In the early days of the Third Reich until he was forced to flee Germany in 1938, the Jewish thinker Hans Joachim Schoeps attempted to combat what he considered to be a political and religious crisis that affected all Germans. He claimed that this emergency grew out of a "universal faithless situation." In response to this existential crisis, Schoeps laid the foundations for a systematic Jewish theology that repositioned the Jew in relation to God and the rest of German Christian culture.

He demonstrated this theological reconfiguration of Jewish and Christian boundaries in his "Critical-Protestant" theology of Jewish identity that reexamined rabbinic tradition by raising what he considered to be Protestant questions regarding the sacred content of the Oral Torah and the rituals associated with it. Schoeps was concerned that Jews had lost their connection to "the divine word... in its absolute concreteness." This blurring of theological boundaries between Judaism and Christianity is further illustrated in Schoeps' dialogical portrayal of the Jewish-Christian relationship.

Because of his construction of an existential Jewish theology with the aid of Christian categories, Schoeps' work can also be compared to that of the Jewish thinker Franz Rosenzweig, who just a few years earlier had constructed a systematic Jewish theology by drawing upon Augustinian categories of the "City of God" and the "City of Man," and inverting Christian caricatures of Judaism to promote Jewish uniqueness. Whereas both Jews and Christians often see Rosenzweig's theology as a model for dialogue, I will argue that Schoeps actually went further than Rosenzweig in breaking down the barriers between Judaism and Christianity. Both Rosenzweig and...
Schoeps gave Christianity an unprecedented role in redemption, yet Rosenzweig portrayed it as subordinate to Judaism.  

In contrast, Schoeps tended to recognize Christian uniqueness to a greater extent and at times even placed Christianity on equal footing with Judaism. Yet, because of his somewhat ambiguous portrayal of Jewish identity in relation to Christianity, Schoeps was considered neither Jewish nor Christian enough by his detractors in the two religious communities. This demonstrates his unique positionlessness on the border between Judaism and Christianity. Schoeps' seemingly contradictory and multiple Jewish subjectivity represents a possible model for a Jewish-Christian heterogeneous totality, in which Jewish and Christian identities are intertwined yet not melded together, therefore retaining their difference. However, this model of interconnection was misunderstood and subsequently marginalized in the master narratives of Jewish intellectual history.

Rosenzweig's Dialectic with Christianity

Both Rosenzweig and Schoeps constructed Jewish identity in response to theological dilemmas shared by their Christian contemporaries. In fact, each went through a religious identity crisis in which he turned to Christian mentors for support, ultimately discovering his Jewish identity as a result. In the context of their Jewish-Christian intersections, they both drew upon Christian theologoumena to define Jewish identity, subsequently reconfiguring Jewish and Christian boundaries.

Following his dialogue in the summer of 1913 with the Christian historian and convert from Judaism, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, Rosenzweig resolved to become a Christian in order to experience divine revelation as an historical

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