

***A Positive Light on the Nations:
R. Moshe Isserles' Revisionistic Views on
Christianity***

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Opinions of the Geonim and Rishonim on the question of whether the Christian belief system is permissible for non-Jews who adhere to the Noahide code¹ range from a clear prohibition, based on the view that

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This paper is part of a larger, unpublished work, which was researched and written, some of it by hand, by the late Rabbi Asher Turin for the NISHMA foundation. While no date is given for the paper, based on the sources he cites, this most probably dates to the early 2000s. I thank Rabbi Benjamin Hecht for providing me with a PDF copy of the paper—the original document is unfortunately no longer available. I also thank Dr. Albert Friedberg for the generous sponsorship of this editing project. Ed.

+ The arguments made in the body of the paper are entirely R. Turin's own. I have reworded most of the sentences and rearranged many of the paragraphs, so that the argumentation is continuous, and have also removed some of the tangential discussions. Nevertheless, I have left the substance and structure of the paper unchanged, and the only supplementary information, clarification, and sources are inserted into the footnotes, all of which are identified by 'ed.' Ed.

¹ The Noahide code is seen by some as including more than one commandment pertaining to idolatry. On this view, Christianity would be encompassed by one of the following commandments: it can be a violation of the commandment against blasphemy, either directly or indirectly, inasmuch as some argue that the belief in God is a presupposition of the commandment against blasphemy.

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Christianity is considered idolatrous,² all the way to a positive acceptance of Christianity as non-idolatrous.³ In this article, we focus primarily on the seminal ruling of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Rema),⁴ and its reception, but we will also analyze the position of Menahem Ha-Meiri, who was R. Isserles' intellectual predecessor in this regard, and Rabbi Yaakov Emden, who was his successor.

In discussing the permissibility of a Jew causing a non-Jew to swear in the name of his or her religion, R. Isserles wrote that, with respect to the Noahide code, Christianity is not seen as idolatrous, and it is therefore not forbidden for non-Jews. Accordingly, it poses no halakhic problem for a Jew to cause Jesus' name to be uttered in an oath.⁵ Even from this summary of his words, it is clear that Isserles' opinion belongs on the more lenient end of the spectrum.

Alternatively, it can be a facet of idolatry, but without a death penalty. But see R. Nissim Gerondi (Ran) on *Alfasi, Avodah Zarah*, chap. 1, citing Nahmanides, who considered the possibility that swearing in the name of an idol is not one of the prohibitions included in the Noahide code.

² Besides the opinion of Maimonides, cited in the following footnote, R. Turin also mentions Rabbenu Hananel ben Hushiel's commentary on Tractate *Sanhedrin*. Although I have not found an explicit statement from him about Christianity or *shituf*—the pertinent sections are missing from the Almanzi Codex—in one volume that contains the commentary of several Rishonim on *Sanhedrin*, there is an extensive commentary on *Sanhedrin*, which is attributed to Rabbenu Hananel. Two significant points can be found in the comments to folios 58a-65b. The first is a reference to Jesus in the context of a person who considers himself a god; and the second is a categorical prohibition of forming business partnerships with a non-Jew, lest the non-Jew swear in his or her god's name. Both of these statements seem to take it for granted that Christianity amounts to idolatry. *Otzar Ha-Geonim Le-Masekhet Sanhedrin*, ed. H. Toibish (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1966), 553, 555. I thank Dr. Albert Friedberg for this reference. Ed.

³ For the former, see Maimonides, *Commentary to the Mishnah, Avodah Zarah, Sanhedrin*, chap. 10 (in uncensored editions); Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Melakhim*, chap. 12; Maimonides, *Epistles of Maimonides: Crisis and Leadership*, trans. Abraham Halkin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), 98. For the latter, see Menahem Ha-Meiri, *Hidushei Ha-Meiri on Bava Kamma* 37b, 38a, 113a-b, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Institute for Publication of Books and Study of Manuscripts, 1977), 40, 107; Rabbi David Kimhi, *Pirush Rabbenu David Kimhi al Ha-Torah* on Genesis 22:1, ed. A. Ginzburg (Pressburg: Schmid, 1842), 55.

⁴ R. Isserles (1530–1572) lived in Poland. He is considered the bedrock of present day halakhah.

⁵ See R. Moshe Isserles' gloss on *Shulhan Arukh: Orach Hayyim* 156.

As I shall argue, however, the sources upon which he based his argument do not seem to bear out his view of Christianity. On the contrary, the authorities he cited subscribe to the view that Christianity is idolatrous. Once this point is established, this article will then consider the parameters of this new extra-halakhic position. Finally, we will attempt to reconcile the more positive view of Christianity found in the writings of Meiri, R. Isserles, and R. Emden with that of the Rishonim and Aḥaronim.

The View of Tosfot

We begin with the view of Tosafot, which serves as R. Isserles's main source.⁶ It should be noted at the outset that, in the comments of Tosafot, and in R. Isserles' remarks, the non-Jews to which they referred are Christians. Tosafot deal with the question whether a Jew who suspects that his non-Jewish partner has misappropriated funds can have him swear an oath to prove his innocence. In rendering their decision, Tosafot considered whether, in doing so, a Jew would be violating one of the following three prohibitions.

The first prohibition in question is that of a Jew mentioning the name of idolatry, emerging from the biblical commandment, "ישם אלהים" "לא ישמע על-פִּיךָ".⁷ And later in the verse, "אחרים לא תזכירו". According to the Talmud, the first part of the verse refers to the biblical prohibition for a Jew to utter the name of an idol. The second part of the verse, however, refers to the prohibition for a Jew to swear or take a vow in the name of an idol or to cause another, even a non-Jew, to do so. The latter prohibition, which pertains to another party, may be biblical in origin, or it may be a loose allusion (*asmakhta*) rather than a proper biblical source, for the Talmud considers an alternate interpretation of that

⁶ Tosafot to *Bekhorot* 2b, s.v. *shema*, repeated in Tosafot to *Sanhedrin* 63b, s.v. *asur*, and cited by Asher ben Yehiel, *Tosafot Ha-Rosh* on *Sanhedrin* 63b, ed. C.B. Ravitz (Jerusalem: Mossad Rav Kook, 2004), 353; *Rosh*, *Sanhedrin* 7.3. See also Tosafot to *Gittin* 50b, s.v. *yetomin*; *Talmid Ha-Ramban* on *Sanhedrin* 63b, in *Sanhedria Gedolah Le-Masekhet Sanhedrin*, vol. 5, ed. G. Lezevnik (Jerusalem: Makhon Harry Fischel, 1968), 84.

Isserles' sources were inserted by a later author, who based them on Isserles' book *Darkehei Moshe Ha-Arukh* (Sulzbach: M. Bloch, 1692). The sources quoted by Isserles in *Shulkhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 156 are those discussed by him in *Darkehei Moshe*. Isserles' other sources are Rabbenu Yeruḥem and Rav Nissim Gaon. Rabbenu Yeruḥem, *Toldot Adam Ve-hava* 17:5 (Kapust, 1837), 127; Rabbenu Nissim (Ran) to *Alfasi*, *Avodah Zarah*, chap. 1.

⁷ Exodus 23:12.

part of the verse.⁸ Be that as it may, on this basis, the rabbis of the Talmud prohibit a Jew from forming a business partnership with a non-Jew, as it may result in the Jew being forced to take the non-Jew to a gentile court and the non-Jew taking an oath in the name of an idol.⁹ (In the subsequent section, these halakhic concerns will be indicated with an A.)

The second prohibition relates to oaths. There is a distinct commandment against joining (*shituf*) in the context of oaths. The prohibition pertains to mentioning anything in the created universe alongside God's name. There may be one or possibly two prohibitions included in this commandment. 1. The biblical prohibition of a Jew swearing with *shituf*.¹⁰ 2. There may be a violation of *לא ישמע*, meaning the commandment against making someone else swear with *shituf*. The question is whether a Jew would be violating this second prohibition by making a non-Jew take an oath in this fashion. (In the subsequent section, this halakhic question will be indicated with a C.)

The third prohibition is of *ולפני עור לא תתן מכשל*.¹¹ These words are understood to be a commandment for Jews against causing other Jews to sin. If, and only if, non-Jews are prohibited against *shituf* in oaths, a Jew may be violating the prohibition of *ולפני עור*—in addition to the other prohibitions we have mentioned—by causing a non-Jew to take an oath with *shituf*. An example would be swearing in the name of God and joining the name of a Christian saint.¹² (In the subsequent analysis, this halakhic question will be indicated with a B.)

The issue before the halakhic decisors was whether a Jew violates the second part of the *לא ישמע* clause if he or she takes a non-Jew to

⁸ *Sanhedrin* 63b; Tosafot, s.v. *she-lo*.

⁹ Rabbenu Asher states that if the Jew sees that a non-Jew is about to take such an oath, the Jew should ideally not proceed, the reason being that the non-Jew may still lie and swear falsely in his or her deity's name; and that would mean that the Jew is making the non-Jew take a gratuitous oath in the name of an idol. This outcome is something the Jew should avoid. The Rosh adds, however, that the Jew is allowed to proceed if there is the remote possibility that, in the last moment, the non-Jew will admit his or her guilt out of fear of taking the oath. The Rosh seems to be assuming that the non-Jew will call upon his or her idolatry and that Christianity is therefore idolatrous. Asher ben Yehiel, *She'elot U-Teshuvot Ha-Rosh*, no.18 (Venice: 1607), 33–35.

¹⁰ *Sukkah* 45a-b; b. *Sanhedrin* 63a.

¹¹ Leviticus 19:14.

¹² Cf. Rabbi Henkin, *B'nei Banim* 3:36 (Jerusalem: 1997), 128–136, where it appears that Rabbi Henkin understands Tosafot to be referring to a lesser form of idolatry.

court and thereby causes him or her to take an oath. Tosafot referred to a disagreement about this issue: According to Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam), it is a biblical prohibition that cannot be permitted under any circumstance, including the case under consideration. According to Rabbenu Tam, however, the prohibition coming from the second part of the verse is an *asmakhta*, and the source is thus rabbinic;¹³ and the rabbis did not apply this law in cases where such an oath is necessary for a Jew to prevent a monetary loss.¹⁴ While Rabbenu Tam conceded that it is prohibited to enter into a situation where an oath of an idolater might be required, he stated that, when one is in that situation, in order to protect Jewish financial interests, one can ask the non-Jew to take an oath on the basis of the talmudic dispensation of collecting defaulted loans on a non-Jewish holiday.¹⁵

Rabbenu Tam then goes on to say that, in his time (i.e., in the 12th century), there is no longer the possibility of violating the commandment, for the non-Jews in his day do not mention the name of an idol in their oaths. Tosafot in *Bekhorot* includes a lengthy statement on this matter in Rabbenu Tam's name.¹⁶

בזמן הזה כולן נשבעים בקדשים ואין תופסים בהם אלהות. A. ואע"פ שמזכירין [עמהם] שם שמים וכוונתם [לד"א¹⁷ מ"מ], אין זה [שם] עבודת כוכבים,¹⁸ כי דעתם לשם עושה שמים וארץ. ואע"ג שמשתתף¹⁹ ש"ש ודבר אחר אין כאן לפני עור לא תתן מכשול דבני נח לא הוזהרו על כך. B. ולדידן לא אשכחן איסור בגרם שיתוף. C.

¹³ The term *asmakhta* means that the biblical verse upon which the prohibition is supposed to be based is merely suggestive of that law. The law is therefore rabbinic in nature.

¹⁴ The view of Nahmanides is similar to Rabbenu Tam's, as can be seen in the commentary of Rabbenu Nissim (Ran) on *Alfasi, Avodah Zarah*, chap. 1, in which he cites Nahmanides. Nahmanides went further than Rabbenu Tam, however. The former wrote that he was tempted to say that, if the non-Jew initiates the oath and formulates it according to his own beliefs, there is no sin on the part of the Jew (or non-Jew).

¹⁵ This dispensation similarly involves lifting a rabbinic prohibition.

¹⁶ The three separate halakhic issues discussed thus far will be indicated by their corresponding letter. Ed.

¹⁷ I.e., Jesus.

¹⁸ R. Isserles' other source, namely, Rabbenu Nissim (Ran), cited Tosafot as saying, "they do not swear in the name of idolatry." Rabbenu Nissim (Ran) to *Alfasi, Avodah Zarah*, chap. 1.

¹⁹ Other versions read *meshatef*, i.e., combining God's name with that of another being.

At this time, everyone swears by the Saints and does not include any theistic meaning. And even though they mention the name of heaven and they intend something else, in any case this is not idolatry, for they mean the Creator of heaven and earth. And even though they combine the name of heaven and something else, there is no [prohibition of] “placing a stumbling block,” because Noahides were not commanded on this. And for us there is no prohibition in causing “joining.”²⁰

Thus, Tosafot proposed the following about the three issues:

- A. Although non-Jews are idolaters,²¹ the talmudic prohibition of forming business partnerships with them no longer applies; and that is because non-Jews are no longer swearing in the name of Jesus. Instead, they are now swearing in the name of the saints and/or on the four books of the evangelists.²²

²⁰ The translation here is my own. Rabbeinu Tam’s ruling pertains to an oath made by a non-Jew in the name of “God omnipotent and his holy four evangelists.” See Jacob Katz, *Halakab Ve-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 279, fn. 60. There are several legal implications to Rabbeinu Tam’s statement, and R. Turin explains each point in the section that follows. Broadly speaking, the two main points that emerge from this ruling is that, both with regard to the saints (*kedoshim*) that are mentioned and with respect to combining God’s name with another being (*shituf*), Jews do not have to be concerned that non-Jews include those terms in their oaths. The former, because the saints are not gods; the latter, because joining (*shituf*) is not prohibited to non-Jews. Ed.

²¹ Tosafot make this point about Christians in full view of their acceptance of God as creator. This belief does not seem to change Tosafot’s halakhic view of Christianity as *avodah zarah*.

²² I.e., the New Testament or the evangelists. This expression comes from Rabbi Solomon ben Aderet (Rashba), who writes, “they swear on the four,” meaning the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. R. Solomon ben Aderet, *Teshuvot Ha-Rashba* 7:302, ed. A. Zalzik (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 2000), 79. In his edition, Rabbenu Yeruḥem substitutes the word *evangelion* for “their holy ones” (*kaddeshim*, alternatively *kedoshim*). Rabbenu Yeruḥem, *Toldot Adam Ve-Hava* 17:5 (Kapust, 1837), 127. More evidence comes from Prof. Y. Baer, who posits that Christians used oaths with the Latin words “*per deum omnipotentum et per ista sacra quattuor evangelica*” (meaning, to the omnipotent God and his holy four evangelists), cited by Jacob Katz, *Halakab Ve-Kabbalah*, 279, fn. 60.

- B. A Jew is not violating the prohibition of causing another to stumble in this situation, for the commandment against *shituf* is not included in the seven Noahide laws.²³
- C. There is no prohibition to cause a non-Jew to make an oath with *shituf*, which would parallel the prohibition of causing another to make an oath in the name of idolatry. The reasoning behind this ruling is that the Talmud makes no mention of this prohibition.²⁴

It should be noted that this statement appears to amount to a new type of *shituf*: in the talmudic era, non-Jews did swear in the name of Jesus. Here, however, Tosafot are concerned with the medieval custom of swearing in God's name with the addition of Jesus' name; and this is where Tosafot are lenient. Nevertheless, such an oath must still be considered invoking idolatry, and so it would be prohibited for Jews, and possibly non-Jews as well. That is to say, a Jew would be guilty of לֹא יִשְׁמַע if he or she were to cause—directly or even indirectly—a non-Jew to do this. It must therefore be the case that Tosafot are thus only discussing the mention of God's name with the name of saints, and stating that, although Jews are commanded against doing so, they are not prohibited to cause another to engage in this type of *shituf*. And further, this *shituf* is not included in the Noahide laws, for it is to be seen as separate from the commandment against idolatry. It also follows that a Jew is not guilty of לפני עורר if he causes a non-Jew to engage in this new kind of *shituf*.

The View of R. Moshe Isserles

In using the aforementioned Tosafot as the source for his ruling, Rabbi Isserles revealed a seemingly divergent understanding of it. On R. Isserles' reading, Tosafot suggested that, although non-Jews call on Jesus, Jews can still enter into partnerships with them, for Christianity is not considered to be idolatry. R. Isserles wrote as follows:²⁵

²³ It should be noted that Tosafot did not suggest that there is no prohibition against *shituf*, as if it were treating the matter of a belief in the Trinity. Its concern here is only with the status of making an oath that joins the creator with another created being or form.

²⁴ Still, one would be violating the commandment of causing a Jew to make an oath in that fashion (לפני עורר).

²⁵ The positions on the three halakhic issues are indicated with A, B, and C. Ed.

ויש מקילין בעשיות שותפות עם העכו"ם בזמן הזה משום שאין העכו"ם בזמן הזה נשבעים בע"א. מכל מקום כוונתם לעושה שמים וארץ אלא שמתתפלים שם שמים ודבר אחר.²⁶ ואע"ג דמזכירין הע"א²⁷ ולא מצינו שיש בזה משום לפני עור לא תתן מכשול דהרי אינם מוזהרין על השתוף.

There are those who are lenient in forming partnerships with non-Jews at this time because non-Jews at this time do not swear in the name of idolatry. And even though they mention idols, their intention is to the creator of heaven but they just combine the name of heaven with something else. And we did not find that there is in this [the prohibition of] placing a stumbling block in front of the blind, because they are not commanded on "joining" (*shituf*).²⁸

With regard to issue A, what R. Isserles appears to be saying is that non-Jews mention the name of Jesus in their oaths, but that act is not idolatrous for non-Jews, the reason being that the oath shows their respect for the supreme God; and Jesus is a subordinate deity. That belief is not idolatry for them. Therefore, a Jew who causes non-Jews to take these oaths is not in violation of the causative part of לא ישמע.²⁹ The basis for that statement is that, in adding the name of God to the name of Jesus, non-Jews remove any hint of idolatry. On issue B, R. Isserles posited that the Jew is not violating the prohibition of לפני עור, since, as we just explained, Christianity is not idolatry. On issue C, R. Isserles did not accept the view that causing a non-Jew to join the name of God with a created being or form runs parallel to the causative prohibition which stems from the second part of לא ישמע. It also follows that causing a non-Jew to express a Christian belief does not constitute a sin.

Thus, in a few short lines, R. Isserles expressed a novel view that extends beyond the decisions of his predecessors. That is to say none of the sources he cited write that contemporary non-Jews no longer mention the name of idolatry, but R. Isserles seems to understand his sources as saying so. More to the point, he read those sources as saying that Christianity is not idolatry [*avodah z'arah*] for non-Jews.³⁰ Further, R.

²⁶ I.e. Jesus.

²⁷ Isserles' gloss on *Shulhan Arukh: Orach Hayyim* 156.

²⁸ Translation is my own. The context is clearly the status of non-Jews, rather than simply the meaning of their oaths, which in this case is a reference to both God and Jesus, and the plain meaning seems to be that non-Jews are no longer idolaters. Ed.

²⁹ It is possible that this concept does not exist, even for a Jew.

³⁰ This view is slightly problematic in light of the talmudic prohibition against *shituf* for non-Jews. In one statement in the Talmud, it is said that that which is

Isserles considered this new view to be authoritative and widely applicable. For example, in his gloss on *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ab* 151, he sided with the lenient opinion and allowed Jews to sell Christians items that might be used in religious services. R. Shabtai Ha-Kohen (*Shakh*) cited it in the following manner:

לשון ד"מ מיהו בזמן הזה יש להקל מטעם דמקילין להשתתף עמהם.³¹

This is the wording of *Darkhei Moshe*. However, at this time, there should be lenience on the basis that we are lenient to partner with them.

However, according to many scholars, the Talmud refers to Christianity as idolatry [*avodah zarah*], and this law pertains to both Jews and non-Jews.³² The same view is found in post-talmudic literature.³³ R. Isserles is the first decisor to refer to Christianity as *shituf*; Tosafot would

considered to be idolatrous for a Jew, and therefore punishable by a Jewish court, is equally prohibited to a non-Jew. *Sanhedrin* 56b. According to all the opinions in the Talmud, *shituf*, which, as we have seen, is the belief in the sharing of powers between God and other entities, is prohibited for a Jew. *Sanhedrin* 63a. Thus, *shituf* must be prohibited for non-Jews. Indeed, according to the opinion of Rabbi Meir Ha-Levi Abulafia, *shituf* is even worse than idolatry! R. Meir Ha-Levi Abulafia, *Yad Rama: Masekhet Sanhedrin* (Salonika, 1798), 70.

³¹ See the Shakh's gloss on *Shulhan Arukh: Yoreh De'ab* 151:1, wherein he goes on to cite *Shulhan Arukh: Orach Hayyim* 156.

It may be rebutted that R. Isserles still believed that Christianity was *avodah zarah*, but he ruled that way in order to protect Jews. The basis for the ruling would be *davar ha-domeh*, or the idea that the sages have the power to uproot a law, even in the form of a *kum ve-aseh*, when there is a strong basis for doing so, such as that the case is similar to another Torah law. This idea appears in a number of places in the Tosafot regarding edicts and laws advanced by the Talmud, most prominently in Tosafot to *Yevamot* 89b, s.v. *keivan*. Thus, R. Isserles may have been taking his sources, which appear to accept Christianity as non-idolatrous, out of context, in order to justify what is in reality an uprooting of a Torah law in the form of a *kum ve-aseh*, meaning a decree through which one violates a Torah law through action rather than inaction. However, it is less than reasonable to assume that R. Isserles and his disciple, Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe, made such a change to the halakhah without informing or consulting with the sages of their generation. Also, if the operating assumption would be that Christianity has the status of *avodah zarah*, the case would be comparable to a *hora'at sha'ah* which cannot be enacted in cases of *avodah zarah*, despite the injunction of listening to the prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15).

³² See David Berger's "Jewish-Christian Polemics" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 389–95.

³³ That is, apart from polemic and apologetic material, but this is not an appropriate basis for halakhic decisions.

not have done so. In Tosafot's rishonic frame of reference, something either is, or is not, *avodah zarah*. But R. Isserles actually interprets Tosafot to be saying that the *shituf* of Christianity—that is, an affirmation of God as the supreme God, along with a subordinate deity, namely, Jesus—is not *avodah zarah* and is permissible for non-Jews.³⁴ But in fact, Tosafot did not say that.³⁵

In the vocabulary of Tosafot, *shituf* does not mean the Trinity. Rather, it means joining something created, such as a saint, with God's name, specifically in an oath or when dealing with other matters that concern God. In the view of Tosafot, Christianity is not “non-pagan *avodah zarah* in a monotheistic mode,” in the sense that Tosafot viewed it as something less than full idolatry, as David Berger contends.³⁶ Tosafot used the Christian belief in God as creator only as an argument against the claim that, since they also mean Jesus, the term Lord is contaminated and assumes the status of *avodah zarah*.

Explaining Rabbi Isserles' Ruling: Censorship

How is it possible, then, that R. Isserles arrived at this view—an apparent misinterpretation of Tosafot? Perhaps the reason can be found in Christian censorship of Tosafot. The censorship can be detected by comparing the Tosafot on *Bekhorot* 2b, which was R. Isserles's main

³⁴ And this is in fact the way many Aḥaronim understand R. Isserles' comments, as we will go on to show.

³⁵ The Tosafists have a variety of views on the status of Christianity, so their position may be somewhat oversimplified by R. Turin. See for example Tosafot to *Avodah Zarah* 2a, where the following is written: “Even if they [non-Jews] were regarded as idol worshippers...,” suggesting that some Tosafists felt otherwise. See also Rabbi Meir Hakohen's statement, citing Shmuel ben Meir's tradition from his grandfather Rashi, namely, that non-Jews of his day were not idolaters and would not “go and thank” their gods during their holiday for their business transactions. R. Meir Ha-Kohen, *Hagabot Maimoniot*, in *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avodah Zarah* 9:4, ed. Shabsai Frankel, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Shabsai Frankel, 2000), 171. I thank Dr. Buchman for these two references. Ed.

³⁶ David Berger, “Jews, Gentiles, and the Modern Egalitarian Ethos: Some Tentative Thoughts,” in *Formulating Responses in an Egalitarian Age*, ed. Marc Stern (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 98. For a more extensive treatment of the Tosafot at issue, see the Appendix to Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (Liverpool: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 175–177. Ed.

source, with all the other versions, especially the Tosafot Sens version.³⁷ As we will see, the censorship completely changed the meaning of the Tosafot.

A key change is the substitution of the word **גם**, which appeared in the original version and can be found in Tosafot on *Sanbedrin*, with the word **כי**, as the result of which the sentence becomes **"מ"מ אין זה [שם]** "מ"מ אין זה [שם] **גם דעתם לשם שמים עושה"** *עבודת כוכבים*,³⁸ Other changes made by the censor are to substitute "לישו" with "דבר אחר," and then to remove this phrase altogether. The words **מ"מ** [*mikol makom*] and **שם** were also removed, rendering it... **אין זה עבודת כוכבים**, giving the impression that Christianity is not perceived as *avodah zarah* at all.³⁹ We can now understand how R. Isserles may have been misled by this censored version. The difficulty with this explanation, however, is that Rabbenu Yeruḥem's version of the Tosafot was not censored; and R. Isserles cites him as a source for his ruling.⁴⁰ So how do we understand R. Isserles' interpretation?

We can attempt to offer an explanation based on a responsum attributed to R. Meir of Rothenberg.⁴¹ This responsum reads, in part,⁴² "משום ד(ב)גוים דחוץ לארץ לאו עובדי ע"ז הם." It should be noted that this view would be even more lenient than permitting the oath only in cases of financial loss. This responsum, however, does not cite Rabbenu Tam's ruling in its entirety. In order to understand Rabbenu Tam's, and thus R. Rothenberg's, views, it is necessary for us to analyze R. Yitzhak

³⁷ See *Tosafot Sens al Masekhet Bekhorot*, ed. Yaakov David Ilan (Jerusalem: Makhon Kenset Ha-Rishonim, 1997), 7-8. The Tosafot passage on *Bekhorot* is the one that was censored.

³⁸ In any case, this does not have the [status] of idolatry. Also, their intention is to the Creator of heaven and earth. Translation mine. Ed.

³⁹ For emphasis, the author writes the uncensored words in bold. I italicize them. Ed.

⁴⁰ That is to say, R. Isserles would have presumably seen the uncensored version of Tosafot, but that did not affect his ruling. Ed.

⁴¹ R. Meir ben Barukh of Rothenberg, *Tshuvot Maram Me-Rotenberg*, vol. 2, no. 57, ed. Y. Z. Kahana (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1960), 52. It is possible, however, that this responsum is attributed to him in error. So *Likutei Ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem: Makhon Le-Hotza'at Sifrei Rishonim, 1984), 297. The mistaken attribution may be based on another ruling of R. Rothenberg, in which he accepts the decision of Rabbenu Tam to allow a gentile to mention the name of his idol, provided it is for the purpose of saving Jewish funds.

⁴² Because (in the case of) the non-Jews outside Israel, they are not idol worshippers. Translation Mine. Ed.

ben Moshe's *Obr Zaru'a*, which is where Rabbenu Tam's full ruling is mentioned.⁴³

At the end of the first chapter of *Avodah Zarah*, R. Yitzhak says why Rabbenu Tam believed non-Jews do not practice idolatry:⁴⁴ "לאו עובדי" "ע"ז הם אלא מנהג אבותיהם בידיהם". This statement is a reference to the Talmud, where it is written that gentiles that live outside of Israel are not serving idols.⁴⁵ But this teaching does not mean that non-Jews living outside of Israel are not *idolaters*. Referring to the level of religious fervour among non-Jews at that time, the teaching informs us that the everyday thoughts of non-Jews are no longer filled with devotion to their idols.⁴⁶ Therefore, Rabbenu Tam can still be understood as saying that there is a leniency in forming partnerships with non-Jews, and not because they are not true idolaters. Rather, the reason is that it is no longer certain that non-Jews would be inclined to swear in the name of their idol when they come to court. We might even say that such oaths can now be seen as a formality, not an affirmation of their belief system. In other words, perhaps the only significance of these oaths is in order to establish perjury, as is the case in modern times.

Explaining R. Isserles's Ruling: Noda Be-Yehudah Tenina

Notwithstanding the difficulties in understanding R. Isserles' view, it has become the halakhah. As a result, some of his contemporaries and successors attempted to make peace with it. Rabbi Shmuel Landau, who was the son of Rabbi Yehezkel Landau (author of the *Nodah Be-Yehudah*), understood R. Isserles as saying that Christianity is idolatrous, but *shituf* of an idol's name along with God's name is permitted. The words used in such an oath, which is a sign of deference to their God, would be, "I swear in God and Jesus."⁴⁷ Doing so is not an idolatrous

⁴³ This was written by Rabbi Yitzhak ben Moshe of Vienna, who was R. Meir of Rothenberg's teacher. Yitzhak ben Moshe, *Obr Zaru'a* (Zhitomir, 1862), 40.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Hulin* 13b.

⁴⁶ On this passage, see R. Tzvi Hirsch Chajes, who interprets it to mean that Christianity is not idolatrous outside of Israel, although this conflates this teaching with one that appears in a different context. Maharatz Chajes subsequently uses the same statement as a basis for stating that it is acceptable for non-Jews to practice *shituf*. Maharatz Chajes, *Hagabot Ha-Gaon Tzvi Hirsch Chajes*, *Berakhot* 57b.

⁴⁷ This oath is not to be understood as saying, "You, Jesus, are my God," for that would legally be an act of worship.

act, but it is permitted only if God's name is mentioned as well.⁴⁸ R. Shmuel seems to be suggesting something novel, namely, that the prohibition of *לֹא יִשְׁמַע* is violated only when the name of the idol is mentioned alone—without the name of God. It is far from obvious, however, that the insertion of an idol's name does not amount to an acceptance of that idol's yoke. Further, is this truly what R. Isserles suggested? The other problem is that none of the original sources upon which R. Isserles based his ruling, which implies that Christian worship cannot be equated with idolatry, either permitted causing a non-Jew to mention the name of idolatry, or suggested that Christianity is anything other than *avodah zarah*.⁴⁹

Explaining R. Isserles' Ruling: Other Aḥaronim

Rabbi Shmuel ben Yosef Orgler,⁵⁰ Rabbi Yaakov Emden,⁵¹ Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes,⁵² and Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg⁵³ all rely, either

⁴⁸ Based on Maimonides' statement concerning the ultimate decay brought about by Enosh's idea of worshipping the heavenly bodies, in the first and second chapters of *Hilkebot Avodah Zarah*, R. Turin suggests that mentioning the heavenly bodies is forbidden only in a declaration of worship. That is to say it is only in the context of taking oaths that referring to other created beings serves to diminish the divine image, and that explains why Maimonides' terminology changes between the first four, and fifth, category of heretic in his *Hilkebot Teshuva*, 7:3. This interpretation differs from that of R. Yeḥezkel Landau and R. Shmuel Landau. See Y. Landau and S. Landau, *Nodab Be-Yebudah: Mabadura Tenina on Yoreh De'ab* 148 (New York: Halakhah Berurah, 1960), 93. Ed.

⁴⁹ It seems, therefore, that R. Isserles was consciously appropriating Tosafot's language, taking it out of context and using it as a loose reference. We should therefore make note of R. Isserles' midrashic style in all his writings, particularly his *Torat Ha-Olah*. R. Isserles contends that Maimonides himself often presents a scriptural basis while knowing that those verses were not valid talmudic sources used to derive those laws. R. Isserles' opinion is that those sources only hint to the halakhah. That seems to have been the justification for R. Isserles' midrashic approach. For a full treatment of R. Isserles' usage of *remez*, *dugma*, and other techniques, see *ibid.*, 19–40.

⁵⁰ R. Orgler's *Olat Tamid* is frequently cited by Rabbi Abraham Gumbiner's *Magen Avraham*.

⁵¹ Much has been written on R. Emden's view of Christianity. In a recent article, Jacob J. Schacter places R. Emden's attitude in the context of his anti-Sabbatian views and argues that his positive view of Christianity was fueled, in part, by his rejection of Sabbatianism. Schacter also argues that Emden's view of Christianity reflects an ideal of what Christians can be, rather than his view of the Christians of his time. Jacob J. Schacter, "Rabbi Jacob Emden, Sabbatianism, and Frankism: Attitudes Towards Christianity in the Eighteenth

directly or indirectly, on the view of Rabbenu Nissim and Naḥmanides in order to understand the position of R. Isserles. These aforementioned Aḥaronim posit that non-Jews are not forbidden to worship intercessors to God, or those who possess powers that he has delegated. However, as we will show, Rabbenu Nissim and Naḥmanides do not actually state that such worship is permitted for Jews or non-Jews. A further challenge to the commentators, and to R. Isserles himself, comes from a teaching in the Talmud that states that both Jews and non-Jews are forbidden to worship any entity alongside God.⁵⁴

According to R. Orgler, there are two types of *shitung*. The first of those is an equal sharing of power between God and something else. That type of worship is idolatrous.⁵⁵ The second kind of *shitung* is a hierarchical division of power between a supreme God and lower forces. The latter kind of worship is permissible.⁵⁶ For R. Shmuel, Rabbi Isserles cannot possibly intend the first type of *shitung* in his ruling, and so he must mean its second type. Thus, R. Shmuel understood R. Isserles as saying that Christians conceive of Jesus, as son of God, to be an intercessor or possessor of delegated powers. According to this view, R. Isserles is suggesting that *shitung* is permissible for non-Jews and, more important, that Christianity is not *avodah zarah*.

The difference that emerges here between shared power and hierarchy can also be seen in the thought of R. Emden, who was a prominent rabbinic authority in the 1700s. Much of R. Emden's discussion can be

Century,” in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 359–396. See also Jacob J. Schacter, “Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works” (Ph.D. Diss. Harvard University, 1988), 701. Much like R. Turin's argument with regard to Meiri, the primary concern here is whether the sources upon which he bases his ruling can sustain his interpretation. Ed.

⁵² His views on the matter can also be found in *Hagabot Ha-Gaon Tzvi Hirsch Chajes* on *Hulin* 13b, *Horiyot* 18b, and in his *Tiferet Yisrael*, in Chajes, *Tiferet Yisrael*, in *Kol Sifrei Maharatz Chajes*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Divrei Hakhamim, 1958), 483–491.

⁵³ In his *Ktav Ve-Hakabbalah* on Deuteronomy 4:19 (Berlin 1880), 247–249.

⁵⁴ These and other sources will be listed in the footnotes of the subsequent section.

⁵⁵ An example of this type of *shitung* would be dualism.

⁵⁶ R. Shmuel ben Yosef Orgler, *Olat Tamid, Oraḥ Hayyim* (Amsterdam: D. di Castro, 1681), 156.

found in his *She'elat Yavetz*.⁵⁷ In support of his position, he cited sections in tractate *Menahot* and *Berakhot* of the Babylonian Talmud.⁵⁸ In the former it is said that “they [non-Jewish nations] call him God of gods.” Meaning, non-Jews recognize that God is higher than their gods. Based on this teaching, R. Emden legitimizes the worship by non-Jews of intercessors to God or of those who possess powers that God delegates. In the latter tractate, it is said that “[while Jews pray that non-Jewish idolaters repent], Jews need not say that prayer outside of Israel.” For R. Emden, this statement suggests that non-Jewish idolaters do not need to repent, for *shitzuf* is permitted to them.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ R. Emden, *She'elat Yavetz*, vol. 1, no. 41 (Lemberg, 1739), 36b; *She'elat Yavetz*, vol. 2, no. 133, 40b. See also R. Emden, *Mor U-Ketzia*, vol. 1, no. 224 (Altona, 1761), 97-98.

⁵⁸ *Menahot* 110a; *Berakhot* 57b.

⁵⁹ It should be noted that R. Emden was writing about Protestants, and that he expressed reservations about the views of Catholics. Be that as it may, his attitude towards Christians can be seen in his letter to the Rabbinical Council of the Four Lands (*Va'ad Arba 'Aratzot*), a powerful self-governing apparatus for Jews in Polish lands. The treatise, which was first published in 1756 as an appendix to *Seder Olam Rabbah Ve-Zutta* and expanded in his *Sefer Shimmush*, was intended to help rabbis appeal to Christian leaders to act against the Frankist Sabbatian sects in Poland. In his letter, R. Emden took the unprecedented step of analyzing the New Testament. See Rabbi Abraham Bick (Shauli), *Rabi Ya'akov Emden Ish U-Mishnato* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1974), 138-139. R. Emden noted that in Matthew 5 and Luke 16, Jesus says that he wants Jews to continue keeping every detail of the law. See *Sefer Shimmush* (Amsterdam: 1758), 29-41; *Sefer Seder Olam Rabbah Ve-Zuta U-Megilat Ta'anit* (Hamburg, 1757), 32b-35b. A partial translation is found in O. Fasman, “An Epistle on Tolerance by a Rabbinic Zealot,” in *Judaism in a Changing World*, ed. L. Jung (New York, 1939), 128-136, cited by Jacob J. Schacter, “Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works,” 603, fn. 58. R. Emden also writes that Jesus' message was intended for the gentiles, whom Jesus wished to compel to follow the Noahide laws. Further, R. Emden suggests that Jesus' disciple Paul was a learned and upstanding pupil of Rabbi Gamliel. Paul thoroughly understood rabbinic law and correctly applied it. Therefore, concludes R. Emden, just as Jews should help Christians in keeping the Noahide laws, Christians should encourage Jews to remain Jewish, instead of trying to convert them. Along the same lines, he writes that Christianity falls under the category of “an argument for the sake of heaven” (*mabloket le-Shem Shamayim*), which therefore continues to thrive. R. Emden, *Lehem Shamayim* on *Pirquei Avot* 4:11 in R. Emden, *Etz Avot* (Amsterdam, 1741), 41a-42a. Rabbi Harvey Falk extends these ideas seemingly beyond their original intent. Rabbi Harvey Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (Eugene, Oregon: Paulist Press, 1985), 4-8, 76-78. Be-

But then R. Emden had a change of heart and proposed that Tosafot must view Christianity as *avodah zarah* and permit the mention of idolatry only in oaths, provided God's name is mentioned as well. R. Emden's new point of view created a new set of problems. Based on this view, he wondered why Tosafot had to enter into a discussion in order to arrive at the conclusion that non-Jews are permitted to join the name of Jesus with God while making an oath, for there is actually no sin for a non-Jew to utter the name of his idol even on its own.⁶⁰

sides other issues, Falk's distortion of talmudic texts is evident even from a plain reading of his book.

⁶⁰ R. Emden supports this last point from a statement in *Sanhedrin* 56b, which implies that a non-Jew is responsible for *avodah zarah* only when a Jew would be put to death for the corresponding violation. Since a Jew who transgresses *לא ישמע* by uttering the name of *avodah zarah* only receives lashes, it stands to reason that there is no prohibition for the non-Jew. R. Emden's arguments suggest that he interpreted Tosafot as stating the following: that a non-Jew does not contravene the commandment against *avodah zarah* by mentioning the name of God along with the name of his deity; that a Jew does not violate the prohibition of *לא ישמע* if he leads the non-Jew to make such an oath; that it is obvious that there is no commandment against *shituf* in oaths made by non-Jews; and that a Jew does not contravene *לא יפני עור* by causing such an oath to be made. However, this does not appear to be the correct interpretation. The question with which Tosafot are dealing is whether a Jew would be in contravention of the commandment *לא ישמע* when the non-Jew takes an oath that combines the name of God with either thoughts of Jesus or the name of Christian saints. But what if a non-Jew has both ideas in mind? To this Tosafot respond that they are mentioning the name of saints, which they do not recognize as deities [unlike Jesus, who is viewed as a deity], and their intentions are directed to the creator of the world. Therefore, the name Jesus does not tarnish the word God/Lord. What Tosafot were saying, then, was that in causing a non-Jew to take such an oath, a Jew is not violating *לא ישמע*. It also emerges that we do not find a law against making oaths that combine a reference to the creator with the mention of created beings: that law is a uniquely Jewish one. It follows that R. Emden must have had a radical understanding of Tosafot. In R. Emden's view, what Tosafot were suggesting was that the reference to God/Lord ameliorates the oath and removes the idolatry. In this sense, R. Emden seems to agree with R. Shmuel Landau. But what Tosafot were actually suggesting is that non-Jews mention the name of God along with the names of saints. And although they are thinking of Jesus when making their oaths, they are not actually saying "Jesus." If they were to do so, it would mean that the Jew who caused this oath would contravene *לא ישמע*, since he or she caused another to utter the name of idolatry. R. Emden seems to have been influenced by the mishnah in *Sanhedrin* that states that it is only a *lo ta'aseh*, that is, a prohibition that does not call for the death penalty, for a Jew to swear in the

A slightly different approach was taken by Chajes and R. Mecklenburg. Based on a verse in Deuteronomy 4:19, and Nahmanides' interpretation of it in particular, they argued that the Trinity is not idolatrous for non-Jews, provided they live outside of Israel. Chajes and R. Mecklenburg also wrote that Christians are simply following the hierarchical system that God has set up for them.⁶¹ R. Shmuel ben Yosef went further and posited that, for Maimonides, the state at the time of Enosh, when humanity began having reverence for the celestial system, was not idolatrous.⁶² The only problem was that this new development would lead to idolatry.⁶³

Thus, these commentators explain R. Isserles' view by reference to the concept of a hierarchical system designed by God for human worship. In support of such a view, we can bring the opinion of Rabbenu Nissim in one of his sermons,⁶⁴ and a separate statement from

name of a foreign deity. Based on the ruling we cited, namely, that a non-Jew is held responsible in matters of idol worship only if a Jew who violates the same commandment would incur the death penalty, logic would dictate that there is no sin at all for a non-Jew to swear in the name of Jesus. R. Emden's confusion and the question with which he remains therefore seem to support our interpretation, namely, that this is not ultimately Tosafot's concern. It is still possible, however, that a Noahide is prohibited to swear in an idol's name because it is *avodah zarah*, or a commandment subsumed under cursing God's name. I say this with full knowledge of Nahmanides' uncertainty about whether there is a Noahide prohibition of swearing in such a fashion. R. Emden ruled, somewhat surprisingly, that mentioning the name of Jesus exclusively in an oath is not a violation of *לֹא יִשְׁמַע*. However, he does consider the possibility that, if Christians conceive of the Trinity as a triune God, it is idolatrous.

⁶¹ It should be noted here that Rashi's opinion—cited in a Rashbam that is mentioned by Rabbenu Yeruḥem—namely, that French non-Jews are not idolaters, should not be misconstrued. Rashi actually believes that the non-Jews of his time are idolatrous but are not religiously fervent. As a result, their devotion is not intense enough to have an impact on everyday business practices. Therefore, Jews are not likely to be abetting non-Jewish practice of *avodah zarah* if they conduct business together with non-Jews. Rabbenu Yeruchem, *Toldot Adam Ve-hava*, 127.

⁶² Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Avodah Zarah*, chaps. 1, 2.

⁶³ Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg, *Ktav Ve-Hakabbalah*, 247–249.

It should be noted, however, that, shortly thereafter, Maimonides refers to the belief in intercessors to God, and to the view of those men of Enosh's era that worshipping stars is a form of respect to their maker, as true idolatry. Maimonides, loc cit. See also *Hilkhoh Teshuva*, 3:7.

⁶⁴ Rabbenu Nissim, *Derashot Ha-Ran* § 9, ed. A. Feldman (Jerusalem: Makhon-Shalem, 1976), 143–161.

Naḥmanides. Rabbenu Nissim argues that the belief in the existence of, and control by, lesser deities was a more reasonable starting point for humans than the Jewish belief in the supreme God. For someone who believed in a Supreme Being, says Rabbenu Nissim, the notion that this being has an interest in mundane human affairs diminished from its stature. However, lesser powers and deities would not be tarnished by that characteristic. Therefore, it was natural for human beings to worship those lesser powers.⁶⁵

According to Rabbenu Nissim, revelation at Sinai was therefore necessary in order to lead Jews to the belief that God has an interest in humankind. The “I” [*anokhi*] of that revelation says, “I, the God of creation, am also the God who took you out of Egypt—I care.” Seen in this way, this statement is not a command but an expression of the relationship between God and human beings. And the main function of the commandment about not having other gods, in the view of Rabbenu Nissim, is to serve as proof that God does “lower himself” to command human beings. It should be noted, however, that this conception does not preclude the possibility that the worship of intercessors is forbidden, even to gentiles. That is to say the essential concept that there are lesser powers and channels, specifically for other nations, which operate through the heavenly bodies such as the stars, may be sustained. But that does not mean that Rabbenu Nissim is sanctioning their worship, even for non-Jews.

Another exponent of this “intermediary” model is Naḥmanides. In his commentary on Leviticus, he wrote that there are various channels and powers for each nation, with distinct angels put in charge. The exception to this hierarchical model is the Jewish nation, but only when it is living in Israel.⁶⁶ In this case as well, however, there is no indication that worshipping these powers is an acceptable practice for the nations in question.

It seems that this issue depends on the interpretation of Deuteronomy 4:19, which reads, “And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven,

⁶⁵ It was also natural that the ancients felt connected to celestial bodies, such as the sun, moon and stars. According to this idea, however, it is not clear how Rabbenu Nissim explains the pre-Sinaitic Noahic ban on all idolatry. Perhaps he could say that Adam had a revelation about such a prohibition but it was forgotten over time, or that the ban pertained only to idolatry that does not recognize God as the highest power.

⁶⁶ Naḥmanides to Leviticus 18:25. Naḥmanides, *Pirushei Ha-Torah Le-Rabbenu Moshe ben Naḥman*, ed. C.B. Chavel, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1989), 109–112.

and when thou seest the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou be drawn away and worship them, and serve them, which HaShem thy G-d hath allotted unto all the peoples under the whole heaven.”⁶⁷ The Talmud itself has conflicting interpretations of this verse. In *Megillah*, the Talmud implies that this verse permits the nations to worship the celestial bodies, which is why the translators commissioned by Ptolemy found it necessary to change the words. But in *Avodah Zarah*, the celestial creations are described as a ruse in order to hold those that worship them to account.⁶⁸ It is reasonable to suggest that the former interpretation is closer to the plain reading, to which the translators were attuned.⁶⁹

Thus, we must conclude that the positions of R. Shmuel Orgler, R. Yaakov Emden, Maharatz Chajes, and R. Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg are not well supported. Yet, their approach, namely, that Christianity is not idolatrous for non-Jews since it recognizes the one supreme God with Jesus as a subordinate deity, does seem to be the most logical way to understand R. Isserles' position.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Following the JPS translation.

⁶⁸ *Megillah* 9b. Along these lines, Maimonides rules that it is idolatrous for anyone to accept any power besides God, even as intercessors to him, let alone as independent objects of worship. Maimonides' explanation for this ruling is based on one of the talmudic explanations of the verse, namely, that the planets were given to serve mankind. More broadly, Maimonides describes idolatry as having originated in an error made by the generation of Enosh. The people of that time decided to honor God by worshipping his great heavenly creations. For Maimonides, this is idolatry in its original form. In its later form, the practice of idolatry left out the Almighty God altogether. And in subsequent generations, human beings believed only in those powers and worshipped them exclusively. In contrast to these developments, the people of the world originally espoused the logically necessary principle that God in his essence is the only true and necessary existence, and that he created everything else and acts providentially. In his epistle to the Jews of Marseilles, Maimonides writes that after reading every available book on the subject, which he did while he was younger, he became convinced that astrology is a false concept and that it is being used to lure people into idolatry. Maimonides, *Kovetz Teshuvot Ha-Rambam Ve-Igrotav* (Leipzig, 1859), 25.

⁶⁹ See also Rashi to *Megillah* 9b, who states that the latter interpretation is a mid-rashic one. I thank Dr. Guttman for directing me to this source. Ed.

⁷⁰ Similar positive attitudes to Christians can also be found in the writings of Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe, student of R. Isserles and author of the *Levush*. He writes, for instance, that Christians are not included in any of the negative laws directed towards idolaters. R. Yaffe, *Levush Ateret Zahav, Yoreh De'ab* 148:12 (Jerusalem: Zikhron Aaron, 1999), 334. Other comparable views can be found in

The Rejection of R. Isserles' View

Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz, known as *Hazon Ish*, similarly understood the Tosafot in Sanhedrin as positing that non-Jews are not punished for *shituf*. But his interpretation of this aspect of Tosafot differs from what we have so far seen from R. Isserles and the Aḥaronim that followed him. *Hazon Ish* believed that Tosafot are referring to “mental *shituf*,” which is not a punishable offense, rather than “verbal *shituf*,” which is punishable by law.

In his treatment of the topic, *Hazon Ish* avoided an explicit disagreement with R. Isserles by not naming him. Instead, he directed the reader to the *Pithei Teshuvah* where it is argued that R. Isserles did believe that *shituf* is permissible for non-Jews and that his ruling is incorrect.⁷¹ *Hazon Ish* further critiqued R. Isserles, albeit indirectly, by showing that his ruling is contradicted by his own sources.⁷² *Hazon Ish* interprets Tosafot as ruling that Christianity is idolatrous, and therefore, if a Jew would cause a non-Jew to mention the name of Jesus, that Jew would be violating the causative part of **לֹא יִשְׁמַע**. The debate in Tosafot, according to *Hazon Ish*, relates to causing a non-Jew to contemplate the name of Jesus while mentioning God's name. Such an outcome would not be a violation of **לֹא יִשְׁמַע** on the Jew's part.

Hazon Ish seems to believe that Tosafot in *Sanhedrin* 63b begin with the premise that the prohibition of *shituf* while making oaths is of no concern; and the *shituf* that Tosafot are discussing must be similar to what was worshipped during the sin of the Golden Calf. The pertinent question relates to saying the name of God while thinking of another power. Tosafot's conclusion, according to *Hazon Ish*, is that this is not a violation of any law; and that is for two reasons:

1. The Jew has not caused the non-Jew to mention the name of idolatry, and thus there is no violation of **לֹא יִשְׁמַע**.
2. While the non-Jew is forbidden to engage in this type of worship, he or she cannot be punished for a “mental” sin, and a Jew

R. Yehezkel Landau, “Hitnatzlut ha-Mehaber” in *Nodab Be-Yehudab, Mahadurah Kammab* (New York: Halakhah Berurah, 1960), 8; in Rabbi Elazar Fleklish, *Teshuvah Me-abava* (Prague, 1915), 2b–4a; in Chajes, *Tiferet Yisrael*, 489, and in R. Eliyahu Henkin, *Bnei Banim*, no. 35 (Jerusalem, 1998), 116–127.

⁷¹ Avraham Tzvi Hirsch Eisenstadt, *Pithei Teshuvah to Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah* 147:2, vol. 2, 142.

⁷² This point is primarily based on Tosafot to *Bekhorot* 2b.

is punished only if he caused someone else to commit a punishable crime.⁷³

Ḥazon Ish also learned from Tosafot that a person violates the prohibition of making an oath with *shituf* only if he or she mentions the names of other gods along with God. This idea is based on *Ḥazon Ish*'s conception of the Tosafot in *Sanhedrin* 63a, which he takes to mean that there is no prohibition against saying the name of another entity together with God, even in an oath, provided that the other being is not another god.⁷⁴ This interpretation, however, is difficult in both the plain and conceptual sense. It is unreasonable to suggest that there is a commandment against causing a thought, and Tosafot would not have had to discuss that issue as it relates to *לא ישמע*.⁷⁵ Indeed, it seems that Tosafot's discussion in *Bekhorot* 2b and *Sanhedrin* 63a similarly presupposes this idea.⁷⁶

⁷³ This idea is problematic. Also, the language of Tosafot—"they were not warned"—sounds as if it is completely permissible to have a thought of *shituf*.

⁷⁴ R. Avraham Y. Karelitz, *Ḥazon Ish, Yoreh De'ab* 62:19-20 (Jerusalem, 1994), 96. However, the Tosafot probably meant that it is not permitted to mention anything together with God in an oath, since, by definition, the entities mentioned in an oath are spoken of in a context of *midi de-elohot*. As evidence, we can bring the ruling of Maimonides in *Mishneh Torah: Hilkhot Shvu'ot* 11:2, namely, that making an oath is tantamount to declaring God's power, which is why nothing that has been created may be included in an oath in the same breath as the name of God.

⁷⁵ As for the issue of *lifnei i'ver*, that remains an open question.

⁷⁶ Rabbenu Asher ben Yehiel, *Tosafot Ha-Rosh* on *Sanhedrin* 63a, ed. S. Wilman (Brooklyn: Defus Hemed, 1995), 60. This edition is based on the Oxford MS. The *Tosafot Ha-Rosh* is Rabbenu Asher's version of Tosafot. Since this was not published at the time of *Ḥazon Ish*, he never saw it. Rabbenu Asher also added a question from *Sukkah* 45b, in relation to the practice of walking around the altar while holding willow branches and saying, "to the Lord, and to thee, oh altar." For the Talmud, it is problematic that Jews would do this, because this act would constitute *shituf*. The answer provided is that the Jews said this expression in two separate clauses. Rabbenu Asher explains that the reason this expression would have been an act of *shituf*, if said in one breath, is because the altar is in certain respects *midi de-elohot*, a form of theology. That is to say the altar functions as an extension of God, bringing about forgiveness through sacrifices. But with the view of *Ḥazon Ish*, there should be no problem. Given his interpretation of Tosafot's ruling, that is, that any entities can be mentioned with God, provided they are not gods, mentioning the altar together with God should not be a problem. Further, it is unclear, according to

We should also note that R. Ephraim ben Yaakov Ha-Kohen,⁷⁷ R. Yonah Landsuper,⁷⁸ R. Avraham ben Yitzhak Ayish,⁷⁹ and R. Yosef ben Meir Te'Omim⁸⁰ all considered Christianity and the notion of the Trinity to be *avodah zarah*. Thus, they believed R. Isserles' opinion to be untenable and argue that he misinterpreted his sources.⁸¹

Normative Halakhah: Christianity is not Idolatry

Even as we consider the challenges to his position, the fact remains that R. Isserles—who was dealing with Catholics—was willing to entertain the halakhic view that Christianity is not idolatry, although there is no shortage of Rishonim who disagree with that position.⁸²

Haẓon Ish, how Tosafot would understand the question and answer of the Talmud in *Sukkah*. It is therefore difficult to accept *Haẓon Ish's* interpretation.

⁷⁷ Ephraim ben Yaakov Ha-Kohen, *Sha'ar Ephraim*, no. 24 (Lemberg: E. Margashish, 1887), 11.

⁷⁸ Yehudah Landsuper, *Me'il Tzedakka*, no. 22 (Prague: Grossman, 1757), p. 28.

⁷⁹ Avraham b. Yitzhak Ayish, *Bet Yehudah*, no. 5 (Livorno: A. Meldola, 1746), 62.

⁸⁰ R. Yosef ben Meir Te'omim, *Pri Megadim* on *Shulhan Arukh: Yoreh De'ab* 65:11, vol. 1, 141b.

⁸¹ R. Isserles' view is also undermined by the context of the various Rishonic opinions he cites. Every such decision, cited in R. Moshe Isserles, *Darkhei Moshe Ha-Arukh* 151 (Sulzbach, 1692), 51b-52, is concerned with the question whether permission (*heter*) can be granted for Jews to sell objects of worship to Christians. The fear is that such objects will be used for idolatry. Those who rule that it is permissible to do so base their decision on the fact that “the priest could get it elsewhere anyway.” These discussions inherently assume that Christianity is to be treated as *avodah zarah*. Further, there is, as we have seen, a lack of evidence for his ruling. In light of these questions, we are led towards a radical interpretation of R. Isserles' ruling, namely, that R. Isserles based his decision on sources that were taken out of context. For more on his style of writing, see J. Ben-Sasson, *The Philosophical System of R. Moses Isserles*, 19–40, esp. 42. This type of proof, which resembles an *asmakhta*, is not without precedent. In fact, it can be seen as far back as the mishnah. See for example M. Kritut 8; *yShabbat* 6:1 (“*matnita amar ken?*”); *Berakhot* 52a, 63 a-b; *Shabbat* 115a; *Erwin* 51a; b. *Pesahim* 27a, 112, and Rashi thereon; *Bava Metziah* 109b, and Tosafot thereon, s.v., *mitalkinin*; Rabbenu Gershom to *Bava Batra* 11a; *Niddah* 7b, *Teshuvot Ha-Geonim: Shaarei Tzedek* 4:3, ed. N. Moda'i (Jerusalem: Kelal U-Prat, 1966), 102.

⁸² In *Darkhei Moshe* 151, as quoted by the *Shakh* on *Shulhan Arukh: Yoreh De'ab* 151:7, R. Isserles cites *Orah Hayyim*, 156 as a supplementary source to permit the sale of materials that can be used by Christians for religious purposes. It would not be possible for him to make this claim if his view in *Orah Hayyim* 156 were restricted to oaths, as explained by the *Nodab Be-Yehudah* 148. But R. Isserles' argument would also be untenable if he interpreted his sources to al-

Despite the various critiques of R. Isserles' view, we therefore ought to acknowledge that, by openly stating that Christianity is not *avodah zarab*, he must have deemed that position to be compatible with his perception of the Torah's view.⁸³ In this respect, he had a predecessor.

Menaḥem Ha-Meiri, a 13th-century talmudist and halakhist from Provence, is the first source we have on record to have a similar position on Christians.

R. Isserles never read Meiri's work, for it had not been discovered at the time that the former was writing, and there are some differences in the way the two of them wrote about Christianity. For example, Meiri's position takes Christianity's origins into account, as we see in relation to "Yom ha-Notzri."⁸⁴ He also draws upon Jewish practice over many generations to indicate that Judaism accepted Christians as non-idolaters. R. Isserles, on the other hand, seems to have given an assessment of them based on his own time. One may even argue that R. Isserles was only stating that Christianity is an expression of "One supreme being in charge," as explained by *Olat Tamid* and others.⁸⁵ On that basis, he posited that it was acceptable for non-Jews to hold that belief even though it would be *avodah zarab* for Jews to accept it.

Along similar lines is the explanation provided by R. Isserles for the communities that are lenient about non-kosher wine.⁸⁶ In his book on

low partnerships with Christians and permit their oaths solely on the basis that they no longer refer to Jesus in their oaths. In other words, R. Isserles' position stands or falls on the question of whether Christian beliefs are idolatrous.

⁸³ For the cultural and philosophical influences of the Renaissance on R. Isserles, see Ilia M. Rodov, *The Torah Ark in Renaissance Poland: A Jewish Revival of Classical Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 37–54. Ed.

⁸⁴ Meiri, *Hidushei Ha-Meiri on Avodah Zarab*, 2a–4a, vol. 6, 278. R. Turin seems to be suggesting that the origins of Christianity may have been associated with the cult of Nebuchadnezzar, which is why it shares a name. I thank Dr. Guttman for his comments on R. Turin's assertion. Ed.

⁸⁵ See *supra* p. 9.

⁸⁶ R. Isserles, *She'elot U-Teshuvot Ha-Rema*, no. 124 (Jerusalem: Yerid Ha-Sefarim, 2004), 396–399. In that responsum, R. Isserles entertains the possibility that Christians are not idolaters, and that they are to be compared to innocent children who touch wine, which, according to some authorities, one may even drink. This may even be extended to non-Jewish wine. There remains the problem, however, that non-Jewish wine should still be prohibited by the rabbinic edict of *stam yeinam*, which is based on the fear that the conviviality that may emerge from drinking their wine might lead to fraternizing and then possibly to intermarriage. A propos of this issue, some communities may have a basis in a similar leniency towards bread from non-bakeries. But where the

theology, *Torat Ha-Olah*,⁸⁷ R. Isserles explains that our forefather Abraham was a true believer, and he ingrained those beliefs into his descendants. Thus, Esau and Ishmael received their faith from Abraham. That is to say, at their core they are monotheists, but they supplemented their religion with idolatry. Still, they are far superior to true idolaters, who worship the stars.

We therefore see that, regardless of the position of the Rishonim on the question of whether Christianity amounts to *avodah zarah*, the intention of R. Isserles, who took a lenient view, appeared to be the removal of the stigma of *avodah zarah* from Christianity.⁸⁸ A similar development can be seen in the case of R. Isserles' predecessor, Menaḥem Ha-Meiri. Meiri unapologetically pronounced Christians, and more specifically Catholics (and by logical extension Muslims as well⁸⁹) to be observant *b'nei Noah*.⁹⁰ He wrote, in his commentary on the Talmud, that non-

main drink of the region is wine, there can be a leniency. Therefore, those communities are not to be castigated, even though R. Isserles' own practice was not to allow *stam yeinam*. Out of this discussion, however, actual permission emerges. Gentile wine is certainly then permitted for a bedridden person, assuming it is beneficial for him to drink wine, even though there is no threat to his or her life by their not being allowed to drink it. For such cases, the rabbis did not prohibit *stam yeinam*. While this responsum does not explicitly rule Christians out as idolaters, the ideas expressed there are of a piece with his lenient approach towards Christians. I thank Dr. Guttman for his comments on this section.

⁸⁷ R. Moshe Isserles, *Torat Ha-Olah* 1:16, 19, ed. I. Jaffe, vol. 1 (Königsberg, 1854), 50b–54b, 57a–59b.

⁸⁸ So R. Isserles in *Torat Ha-Olah*, see *supra*, fn. 113. Further, as we have seen, Meiri posits that we disagree with Christianity only in the details of their belief.

⁸⁹ See *supra* note 63.

⁹⁰ Much of the scholarly debate about Meiri relates to the question of how extensive his tolerance for Christians really was, and the closely related question of how innovative it was. For Jacob Katz, Meiri's notion of *ummot ha-gedurot*, and its opposite in particular, is grounded by a philosophical view on the social-political nature of human beings. Katz, "Religious Tolerance in the View of R. Menaḥem Ha-Meiri in Halakhah and Philosophy," *Zion* 18 (1953): 26; Katz, "More on the Religious Tolerance of R. Menaḥem Ha-Meiri" (Hebrew) *Zion* 46 (1981): 243–245; Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (Springfield: Behrman House, 1961), 121. David Berger admits having reservations about Meiri's view but later being convinced that there is a link in his thought between religion and "an ordered, ethical society." David Berger, "Jews, Gentiles, and the Modern Egalitarian Ethos: Some Tentative Thoughts," 94. Other scholars disagree that Meiri's view was innovative or that it embodied a "kernel of religious tolerance." Ephraim Urbach denies that the tolerance in the writings of

Jewish people of talmudic times were not governed by the ways of religion, but that was not the case with contemporary gentiles.⁹¹ The latter qualify as observant because they “recognize the existence, oneness, and omnipotence of God, even though we believe that they are mistaken in some details.”⁹² Crucially, Meiri notes in his commentary on *Gittin* that

Meiri is grounded in a philosophical view, for he sees no philosophical basis in those discussions. Urbach does, however, see the novelty in Meiri's view in his having brought his distinction between types of non-Jews into the halakhic sphere, but Urbach suggests that doing so did not “bear real fruit.” J. David Bleich downplays the significance of *ummot ha-gedurot*, framing it as a legal definition for economic matters, but he makes more of Meiri's statements about the gentiles' belief in God's unity and power. Bleich also raises the possibility that some of Meiri's favorable statements were made with an eye to the censor and that his notion of Christian beliefs had some misconceptions. Urbach, “Rabbi Menahem Ha-Meiri's Theory of Tolerance: Its Source and Its Limits,” in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period: Presented to Jacob Katz* (Hebrew), eds. Immanuel Etkes and Yosef Salmon and Jacob Katz (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1980), 33–44; Bleich, “Divine Unity in Maimonides, the Tosafists, and Meiri,” in *Neoplatonism in Jewish Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 237–254. For a wonderful article on the influences behind Meiri's humanistic view, see Yaakov Elman, “Meiri and the non-Jew,” in *New Perspectives on Jewish Christian Relations*, eds. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schachter (Brill: Leiden, 2012), 265–296. R. Elman argues that Meiri makes favorable distinctions in matters that pertain to personal relations with Christians, and holds up the relationship that Meiri had with the Christian that inspired his *Hibur Ha-Teshuva* as a paradigm. *Ibid.*, 275–291. As we will see, R. Turin seems to agree with R. Elman, but by arguing that there is no halakhic basis for Meiri's decision, other than Meiri's own inclination, R. Turin makes the point even more clearly. R. Elman thus differs from Moshe Halberal, who argues that Meiri's favorable view of Christianity stems from a philosophical tradition in Provence, particularly as it relates to the need for faith to complement philosophical analysis. Moshe Halberal, “R. Menahem Ha-Meiri: Bein Torah Le-hokhmah,” *Tarbiz* 63.1 (1995): 63–118. To the extent that R. Turin sees Meiri as having based his views on his experiences, rather than through philosophical reasoning, R. Turin agrees with David Novak, who posits that Meiri's opinion is not developed philosophically. Novak, *The Image of the non-Jew in Judaism*, ed. Matt LaGrone (Liverpool: Littman Library of Civilization, 2011), 195–199. Ed.

⁹¹ *Ḥidushei Ha-Meiri* on *Gittin* 61b, vol. 4, 279.

⁹² See for example Meiri, *Ḥidushei Ha-Meiri* on *Sanbedrin* 63b and on *Avodah Zarah* 6a, vol. 6, 62, 189; idem, on *Bava Kama* 113a-b, vol. 5, 107; idem, on *Gittin* 61b, vol. 4, 278; Meiri, *Bet Ha-behirab al Masekhet Horiyyot* 11a, ed. A Schreiber (Jerusalem: Sinai, 1958), 274; *Bet Ha-behirab al Maseket Yevamot* 22a, ed. S. Dyckman 91 (Jerusalem: Makhon Ha-talmud Ha-Yisraeli, 1967), 91. Elsewhere, Meiri notes that Christians accept the authenticity of the revelation at

the Christians believe in the three components of religious belief.⁹³ The three elements that form the core of this idea are the belief in God's existence, oneness, and omnipotence.⁹⁴

A key component of Meiri's view of Christians is the statement *ummot ha-gedurot be-darkei ba-datot*. This is the criterion upon which he drew for his favourable view of the non-Jews among whom he lived and on the basis of which he excluded them from the talmudic statements against heathens. But what does Meiri mean by that oft-repeated statement? We posit that the word *datot* refers to religiously inspired laws.⁹⁵ Otherwise, Meiri would have said *dinim u-mishpatim yesharim*—that is, just laws. In this regard, he may have been following Maimonides with respect to his requirement to ground the Noahide laws in divine origin. We should note, however, that even followers of the Noahide code who do so solely on the basis of reason, i.e., without any reference to revelation, are still seen as wise, even if they are not deserving of the World to Come.⁹⁶ Be that as it may, since Meiri was of the opinion that Christianity went beyond the requirements of the Noahide code—he writes that such nations are not only bound by the strictures of *datot* but also “believe in his existence”⁹⁷—he may have also believed that Christians met Maimonides' ideal criteria.⁹⁸

Based on this interpretation, the position of Moshe Halbertal, namely, that Meiri identifies Christians with non-idolaters rather than monotheists, is called into question. Building on an analysis of Meiri's writings

Sinai (*Torah me-Sinai*). On the same basis, Maimonides, in a responsum, allows Jews to study the Bible with Christians. Maimonides, *Responsa Pe'er Ha-Dor*, no. 50 (Amsterdam, 1664), 14b.

⁹³ Meiri, *Hidushei Ha-Meiri* on *Gittin* 61b, vol. 4, 278.

⁹⁴ Along the same lines, see Halbertal, who posits that it is not philosophical knowledge, which is reserved for a narrow group, but faith itself that serves as the category of those bordered by the ways of faith. Halbertal, *Between Torah and Wisdom*, 102-103.

⁹⁵ Along similar lines, Halbertal argues that Meiri's tolerance came from an understanding of “faith.” Halbertal, “R. Menahem Ha-meiri: Bein Torah Le-hokhmah,” 110–114. Ed.

⁹⁶ This statement is true of some manuscripts. In others, it states that those who keep the Noahide code in this fashion “are not even among the wise ones.” On this issue, see S. Schwarzschild, “Do Noachites Have to Believe in Revelation?” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 53.1 (1962): 30–65. Ed.

⁹⁷ *Hidushei Ha-Meiri* on *Gittin* 61b, vol. 4, 279.

⁹⁸ However, there is still the matter of the usage of icons, but that was a subject of debate among Christians themselves. To at least some Christians, any divinity attributed to a physical form was rejected.

on Psalms and Ecclesiastes, as well as his *Hibur Ha-teshuva* and introductions to *Bet Ha-Behirah* and *Pirquei Avot*, Halbertal defines Meiri's notion of *avodah zarah* as the inability to see any spiritual being beyond material existence. For Halbertal, it is for this reason that Meiri did not place Christianity in the category of *avodah zarah*.⁹⁹ However, in light of Meiri's statements about the minor errors made by Christians, and the triune theological foundation to which they subscribe, Halbertal's view is difficult to accept. A more convincing interpretation of the former statement is that Christianity is monotheistic at its core, even if it is mistaken in certain regards.

In trying to understand Meiri's view, it is important to be cognizant that Meiri lived in a culture best described as *laissez-faire* in ideas and beliefs. He also dealt with enlightened Christians.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, as was later the case for R. Isserles, there was an impetus for Meiri to investigate the possibilities for coexistence and construct a theory of religion on the basis of which he could build mutual tolerance and respect.

In support of the comparison between Meiri and R. Isserles, we can point to the fact that R. Isserles, like Meiri, is cognizant that Christianity represented a development beyond the blatant idolatry of the times of the Talmud.¹⁰¹ This idea seems to be what compels Meiri to define the *sugya* in *Yoma*, which relates to the saving of lives on the Sabbath in a case of a building that collapses on a group of people on the possibility that there is at least one Jew under the pile, as referring only to ancient pagans and idolaters.¹⁰² The Christians, who have kept the Noahide laws and built upon them,¹⁰³ must be saved on their own merit, even if no

⁹⁹ Ibid., 103–105.

¹⁰⁰ See for instance, Elman, "Meiri and the non-Jew," 275. Ed.

¹⁰¹ Halbertal sees the progress in the philosophical development of the nations of the world in grasping something beyond the sensual, widely known, accepted, and what Halbertal calls transcendental, as a concept he gets from Ibn Tibon. Unlike R. Turin, Halbertal seems to see progress in Meiri's conception as an intellectual, rather than a normative development. Halbertal, *Between Torah and Wisdom* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 103–108. Ed.

¹⁰² Meiri, *Hidushei Ha-Meiri on Yoma* 84a–85a, vol. 3, 227.

¹⁰³ Following the Jerusalem edition (1875), the wording is "People whose values do not consider the lives of others." However, in his 1964 edition, Ravitz posits that the earlier version is a forgery. But even in Ravitz's view, the original version can still be detected: "The ancient idolaters who worshipped the stars." It seems that Ravitz wanted his edition to be accepted by the yeshiva world, and he therefore denied Meiri's position.

Jewish lives are in danger.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

Meiri lived in Provence at a time when its cultural renaissance had been flourishing for 200 years. The government tolerated other religions, and as a result, there was a proliferation of Torah study and yeshivot and great rabbinic scholars emerged. At the same time, there were enlightened Jewish philosophers who came into contact with Christian scholars. These developments led Meiri to argue not only that Christianity had progressed, but that it was not *avodah zarah* from its inception. This idea is what led him to interpret the Talmud in *Yoma* as meaning something other than Christians when it states that one cannot violate the Sabbath to save an idolater's life. As we have seen, Meiri believes that we must save b'nei Noah *de jure*, rather than *de facto*, i.e., not because of a fear of repercussions against Jews.

In a similar way, R. Isserles studied the humanities and philosophy and lived in Cracow.¹⁰⁵ This was the site of one of the medieval world's greatest universities and home of many intelligent Christians. We can assume at the very least that he felt Christianity had progressed beyond *avodah zarah*, and he reshaped the halakhah accordingly. This was in spite of the opinions of the Rishonim with which he was familiar. R. Isserles also read the words of the Rishonim to mean that a *shituf*-oriented belief in the Trinity is not idolatrous, given Christian acceptance of God the Creator.¹⁰⁶ Finally, along the same lines, R. Emden, who lived among enlightened Protestants, expressed reservation about the Catholic acceptance of the cross, but in reality he conceded that Christians have the status of righteous gentiles. ❧

¹⁰⁴ To strengthen R. Turin's point, it ought to be noted that R. Isserles subscribes to a similar idea. As Jonah Ben-Sasson argues, for R. Isserles, the normative foundation of the Noahide laws joins the nations together, and it is through the laws that the people resemble that which they are intended to be, and enable God's presence to dwell. See Ben-Sasson, *The Philosophical System of R. Moses Isserles* (Jerusalem: Menahem Press, 1984), 127–129. Ed.

¹⁰⁵ On the ontological importance of human beings that stemmed from Christian thought during the Renaissance, see J. Ben-Sasson, *The Philosophical System of R. Moses Isserles*, 111–112. Ed.

¹⁰⁶ This recognition of non-Jews does not stem solely from the necessity of living among them, but it is part of an essential recognition in the fundamentals of faith. This recognition serves as the basis for social and economic living but also a co-existence as it pertains to law and order. Ibid. 289.