

Introduction to Mysterium

Debra Kaplan, Yeshiva University, USA

Notes: Mysterium: About the Conversion of the Jews: As was situated and preached in the Strasbourg cathedral. Das ist Geheimnis S. Pauli Rom am II Von Bekherung der Juden als gelegt und geprediget zu Strassburg Munster. Strasbourg, 1592

Elias Schadeus (1541-1593) held various pastoral positions in Strasbourg's Lutheran churches, beginning in 1570 until his death. In 1586, Schadeus was appointed as a Hebrew professor at Strasbourg's university. Like many of the Christian Hebraists in Strasbourg, Schadeus composed various grammatical textbooks, teaching students Hebrew grammar and language in an effort to instruct them in the truths of Christianity, based on the Hebraica Veritas.

Schadeus also applied his knowledge of Hebrew in an attempt to actively convert the Jews. In his role as preacher at Strasbourg's cathedral from 1581-1593, Schadeus preached tolerance of the Jew. Echoing the notion expressed by Martin Luther in his 1523 treatise, That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew, Schadeus argued that Christian kindness and economic inclusion would facilitate Jewish conversion. In addition, Schadeus founded a Hebrew printing press, through which he hoped to attract the Jews to Christianity through printed media in their own language. To this end, he translated five books of Luther's New Testament into Judaeo-German, which he published together with a preface, excerpts from the Old Testament, some of his sermons and additional arguments intended to attract the Jews to Lutheranism.

Included in this published volume is a supplication to Strasbourg's council, in which Schadeus beseeches the magistrates on behalf of a young Jewess he had baptized as Susanna. His request, written ten years after her baptism, is that Susanna be granted the status of a Stattkind, a ward of the city. This status and the stipend involved would help combat her poverty and facilitate her marriage by enabling her to work within the city. This text reflects Schadeus' position that economic tolerance of Jews and of converts would facilitate conversion to Christianity. It also documents the desperation felt by Jewish converts to Christianity, who had difficulty integrating into both their old and new societies.

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Mysterium: About the Conversion of the Jews **Elias Schadeus, 1592**

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Copy of a Supplication to the respectable Magistrates of the City of Strasbourg, [in the] year 1591, the third of January, offered on behalf of a baptized Jewess, in order to obtain both her rights as a burgher and her marriage tax. And this is laid out here [for] the respectable council to honor, and for others in the same situation, as an example of the following.

Stern, noble, honorable, cautious, wise, gracious men, [who] command respect:

Although I, Your Honors, am requesting only one thing, this has not happened previously in this place for perhaps one hundred years or more. So I hope to God, that after you yourselves will have heard the total cause and that which was done, that you, in accordance with your godly force and high understanding, will know how to be Christian and reasonable.

This concerns, however, contemporary people, and specifically, a woman who was born out of the Jewish people [and whom] was brought to me eleven years ago, through the love of God, a wonderful and gracious sending. Half a year, she was in my house and was instructed correctly in Christian thought, after which she was settled with Christ and his beloved church, through baptism at Old St. Peter's, which is at present, a large community. From that same time on, for ten whole years, she has been in service at her godmother's and godfather's, Herr Johann Adolph Fursten. She behaved both in her service and in the neighborhood, making herself known, that her Christian and merciful change was [out of] complete love. And through the good testimony of the present-day joiner guild, [one] of whom, born in Wurtemberg [she] desires to marry, and according to his honorable manly law, he needs letters from their godfathers, Johann Adolph Fursten [and] Johan Jacob Stossern, also from me, to state it. ^[1] Thereby, their wedding will be confirmed with a public and orderly church going.

Now, however, she cannot be admitted, neither domestically nor as a burgher, without

citizenship.^[2] And she is both poor, and other than her dress, brings together nothing more than that which her Godfather and Godmother and other good-hearted and Christian people have relieved her with. So, I personally appear before you, heartfelt, and I, as her poor patron, in writing, submit subserviently and humbly, that Your Honors, will take and adopt this person,[who is] so totally born again, and who has been held for so long as a Christian, as a ward of the city.

Upon examination, she is related by blood to Christ, who adopted us heathens with spiritual and heavenly citizenship. [She] wants the Christian faith, and is a daughter of Abraham. Because of that, it is reasonable; she enjoys the believing patriarchs, prophets and apostles, and yes, the Master Christ more than she pays the stubborn and latter [day] Jews. She wanted and waited for the Christian religion, and was required to abandon her people, father, mother, friends, also nourishment and heritage.

This is also law of the gentiles, and oh, should be observed, and [it] is also customary under the Turks, that those individuals [who] come from other peoples, and accept the religion and enter into a place where their profession is performed, should become accepted equally in the community of all civic rights and freedoms. After all, God the Master, [at] different times in the Old Testament, ordered and gave the commandment, through Moses, that the stranger, that is, those from the heathens who made their way [into Jewish territory] shall be treated with the same standard and law as the Jews have, and should be appreciated. [This idea] was also observed in every time, and when it was not observed [he who did not observe it] was strongly punished by the prophets. And it is particularly mentioned that in the Second book of Chronicles, the strangers were counted, and they themselves [added up] to a large sum, namely 153,600 were found, and they were used in the Building of the Temple.^[3] And that which occurs in the Old Testament should be reasonable in the New Testament, and when the page is turned, it is also observed. Upon examination of the reasons of the Apostle Paul, reported in Romans 11, and here, for the beloved, I wish to shorten, because I handled this in detail in a midday sermon a few weeks ago, and it is not necessary to repeat.

So then, now, Your Honors, I hope that in the wake of the indicated reasons, you will adopt as a ward of the city, and nobly accept [this woman.] I will provide the endowment in its entirety, so that nothing is repugnant, or work against this, even though she wants the twenty gulden for the beginning of her craft, through which other poor Christian wards of Your Honor are recognized, or a tax from elsewhere should come forth.^[4]

Therein, I prescribe nothing, Your Honors, except for that which Christ wants of honorable Jews, also from all of the believers in the Father Abraham, the beloved prophets and apostles, who were former Jews. From them and through that which is heathen to us, holiness and much good comes. I have only asked and indicated, and this, in all subservience, I want to have placed in your hands: the complete hope that not only will contemporary people gratefully present and show themselves as Christian holy people [and] God-forceful pietists, but also that

the Master, Christ himself, through his proper will, will repay such credit in various ways,^{EMW 2004}
[to]Your Honors and the whole city with rich blessings.

Because of that, then, I ask daily. And to do such a journey also with diligence, I, who see myself as responsible, hereby will have also asked. ^[5]

Subservient Citizen and Preacher, M. Elias Schad

In the name and on behalf of the contemporary person

Endnotes

^[1] He required letters testifying that her conversion was complete and thorough.

^[2] Without the *Burgerrecht*, or right of citizenship, she could not practice a craft within the city.

^[3] See 2 Chronicles 2:16-17.

^[4] The endowment of 20 *fl.* which was given to *Stattkinder* was designed to help them begin working at a craft within the city, subject to the limits imposed by guild regulations. By awarding Susanna with such a stipend, and by allowing her to work and to marry in the city, the magistrates were effectively giving her the same rights that a burgher would have, without requiring her to purchase the *Burgerrecht*. These benefits, in turn, could serve as her dowry, for her husband would be permitted to work. As someone born in Wurtemberg, he would not have had the rights of a burgher without purchasing them from the city.

^[5] Having brought her to the baptismal font, Schadeus feels responsible for Susanna's wellbeing.

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Copia einer Supplication an einen Ehrsamem Rath der Statt Straßburg/ Anno 91. den 3. Januarii/ für eine getauffte Judin gestellt/ dadurch ihr beide das Burgrecht und Ehestewr erlanget/ dem Ehrsamem Rath zu Ehren/ und andern in gleichen fellen zum Exempel der nachfolgung hierhergesetzt.

Gestrenge/ Edle/ Ehrnveste/ Fürsichtige/ Weise/ Gnedige und gebietende herren/ Wiewol ich E.G. eine solche sach fürbringe/ die zu vor an diesem orth/ viellich in 100. oder mehr Jaren nicht fürkomen/ so hoff ich doch zu Gott/ Es werd E.G. nach dem sie dieselb sampt den ursachen angehört/ dabey thun/ das sie nach ihrer Gottes forcht und hohen verstand/ Christlich und billich zu sein erkennen.

Sie belanget aber gegenwertige Personen/ und sonderlich die Weibsperson/ Die ist auß dem Jüdischen volck geboren/ vor 11. Jaren/ durch deß lieben Gottes wunderbare und gnedige schickung mir zu gebracht/ ein halb Jar in meinem hause gewesen/ recht unterwissen/ zum Alten S. Peter in gegenwart einer grossen Gemein/ den herrn Christo unnd seiner lieben Kirchen durch die heilige Tauffe eingeleibet worden/ von der selben zeit an/ hat sie 10. gantzer Jar bey ihrer göttel und pfettern/ herr Johann Adolph Fürsten gedienet/ un[d] sich *Relative* zu melden/ also in ihrem dienst unnd Nachbarschafft verhalten/ das sie ires Christlichen und Erbaren Wandels meniglich lieb gewesen/ und wegen ihres guten zeugnis von gegenwertigem Schreiner gesellen auß dem Würtenbergerland bürtig zur Ehe begert/ un[d] auff sein Ehrlich Man[nes]recht und Lehrbrieff so er gebracht/ von ihren herrn pfettern/ herr Johan Adoplh Fürsten/ herr Johan Jacob Stössern/ auch mir/ ihme zugesagt/ un[d] drauff ihre Ehe mit offenem und ordentlichen kirchgang bestetiget worden.

Nun sie aber Burgerlich unnd haußlich sich allhie nicht können einlassen ohne das Burgrecht und aber beyde arm und uber ire kleider anders nichts zusammen gebracht/ denn was inen von

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iren Pftern und göteln un[d] andern guthertigen auß Christlicher liebe gestewret/ als
erscheinen sie für E.G. und herrlichkeit Persönlich/ und ich als ihr armer Patron Schriftlich/
underthenig unnd Demutig Supplierend/ das E.G. diese Person so allhie widergeboren/ unnd
so lang zeit sich Christlich gehalten/ für ein Stattkind annemmen und Adoptieren wolle/ In
betrachtung daß sie deß herrn Christi/ der uns heiden in das Geistliche unnd himlisch
Burgrecht Adoptiert/ Blutsverwandte/ und umb des Christliche glaubens willen eine Tochter
deß glaubigen Abrahambs ist/ und derhalben billich d[ar]z[u] sie mehr der glaubigen
Patriarchen/ Propheten/ Apostel/ ja deß herrn Christi geniessen/ den der verstocken und
lesterigen Juden entgelte. Das sie auch umb der Christlichen Religionen willen/ Ihr volck/
Vatter/ Mutter. Freundschaftt/ auch nahrung und Erb/ so sie zugewarten gehabt/ hat müssen
verlassen.

Das es auch *Iure gentium* Je unnd je also gehalten worden/ und noch unter den Türke[n]
ublich/ das die Jenigen so von andern Völckern zu ihnen getreten dieselb Religion
angenommen/ an dem orth da sie ihre Profession gethan/ gleich mit in die gemeinschaftt aller
Burgerlichen gerechtigkeit und Freyheit angenommen worden und noch werden. Endlich das
auch Gott der herr im alten Testament zu unterschieden malen durch Mosen befohlt un[d] die
verordnung gethan/ Das die Frembdlinge/ das ist/ Die sich von heiden zu ihnen begeben/
einerley Recht mit den Juden haben und geniessen solten/ Welchs auch jederzeit also gehalten
und do es nicht geschehe[n] durch die Propheten ernstlich gestrafft. Und ist sonderlich
zumercken/ das/ wie im 2. buch der Cronik 2. zulesen/ die Frembdlinge gezehlet/ und
derselben eine grosse Sum[ma]/ Nemlich 153600. gefunden/ und zum Baw des Tempels
gebrauchen worden. Und so solches im Alten Testament geschähen/ soll es billich im Newen
Testament/ da sich das blat umb gekehret/ auch also gehalten werden. In betrachtung der
ursachen die der Apostel Paulus Ro[mans] 11. meldet/ un[d] hie umb geliebter kürtze willen/
Weil ich sie vor etlichen Wochen inn der Mittagspredigt außführlich gehandelt/ unnd
unuonnöthen zu widerholen.

So dann nu E.G. Wie ich hoff in erwegung angedeuter ursachen/ sie zum Stattkind Adoptieren
und auß gnaden annemen/ so versihe ich mich gentzlich/ der Stiftung gar nicht zuwider oder
entgegen sein/ Wenn ihr auch die 20. gulden zum anfang ihres handwercks wie andern armen
Ehrlichen Stattkindern von E.G. zu erkent/ oder anderswoher eine stewr widerfare[n] möchte.
Darin[nen] ich doch E.G. gar nichts fürgeschreiben/ sondern umb Christi deß Edlen Juden
willen/ auch aller glaubigens Vatters Abraham/ der lieben Propheten und Aposteln/ so Juden
gewesen/ und von denen und durch die uns heiden das heil und viel guts zukomen/ allein
angedeutet gebeten/ und doch denselben in aller underthenigkeit heimgestellt haben will: der
gentzlichen hoffnung/ es werden nicht allein gegenwertige Personen sich als Christliche
Eheleut/ Gottföchtig Erbar und danckbarlich verhalten un[d] erzeige[n]/ sondern auch der
herr Christus selbs umb dessen willen es geschicht/ solche gutthat/ E.G. unnd gantzer Statt in
andern wegen/ mit Reichen Segen vergelten/ Darumb ich denn auch teglich bitte/ unnd
solches hinfort auch fleissig zuthin/ wie mich schuldig erken[n]e/ also hiemit will erbotten
haben.

Undertheniger Burger und Prediger M. Elias Schad/ in namen und von wegen gegenwertiger
Personen

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