

Historicity, continuity and neo-orthodoxy in contemporary judaism**Historicidad, continuidad y neoortodoxia en el judaísmo actual**

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Abstract

Judaism is not a uniform religion. In it, different groups are differentiated, among which stand out, for their fundamentalism, the orthodox and the ultra-orthodox. The first ones strictly comply with religious precepts, although they coexist with "gentiles" and even lay people, adapting to certain "modern" social behavior. On the contrary, the second ones, called *haredi jews* or "God-fearing", follow extreme judaism in their interpretation and practice. These groups are today affected by heterodox and secular overmodern influences to such an extent that in the jewish media there is already talk of the emergence of a "new orthodoxy".

Resumen

El judaísmo no es una religión uniforme. En ella se diferencian distintos grupos, entre los que destacan, por su fundamentalismo, los ortodoxos y los ultraortodoxos. Los primeros cumplen estrictamente con los preceptos religiosos, aunque conviven con "gentiles" e incluso laicos, adaptándose a cierto comportamiento social "moderno". Por el contrario, los segundos, llamados judíos *jaredies* o "temerosos de Dios", siguen un judaísmo extremo en su interpretación y práctica. Estos colectivos se ven hoy afectados por influencias heterodoxas y seculares sobremodernas hasta tal punto que en los medios judaicos se habla ya del surgimiento de una "nueva ortodoxia".

History, Judaism, Neo-orthodoxy**Historia, judaísmo, neoortodoxia**

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Introduction

On a souvent reproché aux juifs de faire bloc pour se couper des autres traditions religieuses. Pourtant, le judaïsme n'est pas monolithique. Il a même toujours été traversé par diverses mouvances, parfois en conflit.

Jean-Christophe Attias (Attias, 2014)⁴.

Judaism is not a uniform religion. In it, and depending on their level of compliance with Halakha or Halajá, a set of rules derived from the Torah, different groups are differentiated, among which the orthodox and ultra-orthodox stand out, due to their fundamentalism. The former strictly comply with religious precepts, although they coexist with "gentiles" and even lay people, adapting to certain "modern" social behavior. On the contrary, the latter, called Haredi Jews or "God-fearing", follow extreme Judaism in their interpretation and practice. These, in turn, are made up of other collectives (Hasidim and Misnagdim, etc.), but the variations between them are few, as they all respect the same basic principles.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews are refractory to the cultural changes that modernity has imposed in industrialized and post-industrialized societies, much more in those that belong to a neoliberal economic system. Keeping their social customs, traditions and religiosity unchanged, they fight to prevent today's novelties, technologies and advances from contaminating them; for this, they live grouped in colonies and neighborhoods, abiding by the authority of their respective rabbis. They not only reject the ideas and innovations of the non-Semitic worlds in which they are inserted, but even the modern ways of life of the State of Israel and, specifically, Zionism, an ideology on which it is built, thus establishing itself as the center of Judaism (Stofenmacher, 2005, p. 236).

These groups are today affected by heterodox and secular overmodern influences, to such an extent that in the Jewish media there is already talk of the emergence of a "new orthodoxy". This work deals with these two great religious branches of Judaism, its normative and practical conservatism, its resistance to change and its vulnerability to the advances of a globalized, intercultural and rapidly transforming world.

Many are the theorists of the Hebrew field who in their investigations deal with distinctive aspects such as Hebraism, Judaism, Semitism or Zionism of their societies. Specialists of their ethnicity, culture and religion have spoken of this people since there is historiography and religious, philosophical and anthropological thought, either as a description of their communities, an attack on their idiosyncrasy or defense of it. In particular, and with regard to Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Judaism, and by way of example, we highlight the following authors:

Nicholas De Lange, professor of Hebrew studies at the University of Cambridge, in his book *Judaism* carries out a complete synthesis of this religion (what is the Judaic religion, characteristics that define it, internal organization, traditional rites ...), building a rigorous information for the unfamiliar. In this text stands out a section dedicated to the way in which Judaism conceives the future.

Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth United Hebrew Congregations and a professor at several international universities, represents the Orthodox view of seeing positive elements in non-Orthodox ways of life. This academic advocate establishing a common *modus vivendi*, which synthesizes the different interpretations of the Halakha, to avoid divisions, guarantee unity and, with it, religious survival. In his extensive work, specifically in *One people?*

⁴ "Jews have often been criticized for forming a unit to isolate themselves from other religious traditions. However, Judaism is not monolithic. It has even always been crossed by various movements, sometimes in conflict". Jean-Christophe Attias is a French historian and philosopher, specialized in studies on Judaism; is Director of Studies at L'École Pratique des Hautes Études Université de la Sorbonne, Paris.

Tradition, Modernity and Jewish Unity (1993), addresses the challenge of Judaism in modernity and the relationships between Halakha and the norms implanted in contemporary societies.

Damian Setton, an Argentine Jew researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), works in the field of orthodoxy and its opening to new dimensions. In "The emotional dimension of the return to sources in orthodox Judaism", chapter included in the section Emotion, modernity and religions of the book *Modernity, Religion and Memory*, compiled by Fortunato Mallimaci (Mallimaci, 2008), as well as in his article "Hasidism, Kabbalah and Rock in Atzmus's musical project", raises the difficult situation of the Orthodox Jewish branch that is between resistance and acceptance of the new innovative currents, which extend, above all, among the youth. This last work focuses on the project of a musical band that wants to be integrated into the group of Argentine rock music and in which, however, two of its members define themselves as Orthodox Jews.

Developing

Jews, Hebrews and Israelites: theoretical-conceptual divergences

Elaborating a historiographical synthesis of the Jewish People is not an easy task; first, by the antiquity of its existence, which requires the researcher to go back in history thousands of years; later, due to its lack of continuity and its dispersion, which run parallel to the numerous lived processes of diaspora and exile throughout the evolution of humanity; but also - and no less important - by the debate established between specialists, and the final disagreement, regarding its nomenclature and classification, always confusing and ambiguous.

In this sense, and before delving into any subject that this ethnic-religious collective complex has as its object of study, we must ask ourselves if, to refer to those who make it up, we should speak of "Jews", "Hebrews" or "Israelites". Consensus seems almost impossible and requires, at least, a first conceptual approach:

The term Jew is properly applied to those born of a Jewish mother; that is, this category is acquired by blood. However, those who accept or convert to Judaism are named in the same way, thus expanding the circle of the so-called "Jews". Historically, this term was used for the first time in the 1st century AD. C. (Ariel, 1995), referring to the inhabitants of southern Palestine (tribes of Judah and Benjamin), settled there since the division of the twelve tribes of Israel in the times of the biblical King Solomon⁵. Despite these different explanations, David Ariel, professor of Jewish Studies at Cleveland College, relying on Tradition and Laws, provides the following clarification: "There is no word in the Bible for what we call Judaism; the religion is variously referred to as the 'teachings' (Torah), 'commandments' (mitzvot), and 'laws' (hukkim or mishpatim)" (Ariel, 1995, p. 110)⁶.

According to Ariel, "Jew" and "Judaism" are words that are gestated in Palestine during the conquest and occupation of Rome, later spreading to the West, which is why, in his opinion, there are no previous uses of them.

It is possible that the feeling of difference with respect to other peoples, which from its origins has always and with such certainty united the Jews, made them never consider the need to call themselves to mark a distinction and make a personality evident.

⁵ Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel declared in rebellion led by Rehoboam, son of Solomon, while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained in the south of the territory. This division would later mark the separation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

⁶ There is no word in the Bible called "Judaism"; religion is referred to as teaching (Torah), (mitzvot), and "laws" (hukkim or mishpatim).

In turn, by Hebrew a more arcane historical concept is understood, which dates back to the time of the Patriarchs (ca. 17th century BC), applying, specifically, to Abraham and his descendants (Ibrim). According to other hypotheses, this word would name those who were originally a nomadic Semitic⁷ people from Mesopotamia and Ur de Chaldea, Abraham's homeland, who moved to Canaan, land that Yahveh had promised for him and his lineage. The Hebrews would therefore be the ancestors of the Jews and the Israelites.

For its part, Israelite derives from "Israel", a name given by God to Jacob. In Genesis this designation is related:

God appeared again to Jacob when he was returning from Paddan-Aram and blessed him saying: "Your name is Jacob, but from now on you will no longer be called Jacob, but your name will be Israel." So, he named it Israel. And he added: << I am the God of the Heights; be fruitful and multiply. A nation, or better, a group of nations will be born from you, and kings will come out of your lineage. I will give you the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac, and I will give it to your descendants after you >>. Then God moved away (Genesis, 35, 9-13).

This quote shows that from the sons of Jacob the "Biblical State" of Israel was born, so that henceforth they, their children, and their children's children were Israelites. Understood in this way, "Israelite" would be a concept that would indicate a nationality and not a religion.

In short, the term "Jew" would refer to a religious affiliation, "Hebrew" to an ethnic origin and "Israelite" to a nationality. These three circumstances can coincide in an individual in all or only in part: there are Jews who are not Hebrews or citizens of present-day Israel; in turn, Hebrews living in different countries of the world, with varying degrees of Judaism, and Israelites who may not be Hebrews or Jews, living together, in the same state, quickly and improvisedly built after the Second World War, with Muslims and Christians of various ethnic origins.

Historical background of the "Chosen People"

The history of the Jewish people is, in short, that of the Hebrew people, of whom, by roots, the Jews feel descended and whose beginning is lost in the night of biblical times. It refers to the future of a minority, diverse and geohistorically very divided people. Taking the terms "Jews" and "Hebrews" as synonyms, we note their appearance in Genesis with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As already mentioned, Jacob identifies with Israel and with the Promised Land. From him, the history of the Jewish people will be that of the Land of Israel (Eretz Israel). The Bible records the first thousand years of its evolution, giving an account of its bond with God, its migrations to settle in richer and more prosperous places, the conflictive relations with neighboring peoples and the formation of its identity, both religious and cultural, attached to the maintenance of the Law and Tradition. Chilean professor Miguel Saidel rightly synthesizes his complex historical trajectory:

The commented history that we are going to sketch in broad strokes is that of a physically very small oriental people, whose greatness is not traced in geography, whose victories are not military, whose material power was always reduced, to which the great empires of antiquity over and over again, plunging him into destruction, slavery, or captivity; a people later scattered by the adverse winds of history, whose communities and individuals - lacking a national will - were harassed and bitterly persecuted, first, in order to attract them and, after a century of legal emancipation, to exterminate them (Saidel, 1968, p. 8).

A brief chronological summary distinguishes several stages in the history of this controversial town:

⁷ "Semites" are understood to be all peoples originating from Shem, Noah's son.

The first, and already mentioned, is known as the Biblical Stage, between the seventeenth and sixth centuries BC. From this chronology dates the establishment of the Jews in the Promised Land, the migration to Egypt and their long captivity, the Exodus led by Moses and the arrival to the land "flowing with milk and honey", in which the community receives his laws (Ten Commandments), inaugurates his monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon...), and fixes his capital in Jerusalem, where he erects his first Temple.

Around 930 a. C. arises the division between the descendant tribes of Jacob, giving rise to the kingdom of Israel, which will be subdued by the Assyrians, and that of Judah, conquered by the Babylonians, which will lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple and the deportation of the Jews to Babylon.

A third historical stage is distinguished from the 6th to the 1st century BC. In it, known as The Second Temple, the Jews return from Babylon, the Temple is rebuilt again, and now the arrival of the Macedonians of Alexander the Great is suffered. This time will not be exempt from internal rebellions against foreign occupation and a brief independence, which will conclude with the taking of Jerusalem by General Pompey in 63 BC. C.

From here, the period of Roman domination begins, which will span the 1st century BC. C. to III d. C., in which the family of Herod, Jewish king ally of Rome, will reign, and the birth, public life, passion and death of Jesus of Nazareth will be seen. The beginnings of Christianity will now coincide with uprisings against Rome and with a new devastation of the Jerusalem city.

From the 4th century of our era onwards, the history of the Jewish people will be that of subjugation to continuous foreign powers: Byzantines (4th-6th centuries), Arabs (6th-11th centuries), European crusaders (11th-13th centuries), Mamluks (13th-16th centuries), Ottoman Turks (16th-20th centuries) and British.

At this time, it is noteworthy that in the 7th century the Caliph Abd el-Malik ordered the construction of the Muslim mosque of the Dome of the Rock in the place where the successive temples of Jerusalem were located before, and that the medieval crusaders constitute the Regnum Hierosolymitanum or Kingdom of Acre in 1099.

Already in the contemporaneity of the 19th century, the First World Zionist Congress was opened in Basel (Switzerland), convened by Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), an Austro-Hungarian Jewish activist, and the Zionist Organization was founded.

In the early 20th century, the British will end Ottoman rule. The Arab-Israeli conflicts will then begin with the formation of Transjordan⁸. The Second World War and the Nazi genocide, better known to posterity as the Holocaust, will make the world turn its eyes towards the massacred Jewish people, so that, at the end of the war, the UN will propose the creation of the State of Israel.

In all this long time, the Jews suffered invasions, exterminations, captivity and diasporas; but "during the long years of dispersion, the Jewish people never cut or forgot their bond with the Earth. [Finally] with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jewish independence, lost two thousand years earlier, was regained" (Israel, 2020).

While all these conjunctures occurred, one after another, throughout the centuries, the tradition and religious faith of this people remained unharmed. This was possible because Judaism is not only an atavistic and strong doctrinal system, embedded in the culture of the Hebrew people for millennia:

If we take Judaism only as a religion, we can assure that it is certainly not a religion of fixed doctrines or dogmas, but a complex belief system that evolves. Beyond diversity, there is above, like a rubric, an arch that unites the (Jewish) individuals of each trend, from the most orthodox to the most liberal or secular (Barriuso and Laureiro, 2020).

⁸ It comprised the eastern fringe beyond the Jordan River.

In time, it will give rise to the current country of Jordan.

The Jewish religion: unity in diversity

Unlike Christianity and Islam, the other two great existing monotheistic religions, Judaism does not have a specific date on which to chronologically secure its beginning. As has already been indicated, being linked to a semi-nomadic people, which is forced, for one reason or another, to make multiple movements through the Middle Eastern geography, its beginnings are lost in remote antiquity. However, his most deeply-rooted convictions, his dogmas, are based on a founding book: The Bible (Christian Old Testament), called by the Jews Tanakh, which recounts the epic of the Hebrews marked by their constant relationship with God.

Other fundamental religious texts are: the Torah (Pentateuch), the Nevi'im (Book of Prophets), the Ketuvim (Writings), The Mishnah (oral traditions and commentaries on the Torah⁹) and the Talmud (interpretations elaborated in the second century). Also, and derived from the school of thought known as Kabbalah¹⁰, highlights the mystical book Zohar ("Book of splendor")¹¹.

As already mentioned, according to the Bible, Abraham is the first Hebrew who, leaving his Chaldean city of Ur, at the direction of Yahveh, will migrate to the land of Canaan. From his tribe, sedentarized around 1200 BC. C., the Hebrew people will be born, whose religion is based on the Covenant with God and the Law revealed by this to Moses.

Neither the Jewish nor the Christian faith question the existence of the first biblical characters and episodes, for example, Noah and the Universal Flood; yes, instead, secular history, which attributes to them a legendary and fictitious origin. However, studies of biblical criticism (without formal presence until the 18th century) and historical archeology, have revealed the credibility of certain characters, such as the kings David and Solomon.

From a religious point of view, Abraham is therefore the first patriarch to recognize the existence of a unique God who must be honored and obeyed, in exchange for the promise of a descendant as vast as the sands of the sea and a land in which to settle and grow. This covenant with Yahveh will extend to his son Isaac and his son's son, Jacob, from whom, as already noted, the Jewish or Israelite people would come.

The sons of Jacob, founders of the twelve tribes of Israel, refugees in Egypt because of a fierce famine, were enslaved by Pharaoh, until Moses, who had received a divine revelation in the burning bush, frees them and leads them to the land that God had claimed to grant Abraham. In the Exodus Yahveh gives Moses the Decalogue of the Ten Commandments: "Cette loi visait à garder le contrôle sur le royaume par l'imposition d'une culture commune à toutes ses parties"¹² (Fellous, 2008, p. 3).

Next, Moses orders to build the Ark of the Covenant, to keep the Tablets of the Law in it. This will be the first seat of the later Jewish Temple. Later King David will establish the Israelite capital in Jerusalem, and his heir Solomon will actually build the aforementioned first Temple. With this action, Judaism will now be an official religion.

In the V century a. C., the Torah (instruction, teaching, doctrine) is reintroduced, the Law par excellence, which synthesizes the previous Jewish uses and rules, and corresponds to the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible¹³. The reading of the Torah, the festivals, the sacrifices and the prayers will be, from now on, the foundation of Jewish life. This tradition lasted with the conquest of Rome and was preserved unchanged after the appearance of the Messiah, the diaspora and the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem, continuing to this day.

⁹ Compiled in the 2nd century by Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi.

¹⁰ The origin of this hermeneutical school or current dates back to the Essenes, although it became official in the Middle Ages.

¹¹ Book supposedly written by Shimon bar Yojai in the second century, but whose authorship is probably due to Moses de León.

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¹² "This law aimed to maintain control over the kingdom by imposing a common culture in all its parts".

¹³ Esdras, a Hebrew priest and scribe, is the one who, upon his return from the Babylonian captivity, reintroduces the Torah as religious and legislative norm.

This, then, in synthesis, is the foundation of the Jewish religion, characterized by the recognition of a unique and absolute God, who agrees an alliance of friendship with the man to whom he gives his Law, and the implementation of the Torah. These principles bring unity to the scattered Jewish people. However, contrary to what one might think, Judaism is made up of a great variety of currents, which present notable differences among themselves and come from at least the 6th century BC. C.

Since then, heterogeneous religious and political groups are documented in the ancient world, such as the Essenes, Baptists, Samaritans, Zealots, Sadducees and Pharisees. The former made up a rigid priestly caste, which only recognized the written Torah. In turn, the Pharisees were considered spiritual leaders, standing out for strictly applying and enforcing the Torah. These last two groups constituted the legal-religious institution of the Sanhedrin, in force at the time of Christ.

This diversity of ideologies, which continues to this day, causes astonishment in an extreme monotheistic religion like the Jewish one. The specialist in biblical studies Julio Treballe explains the reconciliation between this monotheism and its different tendencies with the following words: "The question that arises here is precisely the relationship between Jewish monotheism and its particularistic and universalistic derivations at the same time, that is, between Jewish monotheism and Jewish identity, universal and particular at the same time" (Treballe, 2005, p. 11). The dispersion of the Jewish people, the compartmentalization and isolation of their communities throughout history would go further in the direction of interpreting and living a Law in different ways. However, it could be said that religious alternatives do not imply basic dogmatic dissensions, but rather practical. In this sense, for the understanding of Judaism, the American psychologist Peter Nathan proposes starting from two previously contrasted concepts: "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxis".

From this point of view, there would be no distinction regarding an "orthodoxy" (let us remember here that, in opposition to Christianity, in Judaism there is hardly a dogmatic or an elaborate theology), only in terms of a practice, which would be what would make some currents differ from others. It should not be forgotten that Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew, and he himself became involved in this controversy. In Professor Nathan's opinion:

Judaism as a religion has always been defined as "having the correct practice" rather than "having the correct belief" (orthopraxis vs. orthodoxy). Uniformity of practice is the criterion. Controversies and differences in practice separated the various Jewish religious groups in Jesus' time, whether they were Sadducees, Pharisees, or Essenes. This explains why Jesus disagreed with his practice of God's law. For him, they failed to the point where they did not practice it correctly (Nathan, 2005).

The different forms of praxis have been imposed by famous rabbis in disparate territories and historical moments, registering, in turn, internal fragmentations, making it very difficult to sketch a first classification and a later typology of past and present tendencies of Judaism. In summary, and following the order proposed by the French researcher Martine Berthelot (Berthelot, 2008, p. 89), the main current divisions can be summarized as:

Orthodox or Hasidic Judaism

Established by the Ukrainian Rabbi Israel Ben Eliezer, it originated in the 18th century as a reaction against the demand for a life dedicated entirely to the study of the Scriptures. Against this, it is advisable to cultivate other values, such as singing and religious dances, prayer and helping others. One division of Hasidism is the Habad movement, made up of those who believe in the coming of the Messiah. This other messianic line was founded in 1775 in Russia by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi.

Ultra-Orthodox Judaism or Haredi

(the "God-fearing"). As an Orthodox split, it was born in the 19th century in Eastern Europe, within the Ashkenazi communities¹⁴, although certain precedents were already registered in Ukraine in the 18th century. Haredi Jews fully uphold the ancient traditions of Judaism, remaining isolated from the other social groups with which they live, rejecting any contact with them, and speaking a distinctive common language: Yiddish¹⁵.

Neo-Orthodox or Modern Judaism

It is instituted in Germany in the 19th century by Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, who advocated that Jews can adapt to modern life, while respecting Halakha. The neo-Orthodox differ from the liberal Jews in that, despite being adapted - and integrated - to the Western life of other denominations, the practices of the synagogues continue to be in Hebrew and with separation between men and women.

Liberal Judaism

It was organized in the city of Hamburg, Germany, in the 19th century as an adaptation of Judaism to modern liberalism, rapidly spreading to France and the rest of Western Europe, from where it passed to the United States, constituting the majority current of Judaism there. For his followers, essential Jewish values are more important than Halakha. The main changes in this line are the admission of women-rabbi (1935), the use of mixed spaces in synagogues, the use of vernacular languages in rites and prayers, etc.

Masorti Judaism

Initiated, in the same way, in Germany in the 19th century by Rabbi Zacharias Frankel, it arises in opposition to the liberal Jews and the Orthodox regarding the interpretation of the Halakha, which must remain unchanged and modernize as long as the Talmud authorizes it. Also, it allows women to be rabbis. This branch later developed, especially in the United States.

Secular Judaism

Known as humanistic or secular, it is more geared towards displaying a plural Jewish cultural identity than religious practice. This type of Judaism, very critical of the most fundamentalist and closed tendencies, which it defines as sectarian, is of an intellectual, humanistic, civic-social and universalist sign, betting on open and cooperative dialogue with all kinds of religions and beliefs, considered forms of cultural and civilizing expression.

All these variants within Judaism present internal divergences, which are well understood from the explanation of Martine Berthelot:

[...] In the case of Judaism, plurality, variability, openness prevail, as well as the complexity derived from the very essence of Judaism, which is not only religion, but also culture and civilization, tradition and practices, history and memory, values, feelings and attitudes, etc. To all of which is added the complexity induced by the multidimensional aspect of individual identity, which in turn is the result of the family trajectory and the civil and social options of each individual (Berthelot, 2008, pp. 105 and 106).

Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Judaism: Characteristics, Similarities and Differences

In the previous section, it has been pointed out how from the margins of Judaism it is difficult to delimit the scope of the different currents that coexist within the same religion. Something similar happened in Christianity when, as a result of the Lutheran Reformation, the "Christian churches" proliferated, having, as in the Jewish religion, a great development and a complex diversification between the 18th and 19th centuries, on the occasion of the Anglo-Saxon migrations to North American lands. However, the similarities and differences between Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews are detectable.

Orthodox Judaism, like ultra-Orthodox, advocates a rigid religious practice, but without falling into isolation and total separation from civil society.

¹⁴ Ashkenazis are the Jewish collectives settled mainly in Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and part of Russia.

¹⁵ Yiddish is a dialect of German spoken only by Ashkenazi Jews.

Their integration into the socio-professional secular world is total, although their followers are signified by a series of signs, such as the dress (kippa -species of skullcap- and the men's black suit and white shirt; the women dress decently, but without the rigor of the ultra-Orthodox).

For its part, ultra-Orthodox Judaism orders a total behavior of the mitzvot or prescriptions that appear in the Bible, and an absolute compliance with the set of legal norms that constitute the Halakha. In this sense, ultra-Orthodox men and women strictly observe the Shabbat (Saturday feast), the rest of the Jewish holidays, the cleanliness of food, conjugal morality and traditional dress, as the bourgeois of Eastern Europe dressed. in the 19th century: men with white shirts, shorts, stockings and buckle shoes, long black coats, borsalino hat or shtreimel, grew long beards and ringlets or payot on their temples ¹⁶; women wear long skirts, blouses buttoned up to the neck, wig ¹⁷ and cap or hat.

Men dedicate themselves, preferably, to the study of religious texts (Bible, Talmud and Kabbalah) and to prayer, while women take care of a large number of children at home, children who hardly receive any other education than in the yeshiva or school run by a rabbi. The economic conditions in which ultra-Orthodox families live are currently very precarious; grouped in neighborhoods, as in the case of Mea Shearim in Jerusalem, separated from the spaces of civil society, they find themselves in dire need to request economic aid from the State in order to survive.

Modern Orthodoxy and the Neocommunities: A Progressive Alteration of the Jewish Religious Tradition

Modern orthodoxy or neo-orthodoxy is not a recent construction. Coinciding with the spread of the Enlightenment, it was born in Europe in the 19th century, within the orthodox trend, by assuming enlightened and romantic values, such as the rescue of the past, which will serve as a spur for the youth by defending respect for the religious heritage-cultural.

The Spanish theologian Antonio Rodríguez Carmona highlights the aforementioned German Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch as one of the promoters of this new orthodoxy, perhaps his most outstanding theorist, who defended, with respect, for example, to education, that "you have to learn subjects both religious and secular, without seeing opposition between the two" (Rodríguez Carmona, 2001, p. 275). Rodríguez Carmona goes on to explain that for this "enlightened orthodoxy" many of the interpretations of the Torah are mere formalities, which:

Reason can and should help religious life, but we must avoid uses that deviate from the Torah, as in fact happened with the Science of Judaism, which served only, according to him [Hirsch], to reason violations of the Torah. The foundation of his religious vision is the Law of God, revealed in nature and at Sinai. The Torah, both written and oral, is divine and therein lies its value, but it needs an explanation. The point of view of traditional orthodoxy that enforces the observance of the commandments just because they are commanded and, therefore, are a means of uniting with the will of God, is not enough. Hirsch offers an explanation of a symbolic type, taken from the Jewish world itself, criticizing the explanation of a rational type that Maimonides gave, making use of philosophy, something foreign to Jewish thought, which is self-sufficient (Rodríguez Carmona, 2001, pp. 275-276).

The above serves to clarify that the transformations of Jewish orthodoxy begin within itself. However, at the same time, and already in post-Enlightenment times, the pressure that ultra-Orthodox communities have received, and do receive, from secular societies has been, and is, very strong.

Despite the isolation in which they try to live, modern life, with its technological, consumerist and globalizing characteristics, the mass media, the advances in science and the general influences of the ways of life abroad are little by little undermining the steadfastness of these religious groups.

¹⁶ Following what is prescribed in Leviticus 19:27.

¹⁷ They cover their hair or shave it on the day of their marriage, so that no one can see it anymore.

The English specialist in Hebrew studies Nicholas De Lange, in his extensive work *Judaism*, ventures to chart the future of this religion, threatened by external anti-Semitic pressures, its declining demographic trends, which have not yet been able to recover from the Holocaust, the conflicts Arab-Israeli politicians and, within the current State of Israel, social transformations, confessional pluralism, interreligious dialogue with Christianity and Islam and Jewish "theology" that, to this day, seems to be paralyzed and lacking dynamism (De Lange, 2011, pp. 351-372).

Thus, the obstacles for the Jews to preserve orthodoxy and the severe way of life that it entails are many. The main one is their location and the role they play in the social fabric of the countries they inhabit, where they try to reconcile secular civil laws with religious faith. Taking the State of Israel as an example, it is known that in it the Haredi or ultra-Orthodox Jews suffer political pressures that urge them to contribute to the payment of taxes or to fulfill military service like any other Israeli citizen, to which they resist, exterminating an evident rejection of all secular partisanship and Zionist manifestation. Paradoxically, as has already been anticipated, the precarious economic situation in which the Haredi live pushes them, on many occasions, to ask for financial support from the State itself, which they despise.

The harsh, almost permanent conditions they suffer also make them dependent on aid or remittances from relatives or other foreign Jewish communities, although, on the other hand, they necessarily belong to economic systems that are "abominable" from the point of view ultra-orthodox. These contradictions have a dissolving effect on the fundamental principles of this current, constituting a gateway to another type of society and world: "a modern world."

This influence is recognized to a greater extent in young people, who no longer agree to receive only the instruction offered by schools or yeshivas, nor to dedicate themselves to the exclusive study of the Scriptures, having as their only professional horizon to become rabbis, and this in the men.

Trades such as a doctor, archaeologist, musician or military are work fantasies that haunt the heads of youth, making them think and conceive ways of reconciling them with laws and religious practices. It is even known, for example, of ultra-Orthodox members of political parties, in order to contribute with their votes to support various proposals of these, and thus be able to receive, in return, the promise of respecting and defending their customs in government institutions and beliefs¹⁸.

These aspirations then pose the problem of equality between men and women, since many young women want to have a profession, or the opportunity to develop innate skills in them, such as those related to the arts, questioning the fulfillment of ancestral practices that they are forced to dedicate themselves to household chores, when they could work and contribute with their own income to the family economy; raising a large number of children, or shaving hair or hiding it under a wig when they marry are other feminine obligations that tend to be refuted and modified over time.

As regards the Orthodox or Hasidic communities, the opening towards a new orthodoxy occurs unstoppably, but almost imperceptibly. Music has been a determining factor in its flexibility. Hasidic Jews, who admit music as a religious-spiritual practice, go beyond the limits of ritual to join, with their musical competence, other artistic and cultural spheres of secular orientation. This is the case of the Argentine-Jewish rock band *Atzmus*, which, positioning itself in a new social space, that of rock and roll,

amalgamates a universalizing and a communitarian-ethnicizing way of projection of the Kabbalah and Hasidism, a process that is related to the construction of meaning about their practices [...] *Atzmus's* music is not exclusively intended for communitarized orthodox Jews nor does it seek to strengthen a community in particular, which accounts for the de-ethnicization of Hasidism (Setton, 2015).

¹⁸ In 2013, an Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox Jew and another Sephardic Jew were elected to preside over the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, a council that has jurisdiction over many aspects of Jewish life in the State.

Contrary to what it might seem, this band does not completely break with Jewish orthodoxy: two of its members declare themselves to be orthodox Jews, the lyrics of their songs have clear Hasidic and Kabbalistic references, and, in general, they conduct themselves while maintaining rigid principles of Halakha, such as the absence of female singers, in response to the ancient rule that prohibits men from listening to a woman sing. All this makes Damian Setton think that in this artistic manifestation Jewish orthodoxy is not lost, but rather expands.

Like any other religion, Judaism, in its strictest versions, is forced today to "coexist" with all kinds of secular and liberal sectors, which sparks debate and controversy over whether or not it needs progressive adaptability. current reality, or its defense not only as religion, but as a differentiating identity element:

The relationship between morality, Jewish religious truths, and social role in a progressively more complex society in the modern state takes on various aspects within Jewish understanding itself, particularly in light of discussions of liberal assimilation, the new orthodoxy, and the increasingly common manifestations of atheism or agnosticism (Fonti, 2011, p. 46).

To this his previous reflection, the Argentine researcher Diego Fonti adds the tendency, followed since the Enlightenment by theorists of Judaism, to admit the possibility of a kind of consensus or "normalization" between the Jewish religious discipline and the advance of secularization:

First of all, Judaism has to be understood qua religion, but in addition to Judaism as culture a science can be elaborated. Modes of religious services and liturgies emerge, and of symbolic representation of the "leaders" of these communities, which would lead all of them to think of Judaism as one more confession in a progressively more tolerant State that admits freedom of worship [...] In a framework of progressive secularization, religion is no longer the founding element of Jewish identity (Fonti, 2011, p. 40).

Apart from the influence that the governments of the countries in which they are inserted have on Jewish groups, the pressure of a neoliberal, consumerist and technologized system to the extreme, the always biased and often sensationalist information of the media, and the weight of the novelties, fashions and types of behavior, increasingly secularized and highly attractive, especially for the youth (all this also added to internal divergences), act as disruptive elements of the old orthodoxy, and as accelerators of the implantation of a "new Judaism" or "new Judaisms".

In the case of current Spanish communities, for example, the discrepancies originate around the idea that the Jews themselves have of Judaism, which is a serious disintegrating element. According to the sociologist Julia Martínez Ariño:

[...] It is in the different degree of compliance with the precepts, but above all in the justification that is made of it, where the greatest differences emerge. More specifically, the differences appear both in the severity or flexibility with which the prescriptions of the law are followed, and above all in the existence or absence of reflexivity around this observance. In fact, it is in the justification offered by people of their own practice where greater variability can be observed (Martínez Ariño, 2011, pp. 452-453).

Decision-making on aspects such as burial places, breaking up old communities to create new ones or positions to be taken on the request for greater visibility and female participation, claims contemplated in the problem of gender equality, are a frequent reason for splits and claims before the corresponding rabbinical authorities.

The issue of gender equality, together with the change in family orientation, is a thorny issue and difficult to deal with - if not impossible - within the Orthodox, but mainly among the Haredis or ultra-Orthodox, since "From their point of view, the more children a couple has, the more confident they feel of having demonstrated their superiority over the secular world and of having followed the biblical recommendation to multiply" (Álvarez, 2007, p. 40).

The Spanish researcher Ana Álvarez assumes, in the same way, the opinion of Richard Baehr, political correspondent for the American Thinker, when she affirms that "In addition, the ultra-Orthodox believe that they are called to repopulate the Jewish community after the loss suffered by the Holocaust." (Cf., Álvarez, 2007, p. 40; Baehr, 2006). Their differences with those who make up non-denominational groups are great; In the opinion of New York sociologist Samuel Heilman, "in secular societies, young people aspire to get a college degree, go out into the world of work, and succeed. The Haredim [or Haredis], on the other hand, have set their goal to have as many children as possible. This is how they interpret success" (Cf. Wattenberg, 2005; Cf., Álvarez, 2007, p. 40).

The aforementioned cases, although they do not have much social impact, are symptoms of something more important: the existence of marked internal dissensions in the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities and the appearance of a gradual trend aimed at blurring the borders of the ethnic, the cultural - community and the religious that is their own and distinctive. Thus, there is a de-ethnicizing and de-communitarianizing process among Jews (Setton, 2015), a process that, in higher instances, even manifests itself in new socio-political currents.

Conclusions

From the above, could it be said that we are facing an imminent fragmentation of Judaism? If so, would the responsibility for this rupture or danger of rupture fall almost exclusively on the generalized advance of secularization in all religious systems?

These and other questions have been raised and answered since the late twentieth century by historians and philosophers, such as British Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who, in his abundant research production, addresses the main problems that Jews will have to face in the future that, in our millennium, it is already a present (Sacks, 1993). To do this, Sacks conducts a survey of the anthropological notion of "being Jewish", a difficult task.

For Johann Meier, a German expert in Talmudic studies, "The emergence of other movements within Judaism, non-religious Zionists, socialist internationalists, neo-Orthodox, etc., shows the impossibility of reducing the modern Jewish experience to a confessional definition" (Meier, 1988). In this sense, it would be in the conception of "Jew", built from the complexity of history, the diaspora, the different interpretations of the Law, schools, guidelines and consequent disagreements, controversies and fragmentations, where the explanation of the advance of the religious lassitude and current secularization.

Likewise, let us not forget that, despite their rejection "of the exterior", the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities live in the realm of modernity, which is why their members enter into controversy with the consciousness of being a modern subject, characterized by, among many other singularities, the death of the sacred, the progressive dissolution of the religious and the affirmation above all of the subjective and secular reason of man.

Product of the previous trend, today, as in all our belief systems, heterodoxy rises among Jews, challenging their ability to maintain their Orthodox unity in the face of growing heterodox diversity. Only the depth and richness of a millennial message can find forms of dialogue and consensus that prevent the new currents from ending up being elements of the extermination of a religion and a culture more than arcane.

Faced with this imminence, Christians should take due precautions, since, in some way, we are indebted to Judaism and inheritors of its tradition collected in the Old Testament, a set of precursor texts of our faith. However, remember that "What unites the Jews is not a belief, but a history: the deep sense of a common origin, and a shared past and destiny" (De Lange, 2011, p. 55), which, As has been demonstrated several times, it conspires, and will always conspire, any extermination of this group with a definitive character.

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