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12-9-2014

December 9, 2014: There Was a Moment

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Ledewitz, B. (2014). December 9, 2014: There Was a Moment. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/889>

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Title: There Was a Moment

Date: 2014-12-09T06:18:00.001-05:00

12/9/2014—There was a moment when Judaism became a universal religion. There was a moment when it abandoned its emphasis on religious law binding only its members. There was a moment when the love of God became its guiding and only principle. Unfortunately, that moment passed. The Jewish group pressing for these changes diverged and ultimately became Christianity—with problems of its own, including its overliteralization of the image of the son of God. When the moment passed and the Roman Wars came, Judaism became more inward and law bound than ever. And the long march toward its crisis over the meaning of the non-Jew, spurred on by the unspeakable violence of anti-Semitism, began. That march has come to its logical climax in today's State of Israel proposing to redefine the State so as effectively to abandon its commitment to democracy and equality for non-Jews. Does it matter at this point whether the legislation passes or is defeated narrowly out of a fear of what the outside world might think? That such a law would be seriously considered makes the point that Judaism is finished as a world religion. The point is theological, not political. Is the redemption of all humankind God's plan or not? Or is God's concern just for the Jewish people? Most American Jews, blindly basking in America's Protestant culture of democracy and equality (all right, more theoretical than real, but still...) assume their religion is like them. But I believe Netanyahu is right about what Judaism became.