TZEDAKAH: THE TRUE RELIGION OF SPINOZA'S *TRACTATUS*?

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Abstract: This article digs into the conceptual history of *tzedakah* to consider its relationship to Spinoza's definition of true religion as *justitia & caritas* in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. I provide a brief explanation of Hebrew grammar and Spinoza's grammar. Next, I consider the original meaning of this term in order to show how it came to be redefined and associated with a particular idea of charity by way of contact with Christian notions of sin. Next, I turn to two major thinkers in medieval Judaism — Rashi and Maimonides, both of whom contributed significantly to the formation of the notion of *tzedakah*. Finally, I consider the intellectual milieu in which Spinoza wrote. This conceptual history prepares the way for a reconsideration of the meaning of true religion in the *TTP*.

Keywords: Spinoza, *TTP*, *tzedakah*, justice, charity, true religion.

> The religious background of seventeenth-century thought should give us a clearer picture of why these thinkers dealt with the issues they did, and sought certain kinds of solutions.[3]

Few terms have been so contested and the source of so much hatred and violence in European history as that of 'true religion'. From its theological roots in Augustine[4] or its juridical institution in the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* doctrine of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215),[5] to its political function in the writings of the *Founding Fathers*, true religion has had both multiple and radically conflicting meanings. While the Latin term for religion, *religio*, is by no means new, its meaning was radically reconfigured during the Protestant Reformation. Prior to this period, during which time the Catholic Church was faced by diverse challenges, the term *vera religio* (true religion) was synonymous with the Church and Christianity. This changed in the seventeenth century when 'true religion' became the centre of a struggle

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[3] R.H. Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth Century Thought* (Leiden, 1992), p. 49.

[4] This term is most commonly associated with Augustine who wrote *De vera religione* in AD 390 in which he argues that only the truth of God can lead one to freedom.

[5] 'There is one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation.'

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between the Catholic Church and Protestant Reformers.[6] Most philosophers and theologians, whether atheist, deist, Protestant or Catholic, writing during the many centuries of religious conflict proposed an account of true religion. In this regard, Spinoza's interpretation of true religion in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*TTP*) is — on the surface — no different. Likewise, on the surface, his definition of true religion in terms of *justitiae & caritas* — justice and charity — is seemingly benign. However, for those familiar with Hebrew and the Jewish tradition — as Spinoza certainly was — 'justice and charity' is a hendiadys — two nouns that express the same meaning — one captured by the Hebrew term *tzedakah*. Reading the *TTP* with an understanding of *tzedakah* demonstrates that Spinoza's true religion[7] is a political and economic *praxis*[8] disguised as an appeal to Christian theological virtues.[9] Before examining the conceptual history of this term, it is important to clarify that I do not seek to recuperate Spinoza for Jewish thought or to claim that Spinoza sought to reinstate Judaism by means of true religion, but rather to demonstrate how an understanding of the Judaic concept of *tzedakah*[10] provides evidence for an economical and political reading of true religion in the *TTP*.

Tzedakah is best translated as *both* justice *and* charity, where the conjunction 'and' creates a *hendiadys* (a two for one *or* figure of twines in rhetoric) such that both nouns express a single idea (often used to add force to an idea).[11] In this vein, synonyms of *tzedakah* would be just charity or charitable justice. What is essential is that the two nouns cannot be separated. While there is rich history of reflections on *tzedakah*, the fundamental idea is that charity is constitutive of justice (and vice-versa). Likewise, *tzedakah* is a responsibility, 'the right thing to do' (being fair), and by no means voluntary. This hendiadic notion can be contrasted to an additive notion of charity, where justice and charity are seen as distinct, albeit related, praxes — this

[6] G. Ward, *True Religion* (Oxford, 2003).

[7] Primarily in the *TTP* but also in the *Ethics* (e.g. IV/37/2) and in his *Letters* (e.g. 76). All references to *Ethics* and *Letters* are taken from Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza: Volume I*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, 1985). All references to *TTP* are taken from Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza: Volume II*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curly (Princeton, 2016).

[8] While some contemporary readers, mainly those influenced by Marxism, have recognized the political and economic implications of the *TTP*, none have considered the political and economic implications of Spinoza's definition of true religion in relation to the Judaic.

[9] E. Garver, 'Spinoza and the Discovery of Morality', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 23 (4) (October 2006), pp. 357–74.

[10] The *Torah* was of course originally written in ancient times for a society based on agriculture and as such its rules and principles are often rooted in agrarian economics, as is the case with *tzedakah*.

[11] There are many examples from the *Torah* in which it is not clear how two terms relate. For example in Leviticus 25:47, the Hebrew says *ger v'toshav*, the alien and the resident, but can also be expressed as resident alien.

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implies that a separation is possible.[12] The latter is often assumed in Christian notions of charity, such as those recuperated by the public-private distinction introduced as a means to separate church and state,[13] which associate charity with love, kindness and generosity (at its extreme, a form of altruism).[14]

While Spinoza does include Hebrew citations of biblical passages in the *TTP* that use the term *tzedakah* (e.g. 13:20), he does not refer directly to this concept (or any other uniquely Judaic concept to the best of my knowledge). The most likely explanation for this is that the intended audience of the *TTP* was Christian.[15] Nonetheless, from his Hebrew grammar, it is clear that he acknowledges the lack of a conceptual separation between these two terms that is distinctive to the Judaic notion of *tzedakah*. It is my contention that Spinoza defines true religion as both justice and charity with the Judaic hendiadic notion of *tzedakah* in mind. If this is the case, we must begin to understand true religion in terms of recognition of equality, in political and economic terms (i.e. recognition and redistribution), for both political stability and philosophical freedom. This reading of true religion elaborates an economic theory of just distribution, a commentary of the political necessity of debt relief, and a critique of the Christian interpretation of charity as distinct from justice.[16] Aware of Quentin Skinner's critique of reading past authors with present concepts in mind, it is my intention to try to establish what *tzedakah* meant in Spinoza's intellectual milieu. This 'gives us a clearer picture of why these thinkers dealt with the issues they did, and sought certain kinds of solutions'.[17] As such, the bulk of this article is an effort to dig into the conceptual history of *tzedakah* in order to enrich our understanding of Spinoza's resolution of political conflict in terms of true religion.

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[12] This type of separation is often implicitly assumed by Spinoza's readers who refer to justice and charity as distinct characteristics or attributes of God, and then proceed to analyse each independently (e.g. not connecting defending justice and aiding the poor).

[13] This is precisely what the contemporary philosopher Peter Singer claims should be the case in the global justice debate. P. Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 1 (3) (1972), p. 235.

[14] While a comprehensive inquiry into the conceptual link between justice and charity is the subject of another paper, it is worth noting that while its current translation in Modern Hebrew is often charity, probably the result of Christian influences, its current usage both in biblical Hebrew and for Jews in the Diaspora, is as justice *and* charity.

[15] A. Matheron, *Le Christ et le salut des ignorants chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1971); S. James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics: The Theologico-Political Treatise* (New York, 2012); A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2005).

[16] Beyond Spinoza scholarship, implicit to the notion of *tzedakah* is a plea — which I believe is of critical importance today — to refuse the conceptual separation of justice from charity along the lines of Peter Singer's ethics. I develop this aspect of *tzedakah* in a separate paper (forthcoming), in which I also consider the implications of this plea in terms of the separation of private/public, justice and morality, and politics and ethics.

[17] Popkin, *Third Force*, p. 49.

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In Section I, I show how, and with what aim, Spinoza defines true religion as *justitia & caritas*. In Section II, I provide a brief explanation of Hebrew grammar and a brief detour to Spinoza's grammar to demonstrate his knowledge of the redefinition of *tzedakah* in terms of justice and charity. In Section III, I consider the semantic and etymological roots of this term originally limited to the notion of justice in order to show it came to be redefined and associated with a particular idea of charity by way of contact with Christian notions of sin. This redefinition of *tzedakah* in terms of both justice and charity is demonstrated by investigating three historical periods: the Second Temple period and in particular Paul's position which I explore in Section IV. In Section V, I turn to two major thinkers in medieval Judaism — Rashi and Maimonides, both of whom contributed significantly to the formation of the notion of *tzedakah*; and finally, in Section VI, I consider the intellectual milieu in which Spinoza wrote by examining Cunaeus' *Hebrew Republic* (1617) to which he explicitly refers in the *TTP*. This conceptual history prepares the way for a reconsideration of the meaning of true religion in the *TTP*, in Section VII.

I
True Religion in the *TTP*

While the meaning and importance of true religion for Spinoza's *TTP* may be evident, it is necessary to establish how true religion is a response to the problem that led Spinoza to compose and publish this text. His goal is explicitly stated in the sub-title of the *Tractatus*. While the subtitle is often overlooked,[18] it clearly provides us with Spinoza's intention, which was to safeguard the freedom of philosophers that was under threat in the 1660s in the Netherlands.[19] He also sought to prove that this freedom was fundamental for the faith of the multitudes and the peace of the political community. What Spinoza aims to explain in the *TTP* is the means to make all this possible. In this sense, the *TTP* is a manual for the foundation and maintenance of a peaceful political community constituted by diverse religious beliefs and philosophical truths (which is also one of the many reasons it should be re-read today). The greatest barrier to the peace of such a community was the conflict that arose between theologians.

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[18] See T. Verbeek, 'L'enjeu du *Traité théologico-politique*: la liberté de philosopher', in *L'Actualité du Tractatus de Spinoza et la question théologico-politique*, ed. Quentin Landenne and Tristan Storme (Brussels, 2014).

[19] S. James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics: The Theologico-Political Treatise* (Oxford, 2012), http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199698127.001.0001/acprof-9780199698127; J.I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (New York, 2002); S. Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge, 2001).

While the bulk of the *TTP* is a close, critical reading of the Torah (First Testament), Spinoza's target — both in terms of an audience and of his critique — is a Christian one.[20] To Spinoza's dismay, it is different groups of Christians that are viewing and feuding for political authority (and not the Jews, Turks or heathens) and using power as a platform to validate their theological beliefs.[21] So what solution does Spinoza propose to preserve peace between these different Christian factions? A well-known theological notion — *vera religio* — true religion (which I will argue is a wolf in sheep's clothing). In order to define true religion Spinoza proposes to separate it 'from philosophic speculations and reduce[d it] to those very few and very simple tenets Christ taught his followers' (*TTP*, 11:22). According to Spinoza, only such a reduction can provide a solid foundation for true religion as a model for obedience. While exact knowledge of God is not shared by all, obedience, which comes from knowledge of his divine justice and charity, is accessible to all (*TTP*, 13:9; 13:20–2). Obedience is an imitable non-philosophical version of justice and charity. After reaffirming that this obedience is the ultimate end of true religion, Spinoza seeks the best means to motivate it. In this vein he states that it is important to appreciate that different persons, communities etc., with their particular geographical, historical and cultural specificities, must each be able to develop their own practices with regard to obedience and pleas for freedom of scriptural interpretation. Nonetheless, Spinoza felt compelled to provide a list of seven tenets specifying the content of true religion. Essential to these are justice and charity (*TTP*, 14:25–9). Some have even argued that all the other tenets can be reduced to justice and charity.[22]

So the question remains, why does Spinoza transform true religion, a theological concept, into obedience, a *praxis*? Is this praxis to be understood theologically in terms of justice and charity as Christian virtues? What, if any, connection is there between the justice and charity of true religion and the

[20] See note 12, above. In addition, as Spinoza wrote in Latin, most of it was inaccessible to the Jews living in the seventeenth century. Moreover, many of his arguments were not new to Jewish 'theological' debates. S. Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind* (New York, 2004); S. Nadler, *The Best of All Possible Worlds: A Story of Philosophers, God, and Evil in the Age of Reason* (Princeton, 2010), p. 239.

[21] Spinoza felt compelled to interrupt his *Ethics*, in order to try to understand and react to what he could not silently accept. Whether it was as Jonathan Israel claims, the specific event of the arrest of the Koerbach brothers (Adriaan and Johannes) (J. Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton, 2011)) or simply the decreasing lack of tolerance for philosophical freedom he experienced as Steven Nadler suggests, or the need to explain his actions which led to his excommunication, Spinoza clearly felt that it was urgently necessary to try to grasp the source of this theological-political conflict and to attempt to resolve it by means of a treatise in which true religion, and its correct relationship to the political, was set forth.

[22] See A. Matheron, *Études sur Spinoza et les philosophies de l'âge classique* (Paris, 2011), p. 393.

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Judaic concept of *tzedakah* that means justice and charity? The answer to these questions is significant as it brings to the fore the political and economic solution to religious conflicts presented in the *TTP*.[23] I will return to this claim in the final section after having explored the conceptual history of *tzedakah*.

II
Tzedakah — Hebrew Grammar and Spinoza's Grammar

While there are many different words in Hebrew, there are a limited number of Hebrew roots. This means that many words share the same root, composed of three consonants. The meaning of the root contains the quintessence of the words that are derived from it; as such two words that have the same root are often related in meaning. The distinct words are formed by adding vowels, prefixes, suffixes etc. to this root.[24] Let us consider the root of the word *tzedakah*. The Hebrew root is צדק (ts-d-k) and means justice, righteousness and correctness. As explained above, this means all words derived from this root have meanings related to these concepts. *Tz'dak* is the singular masculine

[23] In addition, it (1) has a direct impact on how certain phrases are translated and interpreted in the *TTP*, and (2) elucidates certain puzzling steps in Spinoza's argument. The most recent translation by Edwin Curley of *justitia & caritas* as justice and loving-kindness differs from all previous translations (justice and charity) and demonstrates the implicit interpretation of true religion in Christian theological terms. While I acknowledge the dangers of the misunderstanding of the term charity, with its contemporary connotations, I believe the term loving-kindness is even more problematic as it conceals the conceptual link to equality, economics and debt which are fundamental to a proper understanding of Spinoza's notion of true religion. In addition it has a heavy Christian accent most commonly associated with verses such as 1 Corinthians 13. This verse refers to the Greek term *agape* translated as *caritas* in the Vulgate (late fourth-century translation by St Jerome from Greek to Latin), which is the official version, promoted by the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, and the basis for our current translations. While I argue that 'justice and charity' is best understood as *tzedakah*, it is certainly best translated in English as justice and charity. In addition to raising questions of translation, Judaic concepts can point to alternative references that are sometimes overlooked by Spinoza scholars unfamiliar with this tradition. For example, when Spinoza states true religion is 'to love God above all else, and to love your neighbour as yourself . . . since this is the foundation of the whole religion' (*TTP,* 12:34). This phrase is the source of another example of the interpretation of Spinoza in terms of Christian theology, which seems to dismiss its Judaic roots and interpretation. Rather than citing Leviticus 19, or Rabbi Akiva (second century AD) who was famous for his Talmudic claim that all of Judaism could be reduced to 'loving your neighbour as yourself', scholars, such as Susan James (the most recent example) refer to it as 'the interpretation of the law central to the teaching of the New Testament from Romans 13:8'. James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics*, p. 189 n.6.

[24] E.g. the root קדש means holy, sacred or sanctified. Words that derive from it include: קודשה (holiness), קיודש (the prayer for wine), קדיש (a mourner's prayer, which also means holy in Aramaic), אווק קדש (the Torak ark, a holy place), יןש וקדו· (betrothal).

form of the noun and *tzedek* is the plural form. These are nouns that mean justice, righteousness and correct. When discussing Isaiah 58:8 (*TTP*, 5), Spinoza uses the Latin term *justitia* to translate the term *tzedek*.[25] A second word derived from the same root is the verb *tzadák* which means to be right, fair or correct. A third word is *tzadik* that means righteous one. This same root is to be found in the word צדקה, *tzedakah*, which was (until recently with Modern Hebrew[26]) translated as justice, and as I will show included what we now commonly refer to as charity. In order to demonstrate that Spinoza was aware of these different and interconnected meanings of the Hebrew root צדק, let us briefly turn to his Hebrew grammar.

Probably the least read work by Spinoza is his incomplete *Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae*, published a week after his death along with his *Ethics*. This Hebrew grammar was written at the request of his Christian colleagues who were unfamiliar with Hebrew. It is worth noting that their goal was to be able to study texts other than the Torah, which were not yet translated. As such he sought to introduce them to the 'logic' of Hebrew grammar, which differs greatly from that of Latin or Greek, and in so doing empower them to use Hebrew actively. 'Some researchers suppose that Spinoza's grammatical system is based on his philosophical doctrine according to which there is in the world of things one sole and infinite substance of which extension and thought are the attributes known to man (cf. Bernays 1850; Chajes 1869; Hillesum 1921; Proges 1924–6; Gruntfest 1979).'[27] Furthermore, the grammar provides evidence of Spinoza's desire to be understood by a Christian audience and his willingness to use metaphorical language to do so. For example, he chooses to begin his grammar with a very Christian[28] account of the role of vowels and consonants in Hebrew, a role that permits the different meanings of the root צדק. He refers to vowels as 'souls of letters',

[25] This also seems to be the meaning Spinoza seeks in the Ethics, IV app 15, when he writes 'things that beget harmony are those which are related to justice, fairness, and being honourable'.

[26] While this is an unsubstantiated hypothesis, it might be the case that Modern Hebrew created in the twentieth century was in fact influenced by the Christian worldview.

[27] A.J. Klijnsmit, 'Some Seventeenth-Century Grammatical Descriptions of Hebrew', *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, 12 (1) (1990), p. 94. While I do not intend to consider this claim, one possible example of such a correlation is to be found in chapter 25 of the grammar where he considers the relationship between intensives, which have both an active (pi'el) and passive (pu'al) form. The relationship between active and passive forms, as well as the reflexive form — which is a bridge between these (and is discussed below with relation to justice), has resonances with a distinction present both in the *TTP* and the *Ethics*.

[28] Another example of the obvious influence of his audience is in the choice of words to explain in the grammar itself, such as חטא, sins, which is of central importance to Christians in this period, also in relation to the notion of *tzedakah*, but which has a very different connotation for Jews.

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and consonants as 'bodies without souls' (particularly interesting given the above position of a correlation between Hebrew grammar and Spinoza's substance theory), which can be read as a critique, by no means new in Judaism, of the sectarian conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees regarding vowels and the oral tradition. For our purpose what is important is that Spinoza clearly expressed the importance of vowels in expressing the meaning of a particular root.

He makes reference to the root צדק in four chapters of the grammar (6, 8, 11 and 13) all of which deal with nouns. What is critical is that when he cites the Torah in the *TTP*, as he does with צדק, he does not provide the vowels and as such the meaning remains open to the reader to determine. This differs from the grammar where he provides terms with a concrete meaning such as justice (singular, masculine) for צדק.[29] He uses the same translation of justice for a different construction of the noun based on the root צדק in Chapter 8 where he refers explicitly to צדקה, that is *tzedakah*. What this demonstrates is that Spinoza refuses to draw a sharp distinction between *tzedek* and *tzedakah*, rejecting an additive understanding of the relationship between justice and charity. Both terms are defined as justice for Spinoza according to the grammar. If we allow this analysis in the grammar to colour our interpretation of the definition of true religion in the *TTP*, it would mean that Spinoza acknowledges the Judaic hendiadic interpretation of justice and charity as co-constitutive (and not additive).[30] The reason he uses the two Latin terms, *justitia & caritas*, connecting them by means of an ampersand symbol (&) is because his Christian audience would not have been familiar with the former.

It is also worth noting that the word *caritas* does not appear in the grammar, which if it did, would be proof that Spinoza has another word in mind when he uses the Latin *caritas*. There are certainly some possible Hebrew terms that could have been associated with *caritas* — especially if one accepts Curley's translation in terms of loving-kindness (e.g. *hesed*). Having considered both Hebrew grammar and Spinoza's grammar, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the terms justice and charity share the same Hebrew root, and the word *tzedakah*, because of the specificities of Hebrew grammar, is comparable

[29] B. de Spinoza, *Hebrew Grammar: Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae* (Philosophical Library, 1962), ch. 6.

[30] This claim is further supported by a third signification given to the same root in Chapter 11 where he translates the word צדקי as my righteousness, yet another of the original meanings of the root צדק. Finally, he presents the two other forms of the root צדק, the verb *tzadák* that he translates as 'to be just' and its most complex grammatical construction, in terms of its reflexivity, צהצטדק, which he translates as to justify oneself (in Latin), but exceptionally also translates into Dutch (which he calls Belgian) as *zich ontschuldigen* (*TTP*, 13). This is rather strange as this root is rarely used in the reflexive sense, and as such it does not seem to be an obvious example to use in a grammar intended for a Christian audience reading the Hebrew Scriptures.

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to a *hendiadys* (a two for one often used to add force to an idea) in that *tzedakah* means both justice and charity, which together express one idea and are not to be conceptually separated. Second, we can conclude that Spinoza was aware of the different meanings and grammar of this root. However, in order to consider whether this meaning of *tzedakah* is to be found in his notion of true religion, we must investigate the etymology and conceptual history of *tzedakah*. This will also allow us to answer the question what did *tzedakah* mean, for Spinoza and Christians, in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

III
Tzedakah — Etymological Underpinnings

With an understanding of Hebrew grammar, it is now time to consider the original meaning of *tzedakah*. Philologists and theologians concur that there is significant evidence for the association of *tzedakah* with the legal obligation of giving to the poor from at least the second century BC.[31] While we might consider giving to the poor a noble act of charity, *tzedakah* was a legal requirement. In 1951, Franz Rosenthal sought to explain, 'in detail how, and when, and under what circumstances a word meaning primarily "justice, righteousness" came to signify charity stipulated by the law'.[32] It is this perceived shift from justice to charity that is central to our own investigation.[33] In order to do so we turn to philology to show how the root *ṣ-d-ḳ* in Semitic languages (e.g. Hebrew, Arabic) had connotations approximating our own usage of the terms right, privilege, grant, and gift.[34]

The term *tzedakah* was used possibly as early as the Babylonian exile during the time of Ezra (fifth century BC) 'to express the idea of giving a stipulated gift as the appropriate course of action'.[35] Such actions were seen as expressions of justice, correctness and propriety as stipulated by a legal code. A more notorious example of such a gift is to be found in the Arabic term *ṣadâḳ*, which is a type of dowry. In addition to the understandable feminist alarm bells this notion rings, the latter has an important financial connotation.

[31] O. Bauernfeind, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart, 1935).

[32] F. Rosenthal, 'Sedaka, Charity', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 23 (1951), p. 411. Note his implicit interpretation of this deed to be charity.

[33] The connection most often assumed by theological scholars, primarily in Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is that both charity and justice are actions attributed to a virtuous person. It was also common, although incorrect according to Rosenthal, for these scholars to connect these terms by means of the Greek, which also links justice to the notion of kindness, which is clearly also at play in Curley's recent translation.

[34] There is a clear connection between the Aramaic word charity, *sidka/sdakta*, the Hebrew root צדק, and the Arabic *sadaqah*.

[35] Rosenthal, 'Sedaka, Charity', p. 413.

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ṣadaḳah and *zakâh* are both types of loans. Unlike our contemporary understanding of loans, loans were a compulsory legal contribution to the poor often collected by way of a tax (legally stipulated percentage of one's income). Loans were thus seen as acts of justice, a 'correct or fair' gift as defined by a specific situation. According to Rosenthal, the need for increased external finances of Jewish authorities — during this period of exile — also led to the increased importance of this financial connotation (a claim Luther will repeat in his attack on the abuse of indulgences by the Catholic Church).[36]

Given that Semitic languages have their shared source in Aramaic, Rosenthal considers if this original meaning of a 'correct' action, in line with justice, is present in Aramaic uses of the root *ṣdḳ*. What he discovers, by looking at common formulations of Canaanite royal inscriptions, is an indirect link between justice and being rewarded, as is the case with Noah. 'The proper course of action in all human affairs, the paramount political virtue whose possession may be rewarded with a royal throne . . . refers to a man's righteous [*ṣaddîḳ l^{e} pānay*] behaviour before the deity which assures him a blessed life, exactly as Noah was saved because he behaved properly before the Lord' (Gen 7.1). This shift becomes explicit and essential in Daniel 4:24 as a result of its translation into Greek and Latin by Christian scholars. The change we focus on here is the association of the root צדק with charity (*caritas* rather than *justitia*), and more specifically with almsgiving in relation to sin and salvation. The point here is to show how the idea of 'correct or just actions' is subtly re-framed in terms of sin and salvation.

> Therefore, your majesty, please take my advice: break with your sins [errors/אטחוך] by replacing them with acts of charity [בצדקה], and break with your crimes [iniquities] by showing mercy [favour/במחן] to the poor [needy/wretched/ענין]; this may extend the time of your prosperity.[37]

The prophet Daniel advises the king to break or atone for his iniquities or errors.[38] Daniel advises the king to 'show favour' — to entreat the poor. However this showing favour is mistranslated, or at least misunderstood, as showing mercy. The term mercy is a theologically laden translation as is the term poor. The latter can be understood as a specifically financial concern or more broadly, as in Hebrew, to include anyone in need. The translation, and its

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[36] In the course of the resettlement of Israel in the fifth century, which required great financial contributions for the success of the whole and for the support of those of lesser means, the Aramaic word came into use for the stipulated sums which were levied upon the people first for the *common* welfare, and then for indigent individuals. *Ibid*., p. 430.

[37] I have left the Hebrew terms with other possible translations to show the range of possibilities.

[38] The translation of וחטאך as sins is problematic as in Hebrew this word conveys an error, or more precisely missing the target, rather than anything more morally substantial.

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Christian interpretation, clearly colours the way one reads the Hebrew term *tzedakah*, here translated as charity rather than justice (recently translated in the New Revised Standard Version, in 1989, as righteousness).

It is also from interpretations of this passage that Christian theologians develop the connection to debt and sin. Moral admiration can be bought by paying one's debts;[39] charity is a form of penitence (which is the theological origin of indulgences that Luther attacked during the Reformation[40]). In this passage there is a clear connection between *tzedakah* as a means to atone for wrongdoings, and being blessed with prosperity, specifically by acting justly towards those in need. What it is important to observe is how this passage can also be interpreted without the very Christian theological connotations such as sin, poverty, charity (as in almsgiving) and salvation. The notion that justice was served by almsgiving, that justice could be reduced to a financial transaction offered as a means to atone for one's sins, nonetheless becomes the dominant usage in the Second Testament. It is thus by means of the differing interpretations of this (and other similar) passages[41] that diverging meanings of *tzedakah* begin to arise.

IV
Second Temple Period

If, as Rosenthal's research establishes, *tzedakah*'s change of meaning can be dated to the period in which the Book of Daniel was written (approx. second century BC — although the story occurs in the late sixth century BC), it is necessary to further investigate these linguistic changes and their political and economical implications during the second Temple period (approx. 530 BC–AD 80). This period also played an important role for Christians in the seventeenth century, such as those in Spinoza's intellectual milieu (to be developed in Section VI).

One of the most interesting appearances of righteous (*tzedakah*) in the Second Testament is in the Gospel of Matthew, 25:31–46, which can be dated around AD 80. In the tale of the sheep and goats, Jesus separates the people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep go to the right, and are saved, for they acted charitably towards the worst-off, whereas the goats go to the left, and are cursed to spend eternity in hell, as they did not act appropri-

[39] D. Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn NY, 2011).

[40] J.A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (New York, 1927), http://archive.org/details/criticalexegetic22montuoft.

[41] As historians of this period have shown, this particular passage was central in the quarrels between Christians and was of much less importance in Jewish thought in the Middle Ages.

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ately.[42] The tale concludes with the moral that those who act kindly to the 'least' are the righteous who will be rewarded with eternal life. Righteousness is strongly associated with the final judgment by many early Christians. Likewise, charity is understood as a means of salvation and becomes a central preoccupation of the Church in terms of almsgiving.[43]

The notion of charitable donations, within the context of just actions, is also present at this time in the Mishnah although without a link to either sin or salvation.[44] In it those whose task it is to collect financial donations are referred to as גבאי צדקה, collectors of *tzedakah*, and described in Avot 5:13 as righteous. However the dominant understanding of *tzedakah* in the Mishnah is what I claim is present in Spinoza's notion of true religion — an economic form of liberation, an erasure of debts, in the name of political stability. 'The political purpose of such a move is simple to understand. By lifting the obligation to repay an onerous debt, the king sought to rectify extreme disparities that existed between the rich and poor that would, in time, threaten the stability of the kingdom.'[45] This Jubilee year appears in the Bible in that God, as sovereign, liberates all people of their debts every forty-nine years (the seventh sabbatical).[46] Justice was thus a politically motivated liberation from the inequality created by debt.

According to Gary A. Anderson's analysis of the notion of sin in the Second Temple Period, the semantic shift of *tzedakah* away from this political meaning towards charity cannot be understood without considering the growing importance of 'sin' for the early Christians. With the introduction of a notion of sin, the role of actor performing *tzedakah* changed from that of the sovereign to that of the people — in contemporary terms, it was privatized. It was no longer a political deed aimed at returning stability to a polity by way of economic equality, but rather became a way for individuals to right wrongs, while also helping the sovereign to address an economic need. From this it

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[42] I cannot help but be disturbed by the image of this separation of people as it reminds me of the flick of Mengele's wrist in Auschwitz, right for life (or at least the glimmer of hope brought by work) and left for death.

[43] This usage of *tzedakah* for charity and alms giving is further supported by the Septuagint translation (third century BC) of the term *tzedakah* in Gen 15.6 to the Greek *dikaiosunh* (δικαιοσυνη), the same term used in Matthew 6:1 to refer to charity and alms giving. This same meaning is evident in the Dead Sea Scrolls from this same period (e.g. Prov. $_4Q_{424}$).

[44] While the Mishnah dates from the beginning of the third century AD, its contents cover the period from approximately (100 BC–AD 200), and thus provides an account of Judaism in the Second Temple Period.

[45] G.A. Anderson, 'Redeem Your Sins by the Giving of Alms: Sin, Debt, and the "Treasury of Merit" in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition', *Letters & Spirit*, 3 (2007), p. 45.

[46] The Akkadian term for this liberation was the equivalent of righteousness, or *tzedakah*. This link can also be found in Isaiah 11:4 in which a just king must rectify poverty by freeing or liberating those less well off from their debt.

is clear how the same term *tzedakah* came to mean both justice, in terms of political equality and stability, and charity, in terms of individuals, morality and atonement in the Second Temple Period.

It is also by means of this change in meaning that *tzedakah* became associated with the notion of salvation and theological sovereignty. This is quite pronounced by the end of the Second Temple Period, which Daniel Boyarin analyses in *Border Lines* (2004). By being just and charitable to the poor, the righteous amassed credit with God to be redeemed on the Day of Judgment. Tragically, it also made it difficult for those less well off to be deemed righteous as they could neither liberate others from debt nor could they offer charity to others. This logic of viewing poverty as an offence rather than in terms of a structural political problem is apparent in the period in which Judaism and Christianity begin to part ways, between the second and fourth centuries, and continues to play a significant role in both traditions today.

V
Medieval Judaic Sources

Rashi — the most prominent rabbi in the eleventh century — had developed an elaborate theory of property rooted in *tzedakah*.[47] Many aspects of this theory reappear in Spinoza, by way of Cunaeus, in the third part of the *TTP*. Rashi questions the basis of the allocation of the land of Israel to the Jewish people in the Torah and in so doing explains why there can be no conceptual separation between charity and justice, clearly rejecting the distinction introduced by followers of Paul since the Second Temple Period.[48] His justification for this position is that since all land belongs to God it is his property. As such, any land given to people (as he believed was Israel to the Jewish people), is an act of *tzedekah* on God's part. What human beings call justice, or a legal property claim, is in fact God's charity. According to Rashi this same theory of property is not limited to the case of Israel but extends to all property. As such, any gifts we have received (all of which come from God), we must also give to others — and especially to those who are less fortunate, as the Torah indicates with the phrase 'the poor, the widow, and the orphan'. Likewise this logic applies to all debts during the sabbatical year.[49] As was the case in the Second Temple Period, it was understood that such periodical debt relief was necessary to maintain the stability of a community by ensuring that there was a just distribution of goods. In this vein Rashi confirms that the

[47] E. Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge MA, 2011), p. 64.

[48] S. Silverstein, *The Rashi Chumash* (New York, 1997), Vol. 1.

[49] Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, p. 67. This is also the view commonly attributed to Judaism, as is clear from Jean Bodin's 1588 Colloquium in which Solomon, the Jew, expresses this idea in Book VI. J. Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime* (University Park PA, 2010), p. 428.

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Judaic hendiadic political and legal implications of *tzedakah* are still present during the eleventh century.

While Rashi's views reappear in Spinoza's *TTP*, there is no doubt that Spinoza's most important Jewish sparring partner in the *TTP* is Maimonides (Rambam).[50] While Spinoza is undoubtedly highly critical of Maimonides, this criticism does not prevent him — as I will demonstrate — from reproducing, for his own purposes, certain of Maimonides' conceptual and theological insights. 'Maimonides stood for everything that Spinoza rejected as the two were at once diametric opposites, nevertheless they were also dialectical twins, just similar enough to be two sides of the same coin. Spinoza's revolution had its feet firmly planted in the Middle Ages.'[51] In this case I will focus on Rambam's notion of *tzedakah*, which I claim is partially reproduced in Spinoza's notion of true religion. Maimonides is responsible for concretizing, categorizing and defining eight degrees of *tzedakah*. In his *Mishneh Torah*, written in Hebrew and compiled between 1170 and 1180, Maimonides systematizes *tzedakah* in what is now referred to as 'Rambam's ladder'.

Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, written in Judeo-Arabic (much like Spinoza writing in Latin, the language of a very select, highly educated audience), is a philosophical account of *tzedakah*. In Part III:53 of the *Guide*, he begins by defining the term *tzedakah* (here *zedakah*).

> The term zedakah is derived from zedek, 'righteousness': it denotes the act of giving every one his due, and of showing kindness to every being according as it deserves . . . Thus Scripture says, in reference to the returning of the

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[50] It is not my intention to make any grand claims about Spinoza's hidden Judaism or hidden Maimonideanism. Rather, my intention is to show how important it is to consider the notion, and conceptual history, of *tzedakah* when trying to understand what true religion is in the *TTP*. I am trying to illustrate how the notion of *tzedekah* functioned as the foundational perspective for informing his ideas. For more on Spinoza's relationship to Judaism and Ramban see Roth, who claims that Spinoza uses Rambam to critique Descartes; Shlomo Pines, a medieval Maimonides scholar who supports this claim; and Harry Wolfson and Leo Strauss who recognize Rambam's influence on Spinoza without arguing for any parallels. Other scholars, such as Warren Harvey, argue for parallels with regard to the distinction between imagination and intellect, the association of nature and God, and a critique of anthropocentrism. Another common contention is that Maimonides is a substitute for Meijer in the *TTP*. S.M. Nadler and Vereniging Het Spinozahuis, *Spinoza's Theory of Divine Providence: Rationalist Solutions, Jewish Sources* (Damon, 2005); S. Nadler, 'Spinoza et Le Problème Juif de La Théodicée', *Philosophiques*, 29 (1) (n.d.), pp. 41–56; S. Nadler, 'The Excommunication of Spinoza: Trouble and Toleration in the "Dutch Jerusalem" ', *Shofar*, 19 (4) (2001), p. 40; Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Vol. 1* (Princeton, 1992); Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Volume 2: The Adventures of Immanence* (Princeton, 1992); Y. Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos — Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton, 2009); Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*.

[51] D. Biale, *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (Princeton, 2011), p. 22. See also: Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, pp. 121–2.

> pledge [to the poor debtor]: 'And it shall be zedakah (righteousness) unto thee' (Deut. xxiv. 11).[52]

Maimonides clearly refers to both *tzedakah* in terms of just distribution and showing kindness, here with reference to the same notion in Daniel best translated as 'favour'.

However, it is his final clause that is most striking in its Spinozan resonances. 'When we walk in the way of virtue we act righteously towards our intellectual faculty, and pay what is due unto it; and because every virtue is thus *zedakah*, Scripture applies the term to the virtue of faith in God.'[53] This phrase strikes readers of Spinoza's *TTP* and is an example of Maimonides' influence with regard to his notion of true religion, which for Rambam is explicitly connected to *tzedakah*. While he uses the metaphorical language Spinoza deplored, Rambam defines *tzedakah* as justice and 'favour to the poor' (or charity or kindness) as the ultimate virtue and one which is connected to our intellectual faculty and faith in God. While there is no doubt that Rambam is a believer, which is not the case for Spinoza, his account of *tzedakah* is similar to the notion of true religion that I identify as present in the *TTP*.[54] 'For Maimonides and Spinoza, true religion is the love that attends to the intellectual knowledge of God; and true piety is the performance of acts of beneficence [justice] that results from that knowledge.'[55]

Turning now to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*[56] in which he offers us a religious justification and codification in eight distinct levels of *tzedakah*, in the

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[52] M. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed, Vol. 2*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, 1974).

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] According to Harvey this goes beyond the *TTP*: Spinoza's definition of 'religion' in the *Ethics* as 'whatever we desire and do, of which we are the cause insofar as we possess the idea of God, or insofar as we know God', echoes Maimonides' description in the *Guide* of 'the worship of him who has apprehended the true realities'. That is, the worship 'which can only be engaged in after apprehension has been achieved'. Again, Spinoza's definition of 'piety' in the *Ethics* as 'the desire of well-doing, generated on account of our living in accordance with the rule of reason' echoes Maimonides' description at the conclusion of the *Guide* of the excellent individual who, on account of his having apprehended God to the extent that this is possible, walks in the ways of 'loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness' [the Hebrew term Maimonides uses is *tzedakah*].

[55] W. Harvey, 'A Portrait of Spinoza as a Maimonidean', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 19 (2) (1981), p. 167. Daniel Lasker also acknowledges that Spinoza's arguments are often parallel to well-known Jewish argument, and it would appear that the source lies in Jewish anti-Christian polemics in Melamed and Rosenthal. *Spinoza's 'Theological-Political Treatise'*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Michael A. Rosenthal (Cambridge, 2010), p. 62.

[56] Unlike many of his other works, Maimonides did not compose the *Mishneh Torah* in Europe but in Egypt. He was forced to flee in 1148 because of increasing pressure to convert to Islam, pressure that was related to the increasing tensions within southern Europe between Muslims and Christians. This period of history, from the perspective of

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form of a ladder, several other Spinozan parallels are evident. The lowest rung of *tzedakah* is one who gives charity reluctantly. One step up (*halacha* 13) is someone who gives willingly, although less than 'what is required'. What is required here is based on what is just or fair for the receiver.

> We are commanded to give a poor person according to what he lacks. If he lacks clothes, we should clothe him . . . If he is unmarried, we should help him marry . . . Even if the personal habit of this poor person was to ride on a horse and to have a servant run before him and then he became impoverished and lost his wealth, we should buy a horse for him to ride and a servant to run before him.[57]

It is in this sense that *tzedakah* is a matter of equality, recognition and dignity more than generosity or kindness. Giving spontaneously (*halacha* 12) takes precedence over giving in response to a request, an element that invokes an active and passive distinction.[58] An active stance is deemed more virtuous in that it allows the receiver to retain dignity.[59] This distinction was absent in Medieval debates on charity in Christian sources (with the notable exception of John Chrysostom) which focus on the goodness of the donor rather than the needs of the receiver. This was palpable in the common practice in Christian medieval towns of making the poor parade through the streets shaming them publically for their immorality (which was seen as the source of their poverty). With this same justification, it is better if neither (*halacha* 8) the recipient (*halacha* 9) nor the donor (*halacha* 10) knows the other's identity. While the double-blind form of *tzedakah* might strike one as impersonal, this is the price one pays to preserve the dignity of the receiver.

> At three times during the day, *pe'ah* [crop portion given to the poor] is divided among the poor or left for them to take: at daybreak, at noon, and at *minchah* . . . Why wasn't only one time a day established? Because there are poor nursing mothers that need to eat at the beginning of the day. And there are poor children who are not awake in the morning and will not reach the

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Jews, Muslims, lepers and heretics, has been referred to as the birth of 'Europe: the persecuting society'. R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950–1250* (Oxford, 2007).

57 *Mishneh Torah*, 7:7:1:3. I would like to thank one of the external reviewers for noting that the servant should be acknowledged as a phenomenon/institution that may call into question or qualify Maimonides' ideals of equality and dignity. While there is no space to address this concern here, I do hope to explore it further in the future.

58 This is also present in Spinoza's account of true religion and plays a central role in certain interpretations of the *TTP*. É. Balibar and W. Montag, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowdon (Brooklyn NY, 2008).

59 T.D. Watts, 'The Eight Degrees of Tzedakah in Maimonides: Some Current Implications', accessed 6 February 2013, http://www.envirecon.com/ watts2006.pdf.

> field until midday and there are elderly people who will not come until the late afternoon.[60]

The highest form of *tzedakah* (*halacha* 7) is to empower another individual who is socially, economically or otherwise impoverished. The highest aim of Maimonides' *tzedakah*, like Spinoza's true religion, is to create an environment of freedom in which individuals can empower themselves.[61] This can be done by means of a gift, an example of which is a loan, entering into partnership with them, or by helping to employ or educate them — in other words by doing everything possible to restore equality and dignity.[62] As written by Rambam:

> There are eight levels in charity, each level surpassing the other. The highest level beyond which there is none is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him a present or a loan, entering into partnership with him, or finding him work so that his hand will be fortified so that he will not have to ask others [for alms]. Concerning this Leviticus 25:35 states: 'You shall support him, the stranger, the resident, and he shall live among you.' Implied is that you should support him before he falls and becomes needy.[63]

According to Jean Bodin's *Colloquium*, this is precisely what *ṣadagāt* meant for Muslims as well.

> They [Mohammedans] are amazed that Christian men are able to bear with equanimity so great a multitude of needy people, such want and poverty of their own people, since among Mohammedans there are more homes for the needy and strangers than people who need them . . . Indeed they cherish no law holier than *Al-zāt*,* that is to pay what is owed . . . [* Footnote: The legal and determined aims were the *zakāt*; the voluntary alms were *ṣadagāt*.][64]

In addition to this systematization of *tzedakah*, Maimonides also codifies many other related concepts[65] in the seventh book (*sefer*) of the *Mishneh*

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60 *Mishneh Torah*, 7:3:1:17.

61 B.D. Friedman, 'Two Concepts of Charity and Their Relationship to Social Work Practice', *Social Thought*, 21 (2) (2002), p. 17.

62 It is also this sense of empowerment, an active horizontality, that reappears in many contemporary post-Marxist readings of Spinoza.

63 *Sefer Zera'im* (Seeds): Matnot Aniyiim (Book 2) Chapter 10 (7:2:10:7).

64 Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublim*e, p. 219.

65 Two concepts discussed by Maimonides are debt relief and the Jubilee year (which is the topic of an entire chapter e.g. 7:7 of the *Mishneh Torah*) recently reintroduced into the contemporary debates on global justice and economic redistribution by David Graeber in his book *Debt: The First 5000 Years.* The notion of a Jubilee year (or seventh sabbatical) was introduced precisely to prevent this situation as well as the political instability that arises from such unjust distribution. N. Zion, 'Paul's Charity versus Maimonides's Tzedakah: Loving Giver or Dutiful Donor?', in *Jewish Giving in Com-*

Torah, *zera'im* (seeds). The title comes from the fact that all of its contents — including the account of *tzedakah* — is part of the agrarian law (that is central to the debates of the Hebrew Republic). This reaffirms the importance of understanding *tzedakah* in terms of property, economics and politics more than in terms of morality and theology. This frame was present in its etymological and Biblical origins as well as in the second temple period and in Rashi's account. Maimonides clearly follows this line of interpretation, which refuses a conceptual separation between justice and charity, where the latter is seen as a voluntary act of kindness, altruism or a hand-out etc. Loans, and the obligation to offer a loan that is suitable to the abilities and dignity of the receiver, are part of *tzedakah* as they promote a just distribution and promote political equality and stability.[66]

VI
Hebrew Republic

The concept of *tzedakah*, and in particular Rambam's ladder, might have remained an entirely Jewish matter had it not been for one of the strangest twists of theological fate: the radical about-face of Christian interest in Jewish sacred texts between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. While Christian theologians had always studied the Torah, albeit not always with the best intentions, it was not until this period of Talmudic burnings that they began to examine these other sacred Jewish texts.[67] The Talmud, often un-translated,

parative Perspectives: History and Story, Law and Theology, Anthropology and Psychology, Vol. 3: *For the Love of God: Comparative Religious Motivations for Giving Christian Charity, Maimonidean Tzedakah and Lovingkindness* (*Hesed*) (n.d.), p. 17, http://www.haggadahsrus.com/Tzedakah.

[66] Likewise this means that debts are not seen in such heavily moral terms, as is now the case. See Graeber, *Debt*.

[67] While seemingly civil, these persecutions have their symbolic staging in the inter-faith *disputationes* that took place in Paris (1239), Barcelona (1263) and Tortosa (1412–13). These theological and philosophical debates, between a Jew and a Christian — who was almost always a convert, had it as their goal to publically condemn Judaism and as such there was no way for the Jewish representative 'to win'. In fact it was politically necessary to lose in order to prevent further violence against Jewish communities in Europe. The result of the first disputation in Paris was a bill issued by Pope Gregory IX to burn all 12,000 copies of the Talmud in Paris (as well as four of the most famous rabbis). A similar sequence of events occurred in Barcelona in 1263, resulting in the exile of Nachmanides and the censoring of many Talmudic passages deemed heretical (as well as many more burning ceremonies, although this was not explicitly required). A. Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Jackie Feldman (Philadelphia PA, 2007), ch. 1. The disputations of Tortosa, which were to last over two years, and have as their final consequences the creation of the Inquisition and the exiling of all *moranos* from Spain in 1492, including Spinoza's family, also led to a Papal decree

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required a familiarity with Hebrew that few non-Jews possessed. However, this changed greatly with the birth of new centres of learning, such as Erasmus' tri-lingual college, founded in 1517 (the same year as Martin Luther composed his ninety-five theses). It was thus thanks to a renewed interest by primarily critical Catholic theologians and Protestants that the Talmud went from being burned throughout Europe in the thirteenth century to being translated, studied and admired in the sixteenth century (primarily in Protestant lands).

This latter period was known as 'The Hebrew Republic' during which scholars, such as Cunaeus, saw the Jewish texts as a source of inspiration, while others, like Jacques Basnage, used the history of the Jews as a means to attack Catholicism.[68] 'Scholars who were trying to use history and philology to prove the uniqueness of Christianity were particularly threatened by the enthusiasm for the kabbala because Hebrew had an aura of holiness . . . and the Talmud was a seductive source for Christians.'[69] One common means of putting Hebrew, the Jews and their sacred texts in their 'rightful' place was to reduce it to a form of Orientalism.[70] It was thus during the struggles between the Catholic Church and other Christians,[71] described by Spinoza in the *TTP*, that *tzedakah* became a fundamental moral and political concept in *non-Jewish* circles.

The most infamous of these struggles is undoubtedly that between Luther and the Church. What is perhaps less known is the role *tzedakah* played during the Reformation.[72] Although the story of the ninety-five theses has almost become mythical, making facts difficult to determine, it is clear that Luther was reacting to the selling of indulgences by Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar

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against the Talmud. Six popes, between 1243 and 1605, decreed the burning of the Talmud.

68 Judaism was not the only foreign culture to be used to critique another confession, another common analogy was between the Karaites and reformed Christians.

69 J.M. Elukin, 'Jacques Basnage and the History of the Jews: Anti-Catholic Polemic and Historical Allegory in the Republic of Letters', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53 (4) (1992), pp. 612–13.

70 Basnage argues that the symbols and allegories of the kabbala are a primitive oriental speech manner.

71 'How European Christians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries interacted with a foreign corpus of political and theological writings. Although . . . Jews played an important role in the dissemination of the Hebrew texts with which this study is concerned, the political debates that these texts came to structure took place among Christians — Christians who, it must be said, had for the most part never met a Jew, and who were (again for the most part) anything but philo-semites.' Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, p. 7.

72 While Luther was neither an independent actor nor the first to publically challenge the Catholic Church, his ninety-five theses posted in 1517 are often used to date the beginning of the protestant Reformation.

and papal commissioner.[73] He was protesting against the Catholic position that forgiveness for sins, and thus salvation, could be purchased by means of indulgences, a practice which arose because of a lack of financial resources in the Church (which Rosenthal speculates also happened in the time of Ezra because of the same need for capital). In other words, Luther attacked the Church for a practice that had its roots in a Christian interpretation of *tzedakah* in which it was understood in terms of charity and connected to notions of sin and salvation. This link is clear from Luther's lectures on the notion of righteousness between 1510 and 1520 in the Books of Hebrews, Romans and Galatians. Luther claimed that no works, including those of charity (*fides caritate formata*) could lead to salvation. Salvation was purely a product of faith — a position he supported by citing Augustine[74] and Paul. Luther's doctrine of *sola fide* (which Spinoza engages with in the *TTP*) was another implicit critique of both Judaism, and its Talmud interpretations of the Torah, and the Catholic Church, that also had an oral tradition.[75] Luther's view of *sola fida* became the rallying cry for the Protestant Reformation, and with it a renewed interest in Hebrew and Jewish scriptures (this is of course ironic given how antisemitic Luther was, both against Jews within Europe and Muslims attacking Europe from the outside).

> They operated in a context in which the mysticism and new Scholastic logic of the Counter-Reformation was important, the Protestant search for certainty, its Biblicism and its direct access to truth, the Jewish views of Christianity and history, and the Jewish Kabbala,[76] all played significant roles. None of our seventeenth-century heroes lived in an ivory tower, not even Spinoza. They lived in the world of the religious struggles going on in and

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[73] The Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences (*Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*).

[74] See Augustine's *City of God*, ch. 27 on almsgiving, as a response to the idea that one can atone for sins by almsgiving.

[75] Thesis 86 asked: 'Why does the pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with the money of poor believers rather than with his own money?' Thanks to the printing press, which also saved the Talmud from extinction, Luther's theses were available across Europe within two months.

[76] Basnage feared that Spinoza had misunderstood the kabbala, and this had led to his atheism — seeing the world as an extension of God. 'However, it be, we find the grounds of Spinosism in the Theologie of the Cabbalists; that Spinosa has only cloathed it with what Carthusianism cou'd furnish him, to prop up a sinking building that threat'ned the ruin of the whole.' J. Basnage, *The History of the Jews, from Jesus Christ to the Present Time: Containing Their Antiquities, Their Religion, Their Rites, the Dispersion of the Ten . . . This Nation Has Suffer'd in the West* (4 vols., Andover, 2010), tome 7, pp. 144–5. The German orientalist Johann Georg Wachter at the very end of the seventeenth century identified the same apparent kabbalistic influence on Spinoza — he had incorrectly thought that Spinoza had confused God and world. Elukin, 'Jacques Basnage and the History of the Jews'.

> among Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism. They lived until almost the end of the century with the possibility of a Moslem conquest of Europe, and the drastic changes in life-style that would involve.[77]

These religious struggles are even closer to Spinoza's intellectual milieu.[78] 'The Hebraic self-image was a unifying element in Dutch culture; it was a true foundational myth for all the republic.[79] The thinker most associated with founding this myth was undoubtedly Peter van der Cun (Petrus Cunaeus). As chair of politics at Leiden University, Cunaeus was a central figure in the intellectual debates of the seventeenth century. A Dutch Remonstrant, Cunaeus was a highly respected scholar who spent his sabbatical year studying rabbinic literature and law. After his leave, in 1617, he published *De Republica Hebraeorum*.

> The key to its success was the author's ability to utilize sources that were simply unknown or unknowable to other Christian scholars. These sources included the Talmud and medieval Jewish commentators, such as Abraham ibn Ezra, David Kimhi, and especially Maimonides, whom Cunaeus regarded as *admiration hominum scriptor maximus*.[80]

His book was not only immensely influential; it was equally popular — with at least a half-dozen reprints and translations into all major European languages in the seventeenth century alone. Spinoza, as has often been noted, drew a great deal from Cunaeus' *Hebrew Republic*.[81] Most recently, according to Susan James:

> Cunaeus emphasizes three features, all of which reappear in Spinoza's own analysis. First, as Josephus had argued, the state set up by Moses was a theocracy . . . the Jewish people were therefore sovereign under God . . . Secondly, the Hebrew constitution as it evolved after Moses' death had a federal structure; and a final, defining feature of the Hebrew constitution was its agrarian Law, which guaranteed a level of economic equality.[82]

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[77] Popkin, *Third Force*, p. 49.

[78] R. Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (New York, 2001); S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London, 1997); Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*; M. van Gelderen and Q. Skinner, *Republicanism: Volume 1, Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe: A Shared European Heritage* (Cambridge, 2005); Elukin, 'Jacques Basnage and the History of the Jews'.

[79] Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, pp. 97–9.

[80] J.R. Ziskind, 'Petrus Cunaeus on Theocracy, Jubilee and the Latifundia', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 68 (4) (1978), pp. 237–8.

[81] M. Bodian, 'The Biblical "Jewish Republic" and the Dutch "New Israel" in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Thought', *Hebraic Political Studies*, 1 (2) (2006), pp. 186–202; Ziskind, 'Petrus Cunaeus on Theocracy, Jubilee and the Latifundia'; Elukin, 'Jacques Basnage and the History of the Jews'.

[82] James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics*, p. 268.

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Yet, more than the parallels listed by James, it is critical to note the importance of Maimonides' notion of *tzedakah* as taken up by Cunaeus — and how this appears, indirectly, in Spinoza's *TTP*. Cunaeus argues that the Hebrew kingdom from the period of the First Temple was the ideal model for United Provinces citing the seventh book on seeds of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* for a full account of the agrarian laws and the Jubilee year in the Torah. In addition he used it to argue for the sovereignty of civil authorities, which he then used as the basis of his own reinterpretation of Hebrew agrarian laws as fundamental to the stability of the new republic.[83] Central to his argument was the importance of the agrarian laws and the Jubilee year as shared or common wealth, so that all are provided for equally. This ensures the stability of a republic and helps to avoid bitter conflicts (like those that inspired Spinoza's *TTP*).[84] According to Cunaeus, the only means to avoid these was to structure a government in terms of a republic. He saw the Twelve Tribes, each of which was apportioned the same size land, as a model which prevented the oppression associated with an unjust distribution of wealth.[85] In this vein, Cunaeus reaffirmed Aristotle's claim that revolution was the expression of the frustration of the poor required to give to the rich.[86] 'To prevent a future misdistribution of land and wealth and to avoid moral backsliding, Moses ordained the Jubilee law.'[87] For Cunaeus, who returned to the Jewish sources, there seems to be no doubt that *tzedakah* was a political means to ensure an equal and just distribution of wealth necessary in any republic that seeks stability. Likewise the Christian distinction between justice and charity, introduced in relation to the notion of sin and salvation, is absent here. It is my contention that this concept of *tzedakah*, with its political and economic connotations traced from its etymological roots through Maimonides to Cunaeus, is at play in Spinoza's definition of true religion.

VII
Spinoza's True Religion

I turn now to the question of what role the Judaic hendiadic concept of *tzedakah* plays in relation to Spinoza's notion of true religion in the *TTP*. From the perspective of his significant influence on his milieu and his hybrid cultural religious background, Spinoza was unique. He was a Jew who chose

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83 Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, pp. 19–20; P. Cunaeus, *The Hebrew Republic*, trans. Peter Wyetzner (Jerusalem, 2006).

84 It is this same insight that led Harrington to write in 1656: 'the agrarian laws of all others have ever been the greatest bugbears'. J. Harrington, *The Political Works of James Harrington: Part One* (Cambridge, n.d.), p. 231.

85 Cunaeus, *The Hebrew Republic*, pp. 10–11.

86 Aristotle, *Aristotle: The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, ed. and trans. S. Everson (Cambridge, 1996), para. 1266.

87 Ziskind, 'Petrus Cunaeus on Theocracy, Jubilee and the Latifundia', p. 244.

to live within an intellectual community of non-Jews, many of whom identified themselves as *Neerlands Israel* (a popular expression at the time).[88] Let us not forget that Spinoza wrote a Hebrew Grammar, not an easy or pleasant task, to 'assist' his non-Jewish intellectual community in their study of Jewish scriptures. The concepts of justice and charity, as well as the notion of *tzedakah*, the agrarian laws and the Jubilee year, were all part of the intellectual milieu in which Spinoza thought and wrote — and he, more than any other person in this milieu, knew and understood their Jewish sources. While he undoubtedly did not believe they had divine origins, this does not diminish the fact that we — readers of Spinoza today — must take them into consideration when trying to understand his writings, and in this case his notion of true religion in the *TTP*. In what follows I return to the *TTP*: first to a Hebrew biblical quote in which *tzedakah* appears, second to the many uses of the term *justitia & caritas*, and third to his discussion of the agrarian laws, to uncover the influence of the Judaic hendiadic concept of *tzedakah*.

To begin with let us consider Spinoza's references to Jeremiah 9:23 (in Chapters 5 and 13 of *TTP*) which are significant for two reasons. First, because Spinoza quotes the Hebrew which includes the term *tzedakah*, and second because he offers a different translation of the same verse in Chapter 5.[89] The Hebrew (which Spinoza includes in Chapter 13) is:

כִּי אִם־בְּזֹאת יִתְהַלֵּל הַמִּתְהַלֵּל, הַשְׂכֵּל וְיָדֹעַ אוֹתִי--כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה, עֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה בָּאָרֶץ: כִּי־בְאֵלֶּה חָפַצְתִּי, נְאֻם־יְהוָה.

> Let each one glory only in this, that he understands me and knows me, that I Yahweh practice loving-kindness, judgment and justice on the earth, for I delight in these things, says Yahweh. (Curley's translation.)
>
> But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD who exercise mercy, justice, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (According to the Masoretic Texts, and translated in 1917 by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), considered to be authoritative among Torah scholars.)

Given these different translations, it is important to consider the terms used by Spinoza both in Hebrew and in Latin. The first term is חסד (*hesed*), translated by the JPS as mercy, is odd in that Spinoza inconsistently translates it. In Chapter 5, it is *misericordiam* (compassion for Curley), and in Chapter 13 it is *charitatem* (loving-kindness for Curley). This is significant in that the former

[88] Bodian, 'The Biblical "Jewish Republic" and the Dutch "New Israel" in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Thought', p. 186.

[89] According to Curley's footnote the first reference 'is more a paraphrase than a quote'.

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is a subversive emotion (*Ethics* IV/37), while the latter is not.[90] The second term is משפת (*mishpat*), translated by Spinoza as *judicium*, by the JPS as justice, and by Curley as judgment.[91] The third term צדקה (*tzedakah*), is translated by Spinoza as *justitiam*, by the JPS as righteousness, and by Curley as justice.

What is clear is how difficult it is to translate these terms without introducing a particular theological lens, carried by words such as mercy, charity, judgment and justice. While Spinoza is clearly aware that the term *tzedakah*, here in Hebrew, means justice but includes Christian notions of charity, this hendiadic meaning of *tzedakah* is not known to his Christian readers and as such he uses the term charity explicitly even if it is redundant.[92] With this in mind let us consider the context and meaning of the phrase *justitia & caritas* that appears fourteen times in the *TTP* (in Chapters 13, 14 and 19). Spinoza mentions *justitia & caritas* for the first time in 13:9 referring to the whole of religion, another expression for true religion, and the importance of obedience. 'We must show also that the knowledge which God, through the Prophets, has demanded of everyone, without exception, and which everyone is bound to know, is nothing but that knowledge of his Divine Justice and Loving-kindness.' *Justitia & caritas* is what God requires. In 13:20 he repeats this phrase, this time by directly referring to Jeremiah 22:15–16. Here he includes the Hebrew text showing which terms he has in mind including *tzedakah* and *mishpat* but not *hesed* (further supporting my interpretation of the different translations).

הֲתִמְלֹךְ, כִּי אַתָּה מְתַחֲרֶה בָאָרֶז; אָבִיךָ הֲלוֹא אָכַל וְשָׁתָה, וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה--אָז, טוֹב לוֹ.
דָּן דִּין-עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן, אָז טוֹב; הֲלוֹא-הִיא הַדַּעַת אֹתִי, נְאֻם-יְהוָה.

> Your father, indeed, ate, and drank, and passed judgment, and did justice, and then (it was) well with him; he judged the right of the poor and the needy, and then (it was) well with him; for this (NB) is to know me, said Yahweh.

[90] While Curley accounts for the different translations of the first term by suggesting that Chapter 5 is a paraphrase, the two references to Jeremiah 9:23 play different roles in the text, which might also account for the different translations. In Chapter 5, Spinoza cites it as evidence of the end of God's ceremonial requirement from the Jews in which he wants to emphasize God's mercy so as to convince those of his Christian readers still attached to ceremonies that God has mercy on those who free themselves of the burdens of ceremonies. In Chapter 13, which Spinoza states is a critical chapter to be re-read by his readers (*TTP*, 14:40), the reference to Jeremiah 9:23 plays a different role in that it is central to his account of true religion.

[91] *Mishpat* is a legal term and thus judgment is the better translation.

[92] A completely awkward but correct translation would be mercy, judgment and justice & charity.

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There is a clear connection here between *justitia & caritas* and the judgment of the Lord, an association we saw above with regard to the notion of *tzedakah* in terms of divine merit. This is further supported by the reference to the rights of the poor and the needy, the central issue in the *sefer zera'im* and specifically the discussions of giving to the needy that are central from Paul to Maimonides. Further support for Spinoza's reliance on the Judaic concept of *tzedakah* comes from the third passage in which Spinoza uses the phrase *justitia & caritas*. In 13:29 he repeats the connection to true religion and obedience but this time in relation to the issue of faith or works, again helping us to contextualize the claim with regard to the debate started by Paul and central to the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in the Reformation. This is also supported by 14:33: 'So the person who displays the best faith is not necessarily the one who displays the best arguments, but the one who displays the best works of Justice and Loving-kindness.' By connecting this phrase to this larger debate, which revolves around the term *tzedakah* and the connected issues of indulgences and 'acts' of charity, all of which was familiar to his intended audience, it makes the conceptual connection to *tzedakah* more explicit.[93]

Perhaps the most important use of this phrase, thrice on one page, is in the context of the enumeration of the seven tenets of faith (*TTP*, 14:24–8). Spinoza here reminds us that it is God's *justitia & caritas* that we are to imitate, and that this practice is a form of obedience required for salvation. Again the connection to salvation supports the interpretation of this phrase in terms of *tzedakah* as a means to gain spiritual capital, or divine merit. In 14:27, he repeats this citation made famous by Rabbi Akiva, 'or in the love of one's neighbour' as a synonym for *justitia & caritas*. Again, this refers to the aspect of *tzedakah* regarding distributive justice and the importance of caring for the other with whom one wishes to live in peace and stability. In the discussion on the agrarian laws in the *Misheh Torah*, Maimonides repeats several times the importance of treating the neighbour justly. His argument in support of the Jubilee year is precisely to ensure that those who do not act justly towards their neighbours are forced to do so at least once every forty-nine years. In the seventh tenet, the most challenging in terms of reconciling it with Spinoza's beliefs, the notions of sins, pardon and repentance appears — all of which are also central in the discussion on *tzedakah* as it was understood by his Christian audience. As we saw in the Second Temple Period, *tzedakah* is an act that is a form of making amends to God. According to Spinoza, *justitia & caritas*

[93] As if aware of his critique of Paul in the above passage, and of those theologians and faithful who follow the doctrine of *sola fides*, Spinoza is more cautious in 14:3 (the next time the phrase *justitia & caritas* appears) reaffirming everyone's right to interpret the scriptures personally. In this same vein, he also refers to this phrase in 14:19, clearly stating that any form of persecution is contrary to *justitia & caritas* (and an act of the Antichrist).

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is also in harmony with reason in that it 'grants everyone the greatest freedom to philosophize' as long as they encourage such acts (*TTP*, 14:39). As we have shown above, this is precisely what Maimonides claims with regard to *tzedakah* in the *Mishneh Torah*, to show that it is in harmony with reason.

Turning now to the use of the phrase *justitia & caritas* in the final chapters of the *TTP*, I would like to suggest that the notion of *tzedakah* helps to resolve an issue raised by scholars. These final chapters have a very different tone and purpose than the biblical exegesis of the first fifteen chapters and the search for a connection is often a difficult one. If one considers the connection between *tzedakah*, agrarian laws, redistribution etc., these chapters are further elucidations of the political and economical praxis of true religion. Given that the goal of the entire treatise is one of political community formation and stability, the peace necessary for the freedom of philosophers, true religion when understood as fundamentally related to the equality, such as that described in terms of the agrarian laws by Rashi, Maimonides and those in Spinoza's milieu influenced by the ideas of the Hebrew Republic reappears in these latter chapters in the form of its application to the state. Only by understanding the complex conceptual history of *tzedakah* is this argument, and link, evident.

In Chapter 19, when this phrase *justitia & caritas* reappears six times within the span of one page, Spinoza argues that since *justitia & caritas* can only be legislated and mandated by means of a state, the only authority over people is political (*TTP*, 19:6), which is an argument he has developed throughout the *TTP*. Again, *tzedakah*, according to its Judaic hendiadic interpretation, is a political and not a theological doctrine. Likewise Spinoza emphasizes, in the state of nature there is neither sin nor place for *justitia & caritas* (*TTP*, 19:8) — a rejection of the Christian interpretation of *tzedakah* in relation to sin. In his final usage of this phrase, Spinoza once again equates true religion with the law of *justitia & caritas* (and God's kingdom) (*TTP*, 19:9). This statement, while seemingly identical to many that precede it, differs in its use of legal terminology. While Spinoza has certainly not hidden his criticism of the legalistic aspects of Judaism in the *TTP*, this reinterpretation of *justitia & caritas* within a legal and political framework evokes the etymology of the root צדק, Rashi's theory of property, Maimonides' legal codification of this theory in the *Mishneh Torah* as well as several attempts to do so by Christian Hebraists in the Hebrew Republic. This is further supported by what Spinoza says in the *TTP* about the agrarian laws, which as we have seen are central to the *praxis* of *tzedakah* as detailed by both Rashi and Rambam.

The agrarian laws, as we have seen, can be justified politically and morally. Politically, these laws are necessary to prevent conflict between parties that would arise because of envy due to a perceived inequality. Morally, these laws ensure a just distribution and prevent harm to the dignity of individuals

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who are less well off (and are supplemented by the Jubilee laws). Likewise both political and moral motives for true religion are expressed in the *TTP*.

> Moreover, injustice is taking away from someone, under the pretext of right, what belongs to him according to the true interpretation of the laws. Justice and injustice are also called equity and inequity, because those who are established to settle disputes are bound to have no regard for persons, but to treat everyone as equals, and to defend the right of each person equally, without envying the rich, or disdaining the poor. (*TTP*, 16:42)

In either case, it is clear that justice must be understood in terms of equality, political and economic, consistent with the Judaic hendiadic concept of *tzedakah* in the seventeenth century. Charity, disconnected from sin and voluntarism, is part of justice — a collective political project; it is not additive or private. Justice is the necessary response for the sake of political stability and peace. It is also interesting that in this passage on the agrarian laws he uses the term *caritas* not in terms of a hand-out but precisely in line with the rules of *tzedakah*. Spinoza affirms this interpretation by using the expression 'to restore' in the following account of the agrarian laws. He also explicitly refers to other central aspects of *tzedakah* such as poverty, the dignity of the poor (and explicitly criticises moral judgments of the poor) and the intertwined relationship between giving to others and in so doing earning merit or spiritual reward from God.

> For nowhere did the citizens possess their things with a greater right than did the subjects of this state, who had with the leader an equal share of the lands and fields . . . For if anyone was compelled by poverty to sell his farm or field, when the jubilee year came it had to be restored to him anew, and in this way other practices were instituted, so that no one could be alienated from his firmly established goods. Nowhere could poverty be more bearable than where loving-kindness towards your neighbor, i.e., towards your fellow citizen, had to be cultivated with the utmost piety, so that they would have their God on their side as a King well-disposed to them. (*TTP*, 17:85–6)

A few lines later, Spinoza clearly affirms the political justification for these agrarian laws: 'Again, it was particularly conducive . . . to avoiding civil war and removing the causes of disputes' (*TTP*, 17:87). What follows is a detailed account of these agrarian laws, described in the same way as presented by Maimonides in the *Mishneh Torah* as well as by Cunaeus in the Hebrew Republic.[94] An example of an implicit reference to Rambam is in his account of how the one civil war during the period of Mosaic theocracy was properly

[94] Spinoza also praises the Mosaic theocracy for introducing feast days into the agrarian calendar as a means to promote obedience inspired by joy rather than fear. 'And I do not think anything more effective than this can be devised for steering people's hearts in a certain direction. For hearts are won by nothing more than by the joy which arises from devotion, i.e., from love and wonder together.' (*TTP*, 17:90).

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resolved thereby preventing further conflicts (a scenario he describes as unavoidable in monarchical systems). 'The winners had so much pity on the losers that they took care in every way to restore them to their former status and power' (*TTP*, 18:15). As discussed above, the *Mishneh Torah* explains why, in relation to the question of personal dignity, it is fundamental to restore those who have become impoverished to their former status and power, as is the case with the poor person who used 'to ride a horse and to have a servant run before him'.

Conclusion

Just as our exploration of the concept of *tzedakah* began with the story of Daniel, our expedition ends with Daniel but this time as discussed by Spinoza in the *TTP*. It is the final reference (of a dozen) to the book of Daniel in the *TTP* that relates to the notion of *tzedakah*.

> So we see that of all the Jews who were in Babylon, only three young men, who did not doubt God's aid, were unwilling to obey Nebuchadnezzar. But with the further exception of Daniel, whom the King himself revered, the rest no doubt obeyed, when they were compelled by the law, perhaps reflecting in their heart that it was in accordance with God's decree that they had been delivered to the King, and that the King held his sovereignty and preserved it by God's guidance. (*TTP*, 16:65)

In this passage, Spinoza praises Daniel for refusing to obey Nebuchadnezzar (who is also an implied actor in the book of Jeremiah). It is striking that Spinoza would praise someone who refuses to obey when this is what he calls for throughout the *TTP* as a means of recognition of the authority of the sovereign. Why would Spinoza praise Daniel for the disobedience that he denounces throughout the *TTP*? Could it be because, as we have said above, Daniel acts in line with true religion while Nebuchadnezzar does not. Is Spinoza warning his readers that in their particular political milieu, acting according to true religion is in fact a form of political disobedience? The book of Daniel was for many of his intellectual interlocutors, most significantly for the Millenarians and Jewish Messianism, the most important biblical book for the Dutch milieu in the seventeenth century. Many believers, including Isaac Newton, felt the world they were living in was the one prophesied by Daniel, especially given the significant increase of knowledge in the realm of the sciences, and that it was approaching its end. This apocalyptic vision was also correlated to the rise in Orientalism during this period. Spinoza's patron, Peter Serrarius, was a Millennarian, who believed and publically proclaimed that Sabbatai Z'vi was the new Messiah. The arrival of Z'vi, who was from Turkey, coincided with the increasing fear of an Ottoman conquest of Europe (symbolized by the siege of Vienna in 1683), both of which led to a renewed preoccupation with 'the Orient'.

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While for many of Spinoza's more religious readers the connection to the Day of Judgment might have been fundamental, this is clearly not the case for Spinoza. Yet it is advantageous that true religion, read in connection to the Judaic hendiadic concept of *tzedakah*, could be understood for those philosophically inclined in an entirely non-theological sense as an economic theory necessary for political stability. This is the thesis I have developed here, showing how the complicated conceptual history of *tzedakah* is at play in the *TTP* and thereby providing some new insight into a text that has played a foundational role in both modern and contemporary political thought as well as the notion of true religion itself which plays such a central role in European political theology.

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