

## *Nietzsche's 'The Antichrist': an anti-Christian and anti-Jewish document*

### Abstract

This article is dedicated to one of Nietzsche's most controversial works: *The Antichrist*. Someone who reflects on the relation of church and culture meets a way of thinking in this book that has paved the way to a secular society. We research the line of reasoning that Nietzsche develops in this work. It turns out that Nietzsche's attack on Christianity is no less an attack on Jews and Jewry, in spite of his despising of anti-Semitism. This fact throws light on the anti-Christian contents of *The Antichrist*. Important questions in this context are: What are Nietzsche's arguments when he is attacking Christianity; How does he posit Jesus Christ in this frame of thinking? Finally, I link Nietzsche's speaking about Jew and Christian with the theology of A. van de Beek.

### Introduction

This article discusses the question of how Nietzsche approaches the relation between Jewry and Christianity in *The Antichrist*.<sup>1</sup> Many subjects are at stake in *The Antichrist*, but Nietzsche's views on Jews and Jewry as they are presented in this book have until now not received the attention they deserve.<sup>2</sup> To see this relationship in the right perspective, it is important to know something about 19<sup>th</sup> century German culture and its relation to the Jews. This article, therefore, begins with a brief orientation. The next section concerns the content of *The Antichrist*. How exactly does Nietzsche speak about the Jew, Judaism, and Jewry? It will be explicated that the notion of instinct is crucial in the relationship between Christianity and Jewry. The article finishes with some remarks about the notions stranger, pariah, and parasite. In Van de Beek's theology, the Christian is a stranger and sojourner on earth. This 'location' of the Christian in the theology of A. van de Beek acquires a special meaning.

### *The historical context*

When we discuss and evaluate *The Antichrist*, it is essential to see that it is written in a period in which Christendom was seen as the highest level of civilization. The whole of culture was impregnated with a more enlightened, or a more orthodox, Christendom. The publication of *The Antichrist* was experienced as an affront to the whole of culture. But, in spite of that, Nietzsche's negative approach of Jewry was in line with public opinion.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, anti-Semitism was growing in Europe; in Germany but also in France, Austria and Hungary. The Jewish world was deeply concerned by certain outbursts of hatred. The emancipation-process of the Jews, by which they were obtaining all civil rights, did not lead not to the diminishing of anti-Semitism. In 1829, in Germany, there were the so-called Hep Hep riots.<sup>3</sup> They were the consequence of a long spell of anti-Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> See: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA), (Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari, eds.), Vol. 6, (München: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 165-254. The digital edition of the KSA: <http://www.nietzschesource.org/>. Literature on *The Antichrist*: An older publication is, Gerard Brom, *Nietzsche's Antichrist* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij 1946); J. Salaquarda, "Der Antichrist", *Nietzsche-Studien, Internationales Jahrbuch für die Nietzsche-Forschung*, Vol. 2, (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1973), 91-136. A thorough commentary on *The Antichrist* is the research of Andreas Urs Sommer, *Friedrich Nietzsches "Der Antichrist". Ein philosophisch-historischer Kommentar* (Basel: Schwabe & Co 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Brom pays no attention to this theme. Salaquarda passes by this subject completely. He does not even mention the word Jew or Jewry. Sommer, in his careful investigation, has the problems in view but does not discuss the relation Jewry-Christianity.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction. Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press 1994<sup>5</sup>), 97-104.

propaganda.<sup>4</sup> In 1879, anti-Semitism received a new impulse. Katz writes, ‘the year 1879 is a turning point in modern Jewish history: it marks the beginning of modern anti-Semitism’.<sup>5</sup>

In the period of 1848-1880, the Jewish emancipation was almost completed. But the expectation that the Jews would then abuse their own identity and would no longer distinguish themselves from other citizens was not realized. As a result, these old stereotypes, which the Jews for centuries had been dealing with, were refreshed.<sup>6</sup> It is not by accident that exactly in these years the Zionist longing for a national home was awakened and a renewed Zionism was formed. In 1896, the publication of *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*) by Theodor Herzl was an important event. The following year, the first Zionists-congress gathered.

These remarks about growing anti-Semitism in Germany show that Nietzsche lived in an era in which the position of the Jews became more and more problematic. This is an important point that helps us to come to a balanced interpretation of *The Antichrist*.

### *The Antichrist*

*The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo* were written nearly at the same time, at the end of 1888. September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1888, not long before his mental collapse, Nietzsche completed *The Antichrist*.<sup>7</sup> The book, however, was not published until 1895. More than in any other publication, we get to know Nietzsche as a former Christian who not only says farewell to the Christian religion, but even curses Christianity. But the book offers more than that. It aims at a construction of a foundation for Western culture; another foundation than it had for many centuries. It is his strong conviction that a ‘revaluation of all values’ is needed. Not by accident, Nietzsche finishes *The Antichrist* with these words (paragraph 62).

*The Antichrist* is an embarrassing book on a delicate subject. Every self-respecting philosopher will be reluctant to take the book and to study this text. He will see it as an obscure pamphlet, not due to the subject, but because of the lack of academic distance. For Christians the book is not acceptable because of the contents. They see it as an awful distortion of the Christian faith; a caricature of all what is precious to them. To modern disbelieving people, *The Antichrist* is barely interesting; for them it is an exotic and strange book. In a secular context, the title is almost meaningless. In the circle of church members, the word antichrist has the meaning of bitter hatred of the Christian faith—outside the church it does not. All of this means that the contexts of 1888 and 2010 are totally different.

### *The Subject*

The short book consists of 62 paragraphs<sup>8</sup> and ends with an appendix: *Gesetz wider das Christenthum* (*Law against Christianity*), with seven articles. Despite the fact that this document has a clear subject (namely, a curse on Christianity), it is not constructed as a clear, continuous argument.<sup>9</sup> That applies, however, to most books of Nietzsche. Several books are compilations of aphorisms, but *The Antichrist* has more coherence because of the fact that there is a clear subject which connects the different parts. The subject of *The Antichrist* is the

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<sup>4</sup> After leaving the ghettos, the Jews were regarded as competitors: “(...) the Jew was considered a competitor – all the more so since some had grown rich after leaving the ghetto”, Walter Laqueur, *The Changing of Anti-Semitism. From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (New York: Oxford University Press 2008), 77.

<sup>5</sup> Katz, *Prejudice*, 245.

<sup>6</sup> The pamphlet of Wilhelm Marr, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum*, published in 1879, was reprinted twelve times within a year.

<sup>7</sup> KSA 15, 177. The date of the completion of *The Antichrist* is also the beginning of a new calendar. The book was completed on the day of salvation, on the first day of the year one (KSA 6, 254). It was Nietzsche’s intention that *The Antichrist* would be the first part of the book *Revaluation of All Values*. KSA 13, 545 (September 1888).

<sup>8</sup> These are paragraphs, not aphorisms.

<sup>9</sup> P.J.M. van Tongeren, *Reinterpreting modern Culture. An Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche’s Philosophy* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press 2000), 262.

condemnation of Christianity. Nietzsche makes it clear with the subtitle: *Curse on Christianity*.<sup>10</sup>

What does Nietzsche mean with this condemnation, this curse? We read in par. 39 that he intends to relate the *authentic* history of Christianity. It seems that he is presenting himself to the reader as an apologist, and that he is not trying to destroy Christianity. He is always pressing the same point, namely that Christianity was disloyal to itself. It should have followed in the tracks of the one Christian who ever lived: the tracks of Jesus. Nietzsche has the conviction that “to this day *such* a life is still possible, and for *certain* men even necessary: genuine, primitive Christianity will remain possible in all ages” (par. 39). When reading these words, we can imagine that Nietzsche’s critique would be expressed in the form of a call to conversion, purification, and self-reflection. Why then this curse on Christianity? The next section further enlightens this point.

### *The Contents of the Antichrist*

*The Antichrist*<sup>11</sup> starts with a declaration (par. 1) and finishes with a condemnation (par. 62). The introduction (par. 1) functions as the inauguration of the people<sup>12</sup> who are considered to be capable of passing a judgment on Europe, on culture, and particularly on Christianity.

The first paragraph is put in the first person plural. “Let us look each other in the face. We are Hyperboreans—we know well enough how remote our place is”.<sup>13</sup> About these mysterious Hyperboreans, a mythical people of whom Pindarus writes, Nietzsche says that they had found a way out, a way out from the labyrinth that had maintained itself for many centuries. What makes the subject even more mysterious is the fact that Nietzsche does not only introduce a vague, mythical past, but that he connects it with the expression: “We are Hyperboreans”. Who is this “we”? These Hyperboreans are the bridge which connects the myth and the modern era. By doing this, the present time obtains a mythical glance. Nietzsche makes it clear that these “new” Hyperboreans live in modernity, but do not belong to modernity. For about these Hyperboreans (the “we”), it is said that they have found a way out of the labyrinth, whereas the man of modernity has not succeeded in that endeavor. Modern man sighs: “I have gotten lost; I am everything that has gotten lost.” The modern era is the age of indecisiveness: “This modernity was our sickness: lazy peace, cowardly compromise, the whole virtuous uncleanliness of the modern Yes and No” (par. 1).

Concerning this still mysterious “we”, it is said, that they did not have a way. The moderns do not *know* of a way; the present Hyperboreans *have* no way, though they know the way out. They know the way, but are so choked by modernity that they cannot go *that* way. The Hyperboreans lived far in the North, they lived in a world of ice. And so it will be with the new Hyperboreans. It will be very hard for them, when they, with so much courage, push forward to get out of the labyrinth.

This introduction produces some points of view. Nietzsche lives with the conviction that a new era dawns, by which he means a way back to the mythical past that had been unreachable for thousands of years, owing to Christianity and modernity. We notice that Nietzsche speaks of a way back and not of “progress”: We must find out the way to get to the Hyperboreans. They live beyond the ice and beyond death; there we find *our* life, *our* happiness.... Briefly and to the point: the future lies behind us. The way back: that “program” differs from that of the

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<sup>10</sup> Originally, the subtitle was, “*Versuch einer Kritik des Christenthums*” (Attempt of a Criticism on Christianity).

<sup>11</sup> In the German language *Der Antichrist* can point to one person who appears in the apocalyptic future, as to an anti-Christian.

<sup>12</sup> Sommer says that this paragraph has the character of an initiation of novices in the mystery cult of the Hyperboreans. In his opinion, we may also interpret it as a confirmation. Sommer, *Der Antichrist*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Translation of *the Antichrist* in this article: Walter Kaufmann,  
<http://www.davemckay.co.uk/philosophy/nietzsche>.

Enlightenment.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, Nietzsche's views clash with the Enlightenment and Modernity. Therefore it may come as no surprise that the first line of the *Preface* is: "This book belongs to the very few". Nietzsche is the exponent of "a new conscience for truths that have so far remained mute" (Preface). It is difficult to find the way, because modernity is an obstacle. The struggle is not only against Christianity, but also (and not least) against modernity, because modernity was the result of this Christianity.

The battle front is much broader: not only Christianity and modernity are at the frontlines, but so is Jewry, because Christianity (and thus modernity) came out of Jewry. Christianity is the "*ultimate Jewish consequence*" (par. 24, italics of Nietzsche). That is the reason Nietzsche reacts against anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism creates an opposite to Christianity (the Church) and to Jewry, but this opposition does not exist at all. The one who is an anti-Semite *and* a Christian shoots his own foot.

In Nietzsche's text, one specific, personal antichrist is never mentioned, as opposed to (the book of *Revelation*.<sup>15</sup> It seems remarkable that no picture is painted of the adversaries of Christianity. But this lack of clarity disappears at the moment we realize that Christianity is its own adversary. There is no more dangerous enemy of Christianity, culture, and society than Christianity. So the notion of Antichrist is very ambiguous.

In the last period of his healthy life – thus a short time after he finished *The Antichrist* – Nietzsche wrote his so-called madness-letters, which he alternately signed with the Crucified, Dionysus, or Caesar. Some short letters, from which only the concepts have survived, Nietzsche signed as the Antichrist.<sup>16</sup> Did Nietzsche see himself as the Antichrist? In a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, he writes, "Do you want a new name for me? The church-language has one: I am ... the Antichrist". Not without reason, Nietzsche adds: "Let us not forget to laugh!"<sup>17</sup> We must not forget to laugh; neither must we forget that, at the moment Nietzsche brings himself to the fore, he puts on a mask. "Everything profound loves masks". (...) There are processes of such a delicate sort that people do well to bury them in something crude in order to make them unrecognizable".<sup>18</sup> We have to consider the possibility that at precisely the moment it seems Nietzsche takes off all of his masks, he puts one on. That is the ambivalence that characterizes Nietzsche.

According to paragraph 1, the point is to find a way out of the labyrinth. It is not explained what that labyrinth is. It is not illogical to suppose that the following 61 paragraphs give a description of the labyrinth. The labyrinth is Christianity. The antichrist is the guide who knows the way out and shows people the right direction. For Nietzsche it was shocking to see

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<sup>14</sup> "Progress' is merely a modern idea, that is, a false idea. The European of today is vastly inferior in value to the European of the Renaissance: further development is altogether *not* according to any necessity in the direction of elevation, enhancement, or strength" (par. 4).

<sup>15</sup> Wladimir Solowjew's *Übermensch und Antichrist. Über das Ende der Weltgeschichte* (Freiburg: Herder 1958), contains the "Kurze Erzählung vom Antichrist" (Short Story of the Antichrist), which he published in 1900. See p.100-133. Solowjew describes the Antichrist as a person.

<sup>16</sup> Letter of the beginning of December, 1888, to Bismarck, and a letter of 25 December 1888 to Cosima Wagner. *Kritische Studienausgabe sämtlicher Briefe Nietzsches* (KSB), Vol. 8 (München: Walter de Gruyter 2003), 504, 551. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche declares: "Ich bin der *Antiesel* par excellence und damit ein welthistorisches Unthier, – ich bin, auf griechisch, und nicht nur auf griechisch, der *Antichrist*..." (I am the *anti-donkey* par excellence and therefore a worldhistorical monster, – I am in a Greek way and in a non-Greek way, the *Antichrist*...). KSA 6, 302. Sietschek comments: "(...) Nietzsche(s) steht im Spannungsfeld zwischen einer völligen Selbstidentifikation mit Jesus und einer völligen Ablehnung und sogar Vernichtung von ihm" (Nietzsche stands in the tension between a complete self-identification with Jesus and a complete negation and even destruction of Him). Hans Otto Seitschek, "Nietzsches Blick auf Jesus", *Zeitenwende – Wertewende. Internationaler Kongress der Nietzsche-Gesellschaft zum 100. Todestag Friedrich Nietzsches vom 24.-27. August 2000 in Naumburg* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2001), 214.

<sup>17</sup> KSB 6, 357 (letter of 1883).

<sup>18</sup> KSA 5, 57. transl. Ian C. Johnston. <http://www.davemckay.co.uk/philosophy/nietzsche>.

that the way out was blocked. In the Renaissance, the way out was nearly reached for the first time in Western history. But just then Luther appeared on the European scene and he closed the door. Thinking and writing about what happened, Nietzsche uses a multicoloured metaphorical palette; he can find no words to express his bewilderment (par. 61).

The labyrinth is a metaphor of imprisonment and endless seeking. We would expect that Nietzsche would hold on to this image and elaborate on it, but for Nietzsche this metaphor lacks sufficient strength. The metaphor of sickness is more apt for his goal; it describes a process, a long during process of the degeneration of Christianity. The next summary of *The Antichrist* shows the importance of this metaphor.

Nietzsche presents an analysis of the sickness of culture. Culture is terminally ill, because man is ill. Man is weakened, he is tamed, he is a pet, and, moreover, a herd animal. In order to prevent man from being ruined, it is necessary that another, higher, type of man comes into existence. However, it is Christianity that frustrated this development. More explicitly, Christianity waged a war on life and death against the healthy life (par. 5). Nietzsche's implacable attitude towards Christianity (and towards the church) does not originate in hatred, but is inevitable and a *defense* against the rancour of Christianity toward life. Completely opposite to Christianity, Nietzsche presents Buddhism as a healthy religion (par. 20-23).

In par. 24-28, Nietzsche goes one step further; for the problem is not that Christianity stands in the way of the healing of man and of culture, or that Christianity is sick, *but that Christianity itself is the sickness*. This radicalism and its difference with other forms of criticism of church and Christianity, marks the book. Christianity (the Christian church) is not damaged so that it might need a reformation; it is not derailed, so that it might need prophets to show the right way; it is not sick so that healing might be possible. Christianity itself cannot be healed – it is the illness. It is not the patient, but the illness. To reform the church, to yet again inspire Christianity, would mean that we do not resist the sickness, but that we stimulate it. Christianity is the infection which must be exterminated. That is the bleak, crude core of the book. Some authors moderate this view.

The centre of the book, paragraphs 29-35, contains a psychology of the Saviour. Van Tongeren<sup>19</sup> and Sommer<sup>20</sup> highly value this part of the book. They prefer not to interpret the book solely by the end – the curse on Christianity – but from the middle part. The one who accentuates the centre deprives the text of its hardness and bitterness. For at the end of the book Nietzsche utters his deepest anti-Christian feelings.

Indeed, the centre of *The Antichrist* is crucial. It contains Nietzsche's interpretation of the gospel and, first of all, he sketches a picture of Jesus' epiphany to Israel and His acts among His people. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche spends respectful words on Jesus – He is the Bringer of glad tidings. Perhaps it astonishes us that he is saying these things in a book with the title *The Antichrist*. But here too, Nietzsche is consistent in his approach to Jesus and his respect for Him. He disconnects Jesus from the New Testament church and from Israel. This last

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<sup>19</sup> Van Tongeren, *Reinterpreting*, 262-263.

<sup>20</sup> Sommer accentuates the 'Scharnierstellung' (the hinge-position) of the psychology of the Saviour in *the Antichrist*. Sommer, *Der Antichrist*, 293.

disconnection we see again many times, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>21</sup> but not the former.<sup>22</sup> By disconnecting Jesus from the context in which He was living and acting, Nietzsche, on the one hand, creates the possibility to express respect for Jesus and, on the other hand, he is free to criticize, uncompromisingly, both Jews and Christians.

Starting with par. 39, Nietzsche tells the story of the real history of Christianity: How the gospel has been changed in a dys-gospel, an anti-gospel. Nietzsche unfolds how theological concepts, derived from the Old Testament, were used by the New Testament church, and eminently by Paul, as an instrument to bind humanity for many centuries.<sup>23</sup> We realize the unsound climate of thinking in the Bible, when we compare it with the codex of Manu (par. 56-57).

Nietzsche's argument explodes in par. 62. We see that in par. 62 the foregoing paragraphs reach a culminating point of emotions, which fall down as a heavy flood on the reader. These emotions make a rational argument impossible. The book ends with something that is stronger and bitterer and more irreconcilable than a condemnation. Nietzsche brings an eternal charge against Christianity: "I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great innermost corruption, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means is poisonous, stealthy, subterranean, small enough—I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind".

### *Earliest Christianity falsifies the gospel*

The church is not ill, but is itself the sickness. Nietzsche enumerates several falsifications: Jesus' death as a sacrifice and the belief in His resurrection; the belief in the immortal soul – both of these two articles of the Christian faith shift the emphasis and the value of life to the life hereafter. The most shocking forgery is the fact that faith must control the basic instincts of man. Nietzsche uses the word *instinct* many times in *The Antichrist*. This notion plays an important role in Nietzsche's argument. It functions as a hinge that connects Judaism and Christianity to each other. When Nietzsche speaks about the birth of Christianity, he does so in terms of instinct.<sup>24</sup> To get a taste for how important this notion is in Nietzsche's *Antichrist*, I will display some citations of par. 24 here. (The italics are Nietzsche's.)

### *Nietzsche on instincts*

Here I merely touch on the problem of the *genesis* of Christianity. The *first* principle for its solution is: Christianity can be understood only in terms of the soil out of which it grew—it is *not* a counter-movement to the Jewish instinct, it is its very consequence (...).

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<sup>21</sup> About the relation of Old Testament to New Testament, Schleiermacher writes: "In jedem Fall war der Rekurs der ersten christlichen Gemeinden auf das Alte Testament eine *Übergangerscheinung*" (In any case, the appeal of the early Christian church to the Old Testament was a *transitional phenomenon*). And about Judaism he declares in a letter to F. Lücke: "Diese Überzeugung dass das lebendige Christentum in seinem Fortgange gar keines Stützpunktes aus dem Judentum bedürfe, ist mir so alt als mein religiöses Bewusstsein überhaupt" (This conviction that the vital Christianity in its progress does not need support from Judaism is so old as my religious consciousness itself), H.J. Kraus, *Die Biblische Theologie. Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1970), 21.

<sup>22</sup> The critical method of New Testament scholars differentiates between Jesus and the early church, but Nietzsche separates them and makes them into radical opponents.

<sup>23</sup> Completely against the theological trend of his time, Nietzsche draws an unbroken line between Judaism and Paul. Paul does not liberate from Jewish laws and prescripts. Christianity duplicates Judaism because it continues to turn round the 'natural values'.

<sup>24</sup> The interpretation of the notion "instinct" in the work of Nietzsche is very difficult. Vinzens, who published a study on that subject, has the opinion that an unambiguous interpretation of this word is 'nahezu hoffnungslos' (nearly hopeless). Albert Vinzens, *Friedrich Nietzsches Instinktverwandlung, Quellen, Studien und Texte zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung Friedrich Nietzsches*. Vol. 1 (Basel: Schwabe & Co. 1999), 91.

The Christian church cannot make the slightest claim to originality when compared with the “holy people.” That is precisely why the Jews are the *most catastrophic* people of world history: by their after-effect they have made mankind so thoroughly false that even today the Christian can feel anti-Jewish without realizing that he himself is the ultimate Jewish consequence. In my *Genealogy of Morals* I offered the first psychological analysis of the counter-concepts of a noble morality and a morality of resentment—the latter born of the No to the former: *but this is the Judaeo-Christian morality pure and simple.*<sup>25</sup>

Psychologically considered, the Jewish people are a people endowed with the toughest vital energy, who, placed in impossible circumstances, voluntarily and out of the most profound prudence of self-preservation, take sides with all the instincts of decadence (...).

When we compare this to Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals*, it is necessary to make two remarks: 1. Nietzsche differentiates between instincts upwards and downwards, thus negative and positive instincts. They are in competition but they also need each other. In *Genealogy*, Nietzsche posits this struggle and correlation in a *cultural* context,<sup>26</sup> whereas in *The Antichrist*, he discusses this subject in a *religious* context. In *Genealogy*, Nietzsche blames the Christian God for repressing the instincts, but the religious context is here less obvious than in *The Antichrist*. Another difference between *Genealogy* and *The Antichrist* is that in *Genealogy* the Jews are not mentioned, whereas in *The Antichrist* Nietzsche stresses the relation Jewry – Christianity. I will make five remarks regarding this theme.

#### *Jew and Christian are Tschandalas*

1. Nietzsche distances himself from anti-Semitism and opposes it. In his letters, he mentions the Jews and anti-Semitism only in passing. Sometimes he expresses himself more clearly. In a concept-letter to his sister Elisabeth, who was married to Dr. Förster, an anti-Semite, he writes that it would be a good proposal if the anti-Semites were requested to leave the country.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere, he remarks that among his friends he has neither Jews nor anti-Semites.<sup>28</sup> In spite of this, his relation to Jewry is not without problems.<sup>29</sup>

2. Nietzsche defines Jews as pariahs. He uses the remarkable word *Tschandala* (chandala) to describe the position of the Jews.<sup>30</sup> The word *Tschandala* – in Tamil: sandala – is employed by Tamils as a curse. *Tschandala* applies to people who live outside the caste-system: the pariahs, the untouchables. Nietzsche writes (par. 57):

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<sup>25</sup> Consider here that Nietzsche goes in the track of, among others, the Old Testament scholar Julius Wellhausen, who sees the origins of Christianity in the after-exilic Judaism. See Sommer, *Der Antichrist*, 234.

<sup>26</sup> *KSA* 5, 321-324. Nietzsche uses the image of the transition of sea animals to land animals. ‘Just like the things water animals must have gone through when they were forced either to become land animals or to die off, so events must have played themselves out with this half-beast so happily adapted to the wilderness, war, wandering around, adventure—suddenly all its instincts were devalued and “disengaged.” In a comparable way the instincts of former periods sublimated in man and they were interiorized, with all consequences of it: the bad conscience, resentment.’

<sup>27</sup> *KSB* 8, 82.

<sup>28</sup> *KSB* 8, 46.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Heller describes Nietzsche’s attitude to Jews and Jewry in careful words as an ambivalent mixture in which the negative sentiment remained somewhat preponderant, though it was perhaps increasingly interspersed and mingled with respect, admiration, and sympathy, especially for individual Jews: Peter Heller, “Nietzsche and the Jews”, *Nietzsche Heute. Die Rezeption seines Werks nach 1988*, S. Bauschinger a.o. (eds.) (Bern/Stuttgart: Francke Verlag 1988), 151.

<sup>30</sup> “Nietzsche verwendet ihn (the notion Tschandala, AP) in idealtypischer und bewusst verletzender Weise für alle Unterprivilegierten” (Nietzsche uses it in an ideal-typical and deliberately hurting manner for all under-privileged people), *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, Christian Niemeyer (ed.) (Darmstadt: WBG 2009), 352.

The order of castes, the supreme, the dominant law, is merely the sanction of a natural order, a natural lawfulness of the first rank, over which no arbitrariness, no “modern idea” has any power.

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Indignation is the privilege of the chandalas; pessimism too. “*The world is perfect*”—thus says the instinct of the most spiritual, the Yes-saying instinct; “imperfection, whatever is beneath us, distance, the pathos of distance—even *the chandala still belongs to this perfection* (italics mine).<sup>31</sup>

About Paul he writes (par. 58):

Paul, the chandala hatred against Rome, against “the world,” become flesh, become genius, the Jew, the *eternal* Wandering Jew par excellence...

The Jews had to accept their fate just as the Indian pariahs. In a fatal manner they have influenced world history by the development of their hatred-instinct, as there is sin, guilt, sacrifice, conversion, obedience to God, and so on.

3. Nietzsche asserts that there is no antithesis between Judaism and Christianity. Here Nietzsche’s view is the opposite of the liberal theology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche’s totally deviant remarks on this subject must have hurt the ears of the leading theologians.

4. Jesus receives quite another position in this discussion. He is no genius, not a hero, and neither an Old Testament prophet. His way of life is very different than the deeds of the priests. He does not humiliate people by sin and neither does He make them dependent on the grace of God. Jesus abolishes sin and, at the same time, grace. Jesus does not belong to the Jews; neither is He the founder of the Christian church. Nietzsche disconnects Jesus from His historical and religious roots. Jesus is a ‘free spirit’, a kind of role model. In this way, Nietzsche can hurt the Jew, condemn the Church, and yet be respectful to Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

5. In Christianity – particularly in the New Testament Church and by Paul – the Jew grows to full maturity. Nietzsche condemns anti-Semitism, not because he is concerned about the Jews, but because he meets the Jew especially in the Christian. He resents the degenerated and perverted Christians who do not recognize the Jew in themselves and do not see that they have developed the Jewish decadence-instincts to perfection. “The Christian, this ultima ratio of the lie, is the Jew once more—even three times more” (par. 44).

From this, we can conclude two things. Firstly, Nietzsche stands nearly alone in his opinion that Christianity is a direct continuation of after-exile Jewry.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, his approach of Jews is not very different than that of his contemporaries. His attitude is negative. He despises the

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<sup>31</sup> This perfection provides no feeling of satisfaction. The highest caste, “the most spiritual men, as the *strongest*, find their happiness where others would find their destruction: in the labyrinth, in hardness against themselves and others (...),” (par. 57).

<sup>32</sup> See note 23.

<sup>33</sup> See *the Antichrist* par. 29. For ‘free spirit’: par. 32.

<sup>34</sup> The Jewish philosopher Sarah Kofman summarizes Nietzsche’s view, as he proposes it in *The Antichrist*, as follows: “Zwischen Judentum und Christentum gibt es also eine vollkommene Kontinuität, den das authentische Christentum ist nur das Ans-Ziel-Gelangen der jüdischen Instinkte und das gefälschte Christentum eine Rückkehr zu den jüdischen Instinkten” (Between Judaism and Christianity there is a complete continuation, for authentic Christianity is only the coming-to-the-goal of the Jewish instincts, and the falsified Christianity is a return to the Jewish instincts), Sarah Kofman, *Die Verachtung der Juden. Nietzsche, die Juden, der Antisemitismus* (Berlin: Diaphanes 2002), 83.



Jews who repress the sound instincts.<sup>35</sup> In their resentment, Nietzsche recognizes the small man who takes revenge on the powerful people. Nietzsche displays an aversion to anti-Semites, but not because he has sympathy for Jews. Nietzsche is not an anti-Semite, but he is anti-Jewish and anti-Judaism. We might say, Nietzsche does not attack persons, or a race – as do the anti-Semites – he only attacks a poisoned religion. The comparison of Jews and Christians with outcasts, however, is insulting to both.

*Stranger, pariah, and parasite*

What is, in light of the above exposition, the message of Nietzsche concerning the position of Jew and Christian in the world? And how does Christian theology see its position? Can we compare both positions? When we ask the question, “What is a Christian,” in the context of the theology of Van de Beek, there are several possibilities. One can see the Christian as pilgrim, as stranger or as sojourner.<sup>36</sup> Pilgrims have a goal for their pilgrimage. Concerning strangers, the emphasis lies on the fact they are uprooted. They do not belong to society. This point is even truer for the sojourner. Strangers do know where their domicile is; but sojourners are totally out of place. The Jew knows of the Promised Land, but Christians do not have a native land on earth. ‘Christians are not a new community within the world, but belong to the eschatological reality, that is not of this world’.<sup>37</sup> That does not mean Christians pull their hands off of this world. Van de Beek will also undoubtedly agree with, for example, Moltmann, that the ‘messianic style of life’ is the mission of a Christian. The striking point is, however, that the coming Kingdom does not lie inside history, but on the other side of history – beyond history.

This explains the hesitation Van de Beek has in considering the Christian as a pilgrim. A pilgrim has a goal and it is very well possible that this goal lies inside history. This goes for the Christian as a stranger too. It is much better to compare the Christian with a pariah, an outcast. Nevertheless, this comparison is not entirely apt to explain the position of the Christian and Jew. Pariahs live outside of society. Society does not accept them, despises them, and excludes them. Pariahs do not choose this position, it is their fate. The situation of Christians and Jews differ from pariahs. Their positions as an eschatological reality mean that to live as outcasts is neither their fate, nor their choice: it is their *vocation*.

Nietzsche, throughout his work, describes the identity of Jew and Christian as characterized by resentment. They do not accept their fate. The Christians organize the slave-revolt. They are dominated and reigned by their bad, repressing instincts. Nietzsche fails to see or does not want to see, that vocation liberates from resentment. Vocation is not a choice or a fate; it liberates from fate and therefore from feelings of resentment.

One last point has to be mentioned. The position of Christians and Jews is not that of pariahs. Pariahs are, despite their very hard life as outcasts, *useful* for society. The most dirty work is done by them. Nietzsche calls Jews and Christians parasites and, therefore, they are *not* useful. Why not useful? “The beginning of the Bible contains the *whole* psychology of the priest” (par. 49). It deserves our attention that Nietzsche sees the beginning of the Bible as the starting point of the degeneration of life. Already there – and not just in the post-exile era – he identifies the psychology of the priest. And the priestly psychology is an attempt against life; it is a *priestly* attempt, an attempt of *parasites*, it is vampirism! (par. 49).

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<sup>35</sup> Nietzsche says of Pilatus that he was right that he did not want to be involved in a Jewish affair: “To take a Jewish affair *seriously*—he does not persuade himself to do that. One Jew more or less—what does it matter? The noble scorn of a Roman” (par. 46). Another example: “We would no more choose the ‘first Christians’ to associate with than Polish Jews—not that one even required any objection to them: they both do not smell good” (par. 46).

<sup>36</sup> A. van de Beek, *God doet recht. Eschatologie als christologie* (Zoetermeer: Meinema 2008), 222.

<sup>37</sup> Van de Beek, *God doet recht*, 222.

By saying this, Nietzsche adds something that throws a blazing light on the position of the Christian, namely the element of *harm*. Jews and Christians live at the expense of healthy life. They are parasites, and parasites are harmful and must be exterminated. Nietzsche is very cynical when he discusses the usefulness of Christianity. “Let anyone dare to speak to me of its ‘humanitarian’ blessings!” (...) “Parasitism as the only practice of the church (...)” (par. 62). Jews were harmful: recent history shows it. For Nietzsche, Christians are also harmful, even more so than Jews.

To the above-mentioned remark, that Nietzsche’s comparison of Jews and Christians with outcasts is hurtful for both, must be added a second remark. Characterizing Jews and Christians as parasites is not only insulting but, just as much, threatening. Nietzsche’s *The Antichrist* is indeed anti-Christian, anti-Jewish and anti-Judaism, but also against Christians and against Jews.