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MUSIC EXAMPLES

“Niggûn Merôn” (attached record)

MUSICAL TRADITION AND ITS TRANSMITTERS BETWEEN SYNAGOGUE AND CHURCH

Eric Werner, *New York*

According to the dictionary, a tradition is handed down by a *traditor*, a word which has the meaning of a traitor as well as a transmitter. Indeed this meaning, ambiguous as it appears, is justified when the role of transmitter of tradition between Church and Synagogue is examined: in handing over the customs of one institution he was, in fact, surrendering them to the other — he was both proselyte and apostate. This feeling of guilt may hardly have been consciously felt by the first generation of Christians, but there can be no doubt that it existed, however disguised and rationalized by such concepts as that of the "New Jerusalem", "The Old Law and the New", even by constant reference to the significance of Christ's sacrifice as but the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies¹. A hardly veiled sense of guilt is evident also in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (of the late second century). It admonished Christians to mourn, even to fast, over the loss of Jerusalem and its Temple:

... for their sake (of the Jews) we ought to fast and mourn, that we may be glad to take our place in the world to come ... so we ought to take pity on them ... and to fast and to pray for them ...²

The following inquiries will concern themselves with two tasks: (1) To examine the concept of "national folksong" and its applicability in the instance of the musical tradition of the old Synagogue; (2) the attitude of Western music historians to the question of Jewish influence on early Church music. As will be seen, we are convinced that a purely musical examination of the problem will not yield any truly cogent arguments or proofs. Unlike theology or philosophy, whose ideas may be "in the air" of a period forming part of the *Zeitgeist* and its forces, the melodies, rhythms and forms that correspond to such intangible ideas are *not* "in the air"; if anything, they are perhaps "in the earth", — but that is another matter. They constitute part of the various established

¹ The ambivalence is felt most clearly in the writings of St. Paul; see J. Klausner, *Between Jesus and Paul* (New York 1943), especially Book VII, Ch. 2 and 5. Reading between the lines of Eusebius' *History of the Church*, one seems to sense traces of guilt feelings of these Judaeo-Christians, who, in the year 66, fled to Pella, thus evading the siege of Jerusalem. See Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* X, 4, 23, where Constantine is called "The New Aaron"!

² *Didascalia Apostolorum*, ed. Gibson, in *Horae Semiticae* II, 21 (London 1903) p. 96.