacrament of priestly ordination precluded all sort of consecration. Without priesthood there is no sacrificial rite nor the consecration of the oblation or the victim¹. The dissolution of priesthood was indeed the eradication from tradition, thus reducing the Protestant or Evangelical community, as they prefer to be called, to a lay community. One becomes “pastor” after a mere school course, or simply by election of the community, without obtaining any priestly charism.

8. Likewise, the place of prayer cannot be consecrated and it is no longer the permanent home of the Lord where His presence is real. It is open only during the congregation assemblies. For the rest of the time, it remains an unused profane space.

9. Similarly, the tombs of the saints and the relics are not held as holy. The very concept of sacred is just a conventional title given to the Bible, considered to be “the word of the Lord”. God, therefore, after the prophets of Judaism and after the historical life of Christ, became silent. Or rather, He speaks through the individual fantasies of each Protestant believer.

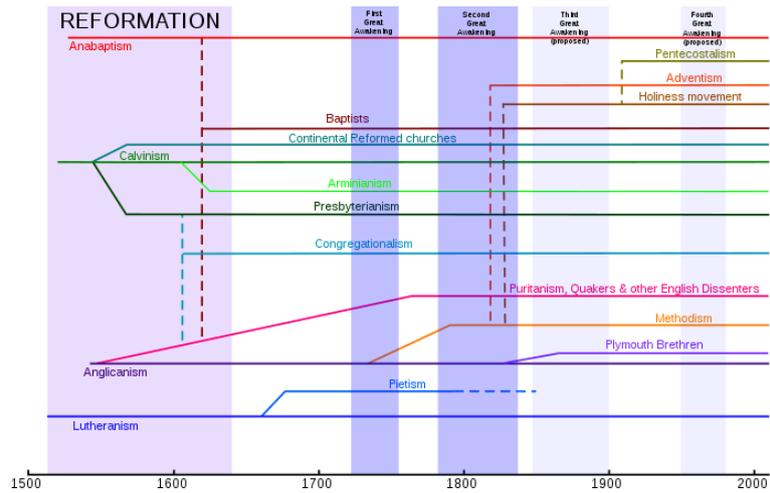
10. Due to the hatred and rejection towards any medieval tradition, the veneration of the saints and of the Virgin was also abolished. All iconic representations were, therefore, prohibited and the ancient images destroyed because they were seen as residues of superstition.

11. Due to the disappearance of the centrality of sacredness and mystery, and by pushing to the extreme limit the individualism, characteristic of that period of mercantile class affirmation, Protestantism inevitably fragmented into hundreds of sects and subsects fiercely in competition with each other: “*And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand; And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand; And if Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.*” (Gospel of Saint Mark, III. 24-26). Notwithstanding their feuding, these sects are always ready to overcome their differences and join forces in order to fight Tradition².

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¹ Due to the absence of priesthood, the killing of an animal is not a real sacrifice, but only a pious slaughter. True sacrifice is performed only accordingly to the rules and by following a complete priestly doctrine of sacrifice.

² These princes miscalculated the outcome: Charles V (1500-1558), the young Emperor and King of Spain, demonstrated skills of great leadership and political savviness. Without ever breaking the chivalric code, he overcame all the intrigues of his vassals and maintained the prestige of the Holy Roman Empire. We must stress the greatness of this Catholic sovereign, since at that time only the external form of the ancient Empire had survived. In fact, without the backbone embodied by Order of the Temple, the Empire of Charles V was by that time completely devoid of its initiatic substratum and, thus, he could only be an impotent spectator of the conversion to Protestantism of half of his German vassals. On the other hand, Germany had to wait until 1871 to achieve its unification as a national state. Moreover, the plots of the German princes, who used Luther for their own interests, irreversibly destabilized Central Europe, waging wars, wreaking vengeance and making chauvinistic and hegemonic claims that are still virulent today.



6. Protestant sects over the centuries

