Guest Editor's Introduction

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As part of the 2015 conference of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR), which took place in July in Louvain-la-Neuve, (Belgium), I organized a workshop around the theme of “Judaism, Judaicities: Mutations and evolutions of the contemporary Jewish world.” This issue of *Contemporary Jewry* includes several contributions that were presented at the conference and that relate primarily to the debates on these issues in France today.

If we can speak of mutations and developments in Judaism and “Judaicities,”¹ it is because today, as never before, Judaism (broadly speaking) is plural. It is both a religion and a culture, and it promotes a set of values, national aspirations, and ways of life. Seventy years after the Shoah, the multiplicity of groups and people identifying themselves as Jewish is a sign of the vitality of Judaism rather than of its possible fragmentation.

As the oldest religious minority in Europe, particularly in France, the Jewish population in this country is currently the largest in Western Europe — between four hundred thousand and six hundred thousand people,² split between 60% Sephardi and 40% Ashkenazi Jews.³ Religious practice, in tune with the entire French population, is quite muted: It is estimated that approximately 15% of Jews observe a set of religious rules; 48% have only one contact per year with a Jewish community space (not necessarily a synagogue); and 45% say they eat kosher. As

¹ All the Jewish communities in the world.

² See Cohen (2013) and DellaPergola (2016). This represents less than 1% of the French population.

³ Here, we have a specificity that France shares with Israel: a Sephardi population that is more numerous than the Ashkenazi population, while, as a whole, the world's Jewish population (13.5 million in the 2012 study by Sergio DellaPergola, thus, 0.2% of the world population) is comprised of between 9 million and 12 million Ashkenazi Jews, but only 3 million to 4 million Sephardic Jews.

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elsewhere, mixed marriages are constantly increasing (Cohen 2007) — from 30% mixed marriages and 70% marriages between Jews in 2002 (including 1% of such marriages involving a spouse who converted to Judaism), to 36% mixed marriages and 64% marriages between Jews in 2006–2007 (including 2% of such marriages involving the conversion of a spouse), with probably more than 40% mixed marriages today.

In France, the continuity of Jewish identity is increasingly asserting itself, often outside the denominational model, sustained for some by the wish to identify themselves as Jewish after the Shoah, to preserve the memory of those who perished, and to transmit a culture that is almost extinct (Yiddish, for example). The continuous interest in the varieties of Jewish culture, plus the booming community centers, courses, and conferences inside the Jewish community, but also outside, such as in universities, is characteristic of our era. What is on offer to everyone, including Jews and non-Jews, includes, for example, the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme in Paris, as well as conferences on Jewish themes, courses on Jewish languages, klezmer music concerts, and Jewish and Israeli film festivals, all of which are available all over France. Jews today can Judaize themselves outside of an organized Jewish community.

In her article, the historian Valérie Assan comes back to the role of the many French Jewish associations in the transmission of memory, and she reflects on the relationship between memory and history.

The contemporary Jewish religious landscape in France reflects the image of this pluralism: Two or three religious groups, each one split into several currents, are on offer to Jewish believers living in the country. The most important one, historically, but also in terms of the number of synagogues and rabbis, the number of religious ceremonies organized, and social visibility, is the Israelite Central Consistory of France, created by Napoleon in 1808 out of a concern to control the organization of Jewish life in the country. The consistory and its rabbis in France represent the traditionalist approach, with a penchant toward orthodoxy in the last 20 years. On its margins and apart from the institution, there are ultra-Orthodox movements, on the one hand, and, on the other, a cluster of “modernist” movements that advocate the need to adapt to contemporary developments in civil society.

Alongside these structured groups, we have also witnessed in the last 30 years the rise of groups claiming an affiliation with Judaism. They all have more or less close ties with similar organizations in the United States, and sometimes in Israel: the Judeo-Christian Brotherhood and its “black Jews,” presented here by Aurélien Gampiot; Buddhist Jews, or “Jubus,” their international ties and the challenges they face in defining themselves, presented by Mira Niculescu; and Jews for Jesus, Kabbalah Jews, and Beit Haverim, the Jewish LGBT Network.

All of this has taken place since the beginning of the 2000s and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the context of a developing antisemitism by new populations of Arab-Muslim immigrants and their descendants, directed more specifically against Sephardi Jews in the francophone world (in France, but also in Belgium), who came from Arab countries and settled primarily in France in the 1950s and 1960s. The drama of the Jews of Algeria, before they arrived in large numbers in France in 1962, is that they experienced a dual form of antisemitism: the traditional Catholic

antisemitism throughout the entire process of colonization with its two paroxysmal moments, the Dreyfus Affair (1890) and the abolition of the Crémieux Decree under Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain (1940); and the crude contempt and hatred by Muslims that erupted in the Constantine pogrom in Algeria in 1934, as my own work and the work of Geneviève Dermenjian show, using different approaches.

The antisemitism that several of the authors in this issue have studied in different ways is still topical and contemporary this time, and it always has dramatic consequences (Jews die today because they are Jews). Eliezer Ben-Rafael brings a sociological approach to his study of antisemitism, tracing the development of antisemitism in Belgium, while Günther Jikeli uses field surveys across several European countries, and Paul Zawadzki enlists an epistemological approach, reflecting on the role of intellectuals, and, more particularly, of French scholars in the social sciences who are questioning the reality of this new antisemitism.

This issue also looks at the development of research on the European Jewish world in anticipation of acting as an incentive to create bridges between American and French scholars on themes that they share with one another, even if they do not always use the same frames of reference.

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