

THE EARLY CENTURIES



Jewish Believers
in JESUS

OSKAR SKARSAUNE

and

REIDAR HVALVIK, *Editors*

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Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries

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Preface

They just don't fit very neatly; they never did. Ever since it became clear that the law-free mission to the [G]entiles would create a church and not a synagogue, Jewish-Christianity has been an uncomfortable reality with which to deal. The "Synagogue" didn't like it. The "Church Catholic" didn't like it. And modern scholarship, far less ready to accept the vagaries of a religion that resembles but cannot be made to fit known varieties of religion, seems to like it even less. . . . Yet it is the very fact that Jewish-Christianity occupies a middle ground between Judaism and Christianity (as though there were such "normative" religions in antiquity or today) that makes it the object of fascination to modern scholarship.¹

This is as true today as when Burton L. Visotzky wrote it in 1989. The present book is another fruit of this "object of fascination." In 1995 the director of the Caspary Center of Biblical and Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, Torkild Masvie, suggested to me that time was ripe for a full history of Jewish Christianity, or rather, as we soon agreed, a history of the Jewish believers in Jesus—the "they" rather than the "it" in Visotzky's quote.

In a moment of rashness that came with enthusiasm for the idea I agreed to act as chief editor of such a project. Had I known the magnitude and the difficulty of the subject, I would certainly have thought twice about undertaking the task. In any case, it took quite some time before the initial idea had gestated so as to be mature for birth. I soon realized that the organizational part was completely beyond my capacity, and I was happy to be joined by my good and close colleague Reidar Hvalvik, who has carried the main burden of organization, and also, and increasingly as the work went along, acted as co-editor. Without his administrative, organizational, and editorial talents, this project had never been realized.

I realized right from the beginning that this was a subject beyond the competence of one scholar. We would have to be a team in order to handle the different

¹Burton L. Visotzky, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities," *AJSR* 14 (1989): 47.

aspects of it in a competent way. It is a great pleasure and a pleasant duty to express here my great gratitude to those fellow scholars who so willingly, even enthusiastically, responded to my pleas for contributions. Two seminars were arranged—one in Tantur, Israel, 2000, and one in Cambridge, England, 2001—in which first and second drafts of contributions were discussed and ideas exchanged. This does not make any contributor responsible for anything said in this volume outside the author's own contribution. Most of the contributions were print-ready in 2003. Only to a very limited extent has it been possible for the authors to take account of literature published after that date.

In the early stages of this work, our common perception was that we were concerned with a category of people who by their very existence somehow refused to take in the reality of what was happening around them—the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity. Then, in 1999, Daniel Boyarin published his intriguing book *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, in which he challenged the paradigm of the parting ways in a groundbreaking manner. In 2003 a new book appeared; challenging the traditional paradigm already in its title: *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed), a conference volume based on a joint Princeton-Oxford conference in 2002. These were not the only publications to signal a shift in scholarly attention and a new awareness of the great relevance of studying the groups and individuals who, so to speak, embodied the non-parting of the ways. Two symposia, one in Jerusalem (1998) and one in Brussels (2001), resulted in one volume each: *Le Judéo-Christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du colloque de Jérusalem 6–10 juillet 1998* (ed. S. C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones); and *The Image of the Judeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry, 2003). Prior to any of these, Simon Claude Mimouni had published his magnificent survey *Le Judéo-Christianisme ancien: essays historiques* (1998). One could add several more titles to these, including Boyarin's own follow-up of his pioneering work mentioned above: *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (2004).

With regard to the present volume, the process behind which has been quite independent of any of the above projects, this has meant that while we were at work, a paradigm shift was going on around us. From the marginal position described by Visotzky, Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile Christian Judaizers moved into the very center of scholarly interest. The present volume, however, is not meant to be a programmatic statement in the scholarly debate about old and new paradigms. There is hardly any one position in regard to this question among the contributors of this volume. What unites us is a common conviction that the phenomenon of Jewish believers in Jesus has its own significance in the history of Christianity, and also for the history of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

Neither authors nor editors think of this volume as a definitive history of Jewish believers in Jesus during the early centuries (first to fifth centuries C.E.).

Nor have the editors made any attempt at unifying and streamlining the points of view expressed in the different contributions. We have regarded it an advantage that the book contains more than one opinion on some of the problems treated. There is, at present, no established scholarly consensus on the different themes treated in this volume. This goes for the many large as well as many of the smaller questions. In this way it is hoped that this volume, rather than summing up current scholarship, may in some measure contribute to it. A continuation of this history through the centuries until our own time is at an early stage of planning. This is a report on plans, not a binding promise.

On behalf of both editors I would like to extend thanks to the many persons who have been involved in the project—first and foremost our fellow authors in the present volume. Torkild Masvie, director of the Caspary Center for Jewish and Biblical Studies, initiated the project and supported it with staff and funds all along. His and the Center's support were ideal from the scholar's point of view: no strings attached. Among the Center's staff, Bodil Skjøtt made invaluable contributions on the organizational side, and Ray A. Pritz provided scholarly and editorial inputs. Our own employer, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, funded part of our own research and writing. Good colleagues at MF provided invaluable assistance during the last hectic stages of editing: Gunnar Haaland, John Wayne Kaufman, Bjørn Helge Sandvei, Andrew Donald Wergeland, and Karl William Weyde. Some gave a hand in assembling the bibliography, some helped in linguistic polishing of English, Greek, and Hebrew. To all of them we extend our deep feeling of gratitude. In the production of this book, Shirley Decker-Lucke and her colleagues at Hendrickson Publishers have made significant contributions towards improving the consistency and the argument of some of the chapters of the book, and, when necessary, polished our English. For this we owe them great gratitude, while taking full responsibility for the end result.

Last but not least, we thank our wives for having put up with absent and absent-minded husbands for all too long.

Oslo, March 2007
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Chief Editor



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Abbreviations

General

aka	also known as
b.	Babylonian Talmud
B.C.E.	before the Common Era
ca.	circa
C.E.	Common Era
cent.	century
cf.	<i>confer, compare</i>
ch(s).	chapter(s)
col(s).	column(s)
cm.	centimeter
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
cod.	codex
diss.	dissertation
ed(s).	editor(s), edited by
e.g.	<i>Exempli gratia</i> , for example
frg.	fragment
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
ibid.	ibidem, in the same place
KJV	King James Version
lit.	literally
LXX	The Septuagint
m.	meter
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
Mt.	mount, mountain
n(n).	note(s)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
n.d.	no date
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version

NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NS	New Series
p(p).	page(s)
prol.	prologue, <i>prologus</i>
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
sq.	square
t.	Tosefta
vol(s).	volume(s)
v(v).	verse(s)
y.	Jerusalem Talmud

Ancient Sources

Hebrew Bible

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Judg	Judges
1–2 Sam	1–2 Samuel
1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings
1–2 Chr	1–2 Chronicles
Neh	Nehemiah
Ps/Pss	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Mic	Micah
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Matt	Matthew
Rom	Romans
1–2 Cor	1–2 Corinthians

Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1–2 Thess	1–2 Thessalonians
1–2 Tim	1–2 Timothy
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1–2 Pet	1–2 Peter
Rev	Revelation

Old Testament Apocrypha

1 Esd	1 Esdras
Jdt	Judith
1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

Ascen. Isa.	<i>Mart. Ascen. Isa. 6–11</i>
2 Bar.	<i>2 Baruch</i>
4 Bar.	<i>4 Baruch</i>
1 En.	<i>1 Enoch</i>
2 En.	<i>2 Enoch</i>
Jos. Asen.	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
Jub.	<i>Jubilees</i>
Liv. Pro.	<i>Lives of the Prophets</i>
Mart. Ascen. Isa.	<i>Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah</i>
Odes Sol.	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>
Pss. Sol.	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
T. Ash.	<i>Testament of Asher</i>
T. Benj.	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>
T. Dan	<i>Testament of Dan</i>
T. Iss.	<i>Testament of Issachar</i>
T. Jos.	<i>Testament of Joseph</i>
T. Jud.	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
T. Levi	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
T. Mos.	<i>Testament of Moses</i>
T. Naph.	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
T. Reu.	<i>Testament of Reuben</i>

<i>T. Sim.</i>	<i>Testament of Simeon</i>
<i>T. Zeb.</i>	<i>Testament of Zebulun</i>

New Testament Pseudepigrapha

<i>Acts Thom.</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
<i>Apoc. Pet.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>
<i>Gos. Eb.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i>
<i>Gos. Heb.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Hebrews</i>
<i>Gos. Naz.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Nazarenes</i>
<i>Gos. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>

Rabbinic Literature

<i>‘Abod. Zar.</i>	<i>‘Abodah Zarah</i>
<i>B. Bat.</i>	<i>Baba Batra</i>
<i>B. Meṣ.</i>	<i>Baba Meṣi‘a</i>
<i>B. Qam.</i>	<i>Baba Qamma</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakot</i>
<i>Cant. Rab.</i>	<i>Canticles Rabbah</i>
<i>Der. Er. Zuṭ.</i>	<i>Derek Ereṣ Zuṭa</i>
<i>Deut. Rab.</i>	<i>Deuteronomy Rabbah</i>
<i>‘Erub.</i>	<i>‘Erubin</i>
<i>Gen. Rab.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
<i>Hag.</i>	<i>Hagigah</i>
<i>Hor.</i>	<i>Horayot</i>
<i>Hul.</i>	<i>Hullin</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i>
<i>Naz.</i>	<i>Nazir</i>
<i>Ned.</i>	<i>Nedarim</i>
<i>Pesah.</i>	<i>Pesahim</i>
<i>Qidd.</i>	<i>Qiddušin</i>
<i>Qoh. Rab.</i>	<i>Qohelet Rabbah</i>
<i>Roš Haš.</i>	<i>Roš Hašanah</i>
<i>Šabb.</i>	<i>Šabbat</i>
<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Šeqal.</i>	<i>Šeqalim</i>
<i>Yad.</i>	<i>Yadayim</i>
<i>Yebam.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i>

Philo

<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>On the Contemplative Life</i>
<i>QE 2</i>	<i>Questions and Answers on Exodus 2</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>On the Special Laws</i>

Josephus

<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>
<i>Vita</i>	<i>Vita</i>

Apostolic Fathers

<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Barnabas</i>
<i>1 Clem.</i>	<i>1 Clement</i>
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Herm. Mand.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate(s)</i>
<i>Herm. Sim.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude(s)</i>
<i>Herm. Vis.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Vision(s)</i>
<i>Ign. Eph.</i>	<i>Ignatius, To the Ephesians</i>
<i>Ign. Magn.</i>	<i>Ignatius, To the Magnesians</i>
<i>Ign. Phld.</i>	<i>Ignatius, To the Philadelphians</i>
<i>Ign. Pol.</i>	<i>Ignatius, To Polycarp</i>
<i>Ign. Rom.</i>	<i>Ignatius, To the Romans</i>
<i>Ign. Smyrn.</i>	<i>Ignatius, To the Smyrnaeans</i>
<i>Ign. Trall.</i>	<i>Ignatius, To the Trallians</i>
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Pol. Phil.</i>	<i>Polycarp, To the Philippians</i>

Nag Hammadi Codices

<i>EpPet</i>	<i>The Letter of Peter</i>
<i>NHC</i>	<i>Nag Hammadi Codex</i>

Papyrii

<i>P.Oxy.</i>	<i>Oxyrhynchus papyri</i>
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Greek and Latin Works

<i>Ambrosiaster</i>	
<i>Comm. Gal.</i>	<i>Commentary on Galatians</i>

<i>Aphrahat</i>	
<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Demonstrationes</i>

<i>Augustine</i>	
<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>Baptism</i>
<i>Cresc.</i>	<i>Contra Cresconium Donatistam</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Letters</i>
<i>Faust.</i>	<i>Against Faustus the Manichaean</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Heresies</i>

Clement of Alexandria

Strom. *Miscellanies*

Codex Theodosianus

Cod. Theod. *Codex theodosianus*

Dio Cassius

Hist. Rom. *Roman History*

Egeria

Itin. *Itinerary*

Ephrem

Haer. *Contra Haereses*

Virg. *On Virginity*

Epiphanius

Pan. *Refutation of All Heresies*

Eusebius

Comm. Isa. *Commentary on Isaiah*

Dem. ev. *Demonstration of the Gospel*

Hist. eccl. *Ecclesiastical History*

Onom. *Onomasticon*

Gennadius of Marseilles

Vir. ill. (*Famous Men*) *De viris illustribus*

Irenaeus

Epid. *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*

Haer. *Against Heresies*

Jerome

Comm. Am. *Commentariorum in Amos libri III*

Comm. Eph. *Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Ephesios libri III*

Comm. Ezech. *Commentariorum in Ezechielem libri XVI*

Comm. Isa. *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri XVIII*

Comm. Matt. *Commentariorum in Matthaeum libri IV*

Comm. Mich. *Commentariorum in Michaeum libri II*

Comm. Zach. *Commentariorum in Zachariam libri II*

Epist. *Epistulae*

Pelag. *Adversus Pelagianos dialogi III*

Qu. hebr. Gen. *Quaestionario hebraicarum liber in Genesim*

Ruf. *Against Rufinus*

Sit. *De situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum (Liber locorum)*

Tract. Ps. *Tractatus in Psalmos*

Justin

1 Apol. *First Apology*

Dial. *Dialogue with Trypho*

Abbreviations

Juvenal	
<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satirae</i>
Lactantius	
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>The Divine Institutes</i>
Melito of Sardis	
<i>PP</i>	<i>Peri Pascha</i>
Origen	
<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>Comm. Jo.</i>	<i>Commentarii in evangelium Joannis</i>
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>Comm. Rom.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Romanos</i>
<i>Comm. ser. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentarium series in evangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>Ep. Afr.</i>	<i>Epistula ad Africanum</i>
<i>Hom. Gen.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>
<i>Hom. Jer.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Jeremiam</i>
<i>Hom. Lev.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Leviticum</i>
<i>Hom. Luc.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Lucam</i>
<i>Philoc.</i>	<i>Philocalia</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	<i>De principiis (Per archôn)</i>
<i>Sel. Num.</i>	<i>Selecta in Numeros</i>
Pliny	
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Plutarch	
	<i>Quest. Conviv. Questionum convivialum</i>
Pseudo-Clementine	
<i>AJ</i>	<i>Ascents of James</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Contestatio</i>
<i>EpClem</i>	<i>Epistle of Clement</i>
<i>EpPet</i>	<i>Epistle of Peter</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Homilies</i>
<i>KP</i>	<i>Kerygmata Petrou</i>
<i>Rec.</i>	<i>Recognitions</i>
Rufinus	
<i>Apol. Hier.</i>	<i>Apologia adversus Hieronymum</i>
Socrates	
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
Sozomen	
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>

Tacitus

Ann. *Annales*
Hist. *Historiae*

Tertullian

Apol. *Apology*
Carn. Chr. *The Flesh of Christ*
Marc. *Against Marcion*
Praescr. *Prescription against Heretics*
Prax. *Against Praxeas*
Scorp. *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting*

Theophilus

Autol. *Ad Autolycum*

Early Jewish-Christian Dialogues

ADJ	<i>Anonymous Dialogue with the Jews</i>
AS	<i>Acts of Sylvester</i>
AZ	<i>The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus</i>
CS-L	<i>The Disputation of the Church and the Synagogue, Latin</i>
CS-S	<i>the same title, Syriac</i>
CZA	<i>Consultations of Zacchaeus the Christian and Apollonius the Philosopher</i>
EP	<i>The Explanation of the Events in Persia</i>
GH	<i>The Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban a Jew</i>
JP	<i>The Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus</i>
PC	<i>Discussion concerning the Priesthood of Christ</i>
STh	<i>The Disputation between Simon the Jew and Theophilus the Christian</i>
TA	<i>The Dialogue of Timothy the Christian and Aquila the Jew</i>

Modern Journals, Series, and Works of Reference

AAL	<i>Atti della R. Accademia dei Lincei</i>
AB	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ACW	<i>Ancient Christian Writers. 1946–</i>
AGJU	<i>Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und Urchristentums</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJSR	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>

Abbreviations

ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.</i> Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
ATHR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 2d ed. Chicago, 1979
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BETL	<i>Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium</i>
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAnt	Christianisme Antique
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio mediaevalis.</i> Turnhout, 1969–
CCSG	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series graeca.</i> Turnhout, 1977–
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series latina.</i> Turnhout, 1969–
CHJ	<i>Cambridge History of Judaism.</i> Ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein. Cambridge, 1984–
CIJ	<i>Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum</i>
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
CPJ	<i>Corpus papyrorum judaicorum.</i> Edited by V. Tcherikover. 3 vols. Cambridge, 1957–1964
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	<i>Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium.</i> Edited by I. B. Chabot et al. Paris, 1903–
CSEL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i>
DBSup	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément.</i> Edited by L. Pirot and A. Robert. Paris, 1928–
DCB	<i>Dictionary of Christian Biography.</i> Edited by W. Smith and H. Wace. 4 vols. London, 1877–1887
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels.</i> Edited by J. B. Green and S. McKnight. Downers Grove, 1992
DJSS	Duke Judaic Studies Series

<i>DLNT</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments.</i>
<i>EBib</i>	Edited by R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids. Downers Grove, 1997
<i>EdF</i>	<i>Études bibliques</i>
<i>EEC</i>	<i>Erträge der Forschung</i>
<i>EKKNT</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Early Christianity.</i> Edited by E. Ferguson. 2d ed. New York, 1990
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>EWNT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>FC</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FRLANT</i>	Fathers of the Church. Washington, D.C., 1947–
<i>GCS</i>	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte</i>
<i>HTKNT</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>JAC</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSSSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies: Supplement Series</i>
<i>KEK</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KAV</i>	<i>Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)</i>
<i>KIT</i>	<i>Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Kleine Texte</i>
	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>

Abbreviations

<i>MScRel</i>	<i>Mélanges de science religieuse</i>
<i>NewDocs</i>	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> . Edited by G. H. R. Horsley and S. Llewelyn. North Ryde, N.S.W., 1981–
<i>NHS</i>	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	<i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
<i>NIGTC</i>	<i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum Supplements</i>
<i>NPNF¹</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1
<i>NPNF²</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 2
<i>NTD</i>	<i>Das Neue Testament Deutsch</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OBO</i>	<i>Orbis biblicus et orientalis</i>
<i>OECT</i>	<i>Oxford Early Christian Texts</i> . Edited by H. Chadwick. Oxford, 1970–
<i>OrChr</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
<i>ÖTK</i>	<i>Ökumenischer Taschenbusch-Kommentar</i>
<i>OTP</i>	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia graeca</i> [= <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca</i>]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886
<i>PJ</i>	<i>Palästina-Jahrbuch</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia latina</i> [= <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina</i>]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia orientalis</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> . Edited by T. Klauser et al. Stuttgart, 1950–
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RBén</i>	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
<i>RGG⁴</i>	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> . Edited by Hans Dieter Betz et al. 8 vols. 4th ed. Tübingen, 1998–2005
<i>RHE</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</i>
<i>SBLMS</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</i>
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
<i>SBLTT</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations</i>
<i>SBS</i>	<i>Stuttgarter Bibelstudien</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i> . Paris: Cerf, 1943–
<i>SecCent</i>	<i>Second Century</i>
<i>SJLA</i>	<i>Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>

SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	<i>Sacra pagina</i>
SPB	<i>Studia post-biblica</i>
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
StPatr	<i>Studia patristica</i>
StPB	<i>Studia post-biblica</i>
Str-B	Strack, H.L., and P. Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . 6 vols. Munich, 1922–1961
SVTP	<i>Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
ThWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> . Edited by G. Krause and G. Müller. Berlin, 1977–
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TZTh	<i>Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie</i>
VC	<i>Vigilae christiana</i>
VCSup	<i>Vigilae christiana</i> : Supplement Series
VL	<i>Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel</i> . Beuron, 1949–
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZKT	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

P A R T O N E

Introduction



Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity— Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources

Oskar Skarsaune

1. The Question of Definition

It goes without saying that defining the term “Jewish believers in Jesus” is basic to this project. By defining this concept we determine the very subject matter of this book. In this book, by the term “Jewish believers in Jesus” we mean “Jews by birth or conversion who in one way or another believed Jesus was their savior.” We have chosen to focus on the criterion of *ethnicity* rather than the criterion of *ideology*. Many, perhaps most, histories of “Jewish Christianity” or the like, have done the opposite. The basic definition of who is a Jewish Christian is derived from the definition of which theology and praxis the person in question embraces.¹ One can then either disregard the question of ethnic origin completely,

¹ See the review by James Carleton Paget in this volume (ch. 2), and also the following studies: Johannes Munck, “Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times,” *NTS* 6 (1959/1960): 103–16; Gilles Quispel, “The Discussion of Judaic Christianity,” *VC* 22 (1968): 81–93; Robert Alan Kraft, “In Search of ‘Jewish Christianity’ and its ‘Theology’: Problems of Definition and Methodology,” *RSR* 60 (1972): 81–92; A. F. J. Klijn, “The Study of Jewish Christianity,” *NTS* 20 (1974): 419–31; Robert Murray, “Defining Judaeo-Christianity,” *HeyJ* 15 (1974): 303–10; Marcel Simon, “Réflexions sur le Judéo-Christianisme,” in *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Festschrift Morton Smith* (ed. J. Neusner; 4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1975) 2:53–76; repr. in Simon, *Le Christianisme antique et son contexte religieux: Scripta Varia* (WUNT 23; 2 vols.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981) 2:598–621; Bruce J. Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward an Hypothetical Definition,” *JSJ* 7 (1976): 46–57; S. K. Riegel, “Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 410–15; Raymond E. Brown, “Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 74–79; James F. Strange, “Diversity in Early Palestinian Christianity,” *Australian Theological Review* 65

or restrict the term “Jewish Christian” to those Jews who believed in Jesus, *and at the same time continued a wholly Jewish way of life.*² Jews who believed in Jesus, and at the same time abandoned their Jewish way of life and were assimilated among the Gentile Christians, would by this definition not be reckoned as Jewish Christians.

In this book we have taken the opposite path. We believe those Jewish believers in Jesus who chose to become more or less “orthodox” Christians within mixed communities, often with a Gentile majority, deserve the scholar’s respect and interest on a line with the other Jewish believers in Jesus. Some scholars may find them less theologically interesting, but we think that would be a premature judgment. In this book we are out to trace the history of a certain category of people, not the history of a certain brand of Christianity.

In so doing, we are in agreement with the ancient sources. Those sources never speak about “Jewish Christians” in an ideological sense.³ They do, however, divide Christians into two categories by an ethnic criterion. There are Christians (or believers in Jesus) from the Jews and from the Gentiles (see further below).

In the preceding passages, we have used the term “Christian” in the same sense as it was probably used in Acts 11:26: someone who holds Jesus to be Χριστός, the Messiah. In that sense, it is no contradiction in terms to speak of a Jewish Christian. We have to take account, however, of the later development of the connotations attached to the term Christian to Jewish ears. It has become a term denoting something by nature *Gentile*, and by implication, *non-Jewish*. Many modern Jewish believers resent the term “Jewish Christian” for this and other reasons.

Thus, on the one hand traditional definitions of the term “Jewish Christian” exclude some of the people we want to include in this history. On the other hand, the term is offensive to many present day representatives of the same category of believers. This has led us to avoid the traditional term, and instead call the category of people we are discussing “Jewish believers in Jesus” (for brevity’s sake, this category will often be called “Jewish believers”). We have found it very difficult, however, to completely avoid the traditional term. We therefore sometimes use the noun “Jewish Christian” as a term of differentiation *within* the category of

(1983): 14–24; Joan E. Taylor, “The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?” *VC* 44 (1990): 313–34.

²This is basically the definition of *judéo-chrétien* proposed by Simon Claude Mimouni, “Pour une définition nouvelle du judéo-christianisme ancien,” *NTS* 38 (1991), 161–86; Mimouni, “La question de la définition du judéo-christianisme ancien,” in Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Patrimoines; Paris: Cerf, 1998), 39–72. Mimouni’s definition reads: “ancient Jewish Christianity is a modern term designating those Jews who recognized Jesus as messiah, who recognized or did not recognize the divinity of Christ, but who, all of them, continued to observe the Torah” (italics are Mimouni’s, translation mine).

³They do speak about “Judaizing” Christians, but these are most often Gentile believers.

Jewish believers in Jesus. A “Jewish Christian” is a Jewish believer in Jesus who, as a believer, still maintains a Jewish way of life.⁴ Since there is no adjective corresponding to Jewish believer in Jesus, we will use the adjective “Jewish Christian” as applying to all categories of Jewish believers. What has been said very briefly so far raises many questions of a theoretical and practical nature. Some of these are addressed in the following.

1.1. Are the Terms “Jewish Believer in Jesus” and “Jewish Christian” Only Modern Terms?

It is sometimes maintained that the terms “Jewish believer in Jesus” and “Jewish Christian” are modern constructions. This is partly true, especially when one defines the terms mainly by ideological criteria. Carsten Colpe has called attention to this by characterizing terms like *Judenchrist* as belonging to what he calls *Metasprache* or *Wissenschaftsprache*, the language constructed by modern scholars to signify realities of the past which they find interesting.⁵ But it should be pointed out that terms like “Jewish believer (in Jesus)” and even “Jewish Christian” are not without close analogies in the ancient sources. There is no set and fixed terminology in patristic sources, but “Jewish believer (in Jesus)” can be said to encapsulate the terms most often used.

A selection of relevant passages will substantiate this.

- (1) “Jesus said to those Ἰουδαῖοι⁶ who believed in him . . .” (John 8:31).
- (2) “. . . those of the Jewish people who have believed in Jesus [οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν πιστεύσαντες]” (Origen, *Cels.* 2.1).⁷
- (3) “Why . . . did he not represent the Jew as addressing Gentile instead of Jewish believers? [οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων . . . πιστεύοντες]” (*Cels.* 2.1).
- (4) “Notice, then, what Celsus says to Jewish believers [οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων πιστεύοντες]” (*Cels.* 2.1).
- (5) “. . . He failed to notice that Jewish believers in Jesus [οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν πιστεύοντες] have not left the law of their fathers . . .” (*Cels.* 2.1).

⁴We thus agree with Mimouni in our definition of this term.

⁵Carsten Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten: Historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 3; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1989), 38–42.

⁶It is disputed whether Ἰουδαῖοι here should be translated “Judeans” or “Jews.”

⁷This and the following quotes from *Cels.* 2.1: Greek text according to SC 132: 276; translation according to Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 66.

- (6) “[Matthew published his gospel first] for those who from Judaism came to believe [τοῖς ἀπὸ Ἰουδαϊσμοῦ πιστεύσασιν]” (Origen, *Comm. Matt.*, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.25.4).⁸
- (7) “It is said that their whole church at that time consisted of believing Jews [ἐξ Ἐβραίων πιστῶν]”⁹ (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.5.2).¹⁰
- (8) “[Hegesippus] was a believer from among the Jews [ἐξ Ἐβραίων]” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.8).¹¹

Even the term “Jewish Christian” may be found in antique Christian sources: “[Jason was] a Jewish Christian [*hebraeus Christianus*]”.¹² In the apocryphal *Martyrdom of Peter and Paul* there is a report on a discussion between two groups of Christians: the one is called *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι Χριστιανοί / Ioudaii Christiani*; the other [*οἱ*] ἔθνικοὶ [*Χριστιανοί*] / *gentiles*.¹³ It is obvious in the context that these two groups are Christians of Jewish and of Gentile origin respectively; there is no doctrinal difference involved. Later in the story, the Jewish Christians are simply called “the Jews” or “the believing Jews” [*οἱ πιστεύσαντες Ἰουδαῖοι*].¹⁴ According to the narrative in the *Martyrdom* Paul mediates between the two groups by saying what he says in Rom 2:11–15: God

⁸ Greek text according to Eduard Schwartz, *Eusebius: Kirchengeschichte, kleine Ausgabe* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955), 246; translation according to Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, eds., *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine* (2 vols.; London: SPCK, 1954) 1: 197–98.

⁹ *Ἰουδαῖοι* and *Ἐβραῖοι* are mostly used interchangeably in the ancient sources, both meaning “Jews.”

¹⁰ Greek text according to Schwartz, *Kirchengeschichte*, 127; translation according to Lawlor and Oulton, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1: 127, slightly altered.

¹¹ Greek text according to Schwartz, *Kirchengeschichte*, 158; my own translation. The same terminology recurs, e.g., in Jerome, *Epist. 112* (Alfons Fürst, *Augustinus-Hieronymus: Epistulae mutuae, Briefwechsel* [Fontes Christiani 41.1–2; 2 vols.; Turnhout: Brepols, 2002], 1:168–230): “eos . . . qui ex Iudeis crederent . . .” (3.5; Fürst 1:178); “fidelis ex numero Iudeorum” (3.8; Fürst 1:186); “qui ex Iudeis crediderant” (3.10; Fürst 1:192); “his qui ex Iudeis crediderant” (4.12; Fürst 1:196); “credentes Iudei” (4.13; Fürst 1:198); “his qui credunt ex Iudeis” (4.16; Fürst 1:210); “fidelii Iudei” (4.17; Fürst 1:212).

¹² In the Latin prologue to the (now lost) Latin translation of Aristo of Pella’s *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*, = Ps. Cyprian, *Ad Vigilium Episcopum de Iudaica Incredulitate* (3d cent.). I owe this reference to Lawrence Lahey. I suppose it would also be possible to translate *hebraeus Christianus* as “Christian Jew.”

¹³ *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* (Greek) / *Passio sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli* (Latin), 5; Richard Adalbert Lipsius, ed., *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha Pars prior: Acta Petri, Acta Pavli, Acta Petri et Pavli, Acta Pavli et Theclae, Acta Thaddaei* (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1891), 122–23.

¹⁴ *Mart. Petri et Pavli*, 6; Lipsius 122–23; also in the close narrative parallel in *Acta Petri et Pavli* 26; Lipsius 189–90. I owe the references in this and the preceding note to Lawrence Lahey. Once again, parallels to this terminology are to be found in Jerome’s *Epist. 112*: “Christianis . . . sive ex Iudeis sive ex gentibus” (4.14; FC 41.1:202); “aliquis Iudeorum qui factus Christianus” (4.15; ibid 206).

will judge everyone according to his or her deeds, not according to whether one knew the Law or not.

Two conclusions follow from this: (1) the modern terms “Jewish believers in Jesus” and “Jewish Christian” are not without precedent in the ancient sources; and (2) in the ancient sources, ethnicity is the sole criterion for the adjective “Jewish” as it is used in the combined terms “Jewish believer” and “Jewish Christian.”

1.2. Is the Category “Jewish Believers in Jesus” Theologically Interesting?

Theologically speaking, one could well claim that this category of persons is uninteresting, since there probably were no common theological convictions that were typical of this category and of it alone. One could also argue that the interesting groups or categories are those defined by some common theological convictions. Whether the members of these groups are Jewish or Gentile by origin does not matter, and is difficult to ascertain in any case.

While admitting the latter difficulty, one historical fact seems undeniable for all periods of history subsequent to the earliest decades of the Jesus movement: seen from the Jewish side, *Gentiles* who believed in Jesus and *Jews* who believed in Jesus were perceived—at least by the Jewish leadership—as belonging to quite different categories. Jewish believers in Jesus were perceived as *apostates* in a way Gentile believers were not. Seen from this perspective, the question of ethnicity was a question of the utmost theological significance. Even if Jewish believers should want to regard their Jewish origin as of no consequence, they were hardly permitted to do so by their Jewish relatives and friends.

There is hardly anyone who doubts that from very early on the Jewish as well as the Christian leadership tried to establish well defined borders between the two communities. Jewish believers crossed this border; seen from the Jewish side they crossed it in the wrong direction. Gentile believers in Jesus either did not cross it or, if they did, they crossed it in the other direction. While this may also have been seen as problematical by Jewish leaders, it would have been another problem altogether. Gentile believers were not and could never be apostates from the Jewish people.

We are thus not imposing a modern construction on history when we single out Jewish believers in Jesus as an interesting category of persons. Precisely because of their ethnicity, they were perceived from the Jewish side as a problematic category of believers in Jesus. From the (Gentile) Christian side, they were perceived as either special or problematic or both.¹⁵ The Jewish believers themselves could, by the very nature of things, hardly be totally unaffected by these outside

¹⁵ An early writer like Justin admits that there are Gentile Christians who do not recognize Jewish believers who practice a fully Jewish lifestyle as good Christians. He himself does so, however. Later writers like Epiphanius and Jerome criticize otherwise orthodox “Nazoreans” because they observe the Law. For details and references, see below chapters 15 and 17.

evaluations. As believers in Jesus they had, in one way or other, to relate to the fact of their Jewishness. They were hardly ever allowed not to do so. In the words of Burton L. Visotzky: “They just don’t fit very neatly; they never did.”¹⁶

In saying this, we are mindful of the recent criticism of the classical paradigm of the “parting of the ways.”¹⁷ The critics of this paradigm are right to point out that scholars have often taken normative descriptions of the incompatibility of “Christianity” versus “Judaism” found in the texts of religious leaders to be historically accurate descriptions of the realities “on the ground.” We agree that this assumption is misleading. The very fact that religious leadership on both sides found it necessary to enjoin sharp borders again and again is itself eloquent testimony that the border was far from sharp in real life. There were people who crossed the border all the time, apparently in both directions. The border-crossers themselves, however, would probably not have conceived of themselves in these terms. They had no consciousness of crossing a border or being border-dwellers themselves. For example, some Jewish believers in Jesus who maintained a Jewish lifestyle and conceived of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel in very Jewish terms would probably have thought of themselves as fully Jewish and members of the Jewish people, and would, at least sometimes, have felt greater fellowship in destiny with their fellow (non-Christian) Jewish compatriots than with the majority Gentile Christian church. On the other hand, some Gentile Christian Judaizers may not have been conscious of crossing any border other than becoming fully Christian when they adopted Jewish customs and Jewish friends. In fact, many of them may have been Judaizers before they became Christians, and would have seen no reason to quit their “Judaizing” now that they had embraced the Messiah of the Jews. In other words, by speaking of these people as “border-dwellers” or as “border-crossers,” we very much adopt the perspectives of those who wanted to enjoin this border; we adopt, to a certain extent, the perspective of the religious leadership.

There is no reason to deny this. At the same time, it is also a historical fact that in the long run the religious leadership were the “winners,” in that their conception of an intrinsic incompatibility between “Judaism” and “Christianity” heavily influenced realities “on the ground” and was destined to form them to a great extent. Those who crossed the border or who settled on it could hardly be unaware that the emerging and gradually dominant leadership of their respective religious communities defined them as people trying to combine incompatible identities.¹⁸

¹⁶ Burton L. Visotzky, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities in Rabbinic Literature,” in *idem, Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (WUNT 80; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 129–49; quotation at 129.

¹⁷ See especially Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2003).

¹⁸ The classic formulation of this from the Christian side is Jerome’s saying about the Ebionites, aka Nazoraeans: “Since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are nei-

The normative views of religious leadership were not lost on “neutral” outside observers either. Celsus in the 170s seems not to have any problem in distinguishing Jews from Christians, in spite of the fact that he knew that many Christians were ethnic Jews. He seems to have taken for granted, however, that when Jews became believers in Jesus they abandoned their ancestral laws. This picture may be derived from his reading of the New Testament and early patristic writings as well as from experience with contemporary Jewish believers. Had he known of Jewish believers who continued to practice a fully Jewish lifestyle, he would probably have considered them non-typical Christians. This means that the effects “on the ground” of normative definitions should not be underestimated.

But they should not be overestimated either. One could think that by the fourth century the normative, mutually exclusive self-definitions of Jews and Christians had become so clear to everyone that there no longer were any border-crossers or border-dwellers, or at least only very few. But there is eloquent evidence to the contrary through the fourth into the fifth century and even beyond. The “ways” that allegedly “parted” continued to intersect and overlap—they never parted completely.

1.3. Other Closely Related Terms (1): “Jewish Christian,” “Christian Jew”

There is nowadays an emerging consensus among scholars to use “Jewish Christian” (*Judenchrist, judéo-chrétien*) as a designation of ethnic Jews who, as believers in Jesus, *still practiced a Jewish way of life*. A recent statement of this definition by Simon Claude Mimouni runs: “ancient Jewish Christianity is a modern term designating those Jews who recognized Jesus as messiah, who recognized or did not recognize the divinity of Christ, but who, all of them, continued to observe the Torah.”¹⁹ This term can be used as an overarching term to comprise the two categories called Ebionites and Nazoraeans by the patristic writers, and also those unnamed Jewish believers, spoken of by Justin Martyr, who believe Jesus to be the Messiah and practice a Jewish way of life. These Jewish believers are so distinctly characterized in the ancient sources that we need a term for them. It could lead to misunderstandings to coin an entirely new term when a long established term exists. We therefore use “Jewish Christian” (noun) in this book in the meaning defined by Mimouni; while our term “Jewish believer in Jesus” also includes those Jewish believers who did not keep a Jewish lifestyle. The latter are sometimes called “Christian Jews,” as distinct from the Jewish Christians. In this case, however, there is no established usage to support such a definition of “Christian Jew,” and we will therefore normally avoid this term. The context will make plain when we speak of Jewish believers in a comprehensive sense, and when we call

ther Jews nor Christians” (*Epist. 112.13*, here quoted after A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* [NovTSup 36; Leiden: Brill, 1973], 201.)

¹⁹Cf. note 2.

someone a Jewish believer because we are not sure s/he was also a Jewish Christian (i.e., practiced a Jewish life-style).²⁰

1.4. Other Closely Related Terms (2): “Judaizer”

The problems with the terms “Judaizer” and “Judaizing” are somewhat different. This term is rarely attested in pre-and non-Christian texts, but occurs frequently in Christian writers. The verb “to Judaize” was coined in analogy to other verbs of the same type, e.g., the verb “to Hellenize.” When a non-Greek (a non-Hellene) began to behave as if s/he were a Greek, the person was said to “Hellenize.”²¹ This means that only non-Greeks could Hellenize, not the Greeks themselves. The element of *imitating somebody else* is integral to the meaning of the verbs of this group, hence the natural members of a group or nation cannot be said to imitate themselves. Accordingly, when a non-Jew began to behave as if s/he were Jewish, s/he would be said to “Judaize.” Gentiles could Judaize, not Jews. This understanding of the term implies that when Christians are said to Judaize, these Christians are of Gentile, not Jewish origin.²² Christian Judaizers are therefore not included in our definition of Jewish believers.

But there are three provisos to be made. *Firstly*, in periods and in areas where it was commonly taken for granted by Christians that Jews who believed in Jesus ought to abandon their Jewish way of life, Jewish believers in Jesus who did not do so could sometimes be included in the term “Judaizers.” Applied to Jewish believers, the term would acquire a somewhat extended meaning: that of Christians behaving as if they were still Jews. We shall have to keep this possibility in mind, especially when we encounter the term in fourth and fifth century writers. *Secondly*, Gentile Judaizers who took their “Judaizing” to the point of actual conversion to Judaism are sometimes included among the Judaizers in early Christian texts. If these Gentiles also believed in Jesus, they would probably not be recognized as legitimate converts to Judaism by the local Jewish community, but might well consider themselves to have become members of the Jewish people. In our study of Jewish believers, this group remains a border case, reminding us that no clear-cut definition is able to correspond to the rather fuzzy realities “on the ground.” *Thirdly*, Gentile Christian Judaizers are not included in our term “Jew-

²⁰ As was said above, since there is no adjective corresponding to Jewish believers in Jesus, we will use “Jewish Christian” as an adjective applying to all Jewish believers.

²¹ There were also other examples of this type of verb, e.g., κιλικίζειν, “to adopt the manners of the Cilicians” [to be cruel and treacherous or to cheat someone]; φοινικίζειν, “to adopt the manners and customs of the Phoenicians,” etc. For a full review, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, “‘Ιουδαΐζειν,’ ‘to Judaize,’” in Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 31; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 175–97. Here and in the following I am very much indebted to this fine study.

²² See now also Michele Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 13; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), esp. 3–4.

ish believers,” but they are not irrelevant to the history of the Jewish believers. By their very existence the Christian Judaizers tell something significant about the conditions prevailing at the “border” between Jews and Christians. One could ask, for example, what role models Gentile Christian Judaizers would have had for their Judaizing? One obvious suggestion would be that these role models were Jewish Christians. There is also evidence that some Jewish believers tried to persuade Gentile believers to get circumcised (if male) and to adopt a Jewish lifestyle. In many cases the existence of Gentile Christians who “Judaized” should be taken as indirect evidence of Jewish believers who, actively or passively, encouraged them to this practice.

Jewish Christians and Gentile Judaizers would have one important thing in common: neither group respected a border which the leadership on both sides vehemently tried to enforce. They found themselves in the same officially declared no-man’s land, although they came to it from opposite directions.

1.5. What do We Mean by “Jewish”? Whom do We Consider a “Jew”?

This question is not easily answered in very precise terms. It would be anachronistic, at least for the first half of our period, to give the current halakic answer, namely, that a Jew is a person born by a Jewish mother or a person converted to Judaism according to rabbinic halakic procedure. The matrilineal principle of Jewish descent was established sometime during our period, but was probably not regarded as valid at the period’s beginning.²³ In any case, whether matrilineal or patrilineal, the genealogical principle in a sense begs the question, since it presupposes that at least some ancestors are simply *known* to have been Jews—otherwise, the principle implies a *regressus ad infinitum*. And the question of the status of the offspring of mixed unions has remained more difficult in reality than halakic theory would allow.²⁴

The question of legitimate conversion of Gentiles to Judaism is also difficult to handle, especially during the period before the fully developed conversion procedures were established. But even after their establishment there is every reason to think that perceptions “on the ground” were at variance with officially sanctioned halakah. What seems to have been a basic criterion for males was having oneself circumcised. From at least the Maccabean period this seems to have been considered a necessary, but not in itself sufficient, condition for male converts to be recognized as true proselytes and full members of the polity of Israel. With circumcision followed the obligation to observe all the Mosaic commandments, not only the optional selection observed by sympathizers and so-called Godfearers. It

²³On this, see Cohen, *Beginnings*, 263–307. It is uncertain at what date the matrilineal principle was introduced by leading rabbis. It is certain that it was only gradually accepted, and that opposition against it among the rabbis remained for a long time.

²⁴See on this whole problem Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

is therefore misleading to regard circumcision as just one among several Jewish customs to be observed or not observed at choice by people with a leaning towards Judaism. Paul makes this point in no uncertain terms: “I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the whole Torah” (Gal 5:3). Getting circumcised changes one’s basic status with regard to all the other commandments of the law. One is no longer outside the people of Israel; one is inside, and therefore has to relate to the entire law, not just Noahide or other commandments considered valid for all people. Jews were not alone in being circumcised in antiquity, but they were unique in making this their most distinctive and indispensable marker of national identity. Therefore “the circumcision” (*ἡ περιτομή*) is often used as a short and sufficient reference to the Jewish people,²⁵ while the Gentiles are referred to as “the foreskin” (*ἡ ἀκροβυστία*).²⁶ When Ignatius wants to say that it is better to hear Christianity from a Jew than Judaism from a Gentile, he phrases it: “It is better to hear Christianity from the circumcised than Judaism from the foreskinned” (Ign. *Phld.* 6.1).

But how were female converts to Judaism recognized as such? The lack of a clear answer to this question may have prompted the development of a new element in the conversion rites; the proselyte’s immersion. The date at which this rite was “instituted” as obligatory for women as well as men is disputed. Perhaps this question is formulated on a wrong premise, that proselyte immersion was “instituted” at a specific point in time. In the life of a proselyte there always had to be a first immersion by which the proselyte for the first time in his/her life was made ritually clean. One could well imagine that this first immersion was gradually invested with more significance, and thus became an integral part of the conversion ritual through an extended process rather than by a sudden halakic decision. In any case, female converts to Judaism are well attested in the ancient sources even if the exact procedure by which they were recognized as such is not. There may have been local as well as temporal variations, and there may have been doubtful borderline cases.

While the question of how one *became* a Jew, if one were not born Jewish, had its complications, the question of how one *ceased* to be a Jew was also difficult. Through intentional or unintended *assimilation*, offspring of Jews with impeccable Jewish ancestry would sometimes no longer consider themselves Jews and would no longer be so perceived by others.²⁷ This phenomenon is of special relevance when we consider Jewish believers, since assimilation into mainly Gentile Christian communities and consequent loss of Jewish identity would be a likely prospect, at least for the children and grandchildren of such Jewish believers.

²⁵ Acts 10:45; Rom 2:26–27; 3:30; 15:8; Gal 2:7–9, 12; Eph 2:11; Phil 3:3; Col 3:11; 4:11, etc.

²⁶ Acts 11:3; Rom 2:26–27; 3:30; Gal 2:7; Eph 2:11; Col 3:11.

²⁷ That this was not a rare phenomenon in the Jewish Diaspora, is emphasized by Gideon Bohak, “Ethnic Continuity in the Jewish Diaspora in Antiquity,” in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (ed. J. R. Bartlett; New York: Routledge, 2002), 175–92.

While we want to take full account of these difficulties with the term “Jew” and “Jewish,” none of them destroy the basic fact that “Jew” remains a meaningful term. Since the latter part of the Second Temple period, Jews in general have had little doubt about who were Jews and who were not. The doubtful cases referred to above may have made the borderline somewhat blurred at times, but did not eliminate it. And there were times when Jewish or Roman authorities had to decide with great precision who was Jewish and who was not, e.g., when the *fiscus iudaicus* was imposed under Vespasian, or when the Jewish patriarch levied taxes from the Jews of the Diaspora. There was thus a certain juridical “pressure” on communities as well as individuals, to define who was “in” and who was “out.”

A special case that was recognized as a difficult border case already in antiquity was that of the Samaritans. As descendants of the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom—although perhaps of mixed ancestry—Samaritans were, biblically speaking, descendants of the House of Jacob. In the New Testament, Matthew and John clearly exclude Samaritans from Israel; Luke, on the other hand, and Justin after him, include them in the wider concept of Israel or the House of Jacob, and explicitly treat them as not Gentile. This probably reflects similar uncertainty about their exact status among contemporary Jews. In this volume we follow the lead of Luke in commenting briefly upon Samaritan believers in Jesus as part of our topic, though a very marginal one.

The bottom line regarding Jewish identity, then, is that people who considered themselves Jewish and were considered to be Jewish by the Jewish community were Jewish. It seems fitting and right that the final “power of definition” should lie with the (different) Jewish communities themselves. According to this principle, we consider Gentile believers who, as part of their conversion to faith in Jesus, accepted circumcision and a Jewish way of life as representing a border case, not as being “Jewish believers” in the strict sense, since they would probably not have been recognized as legitimate Jewish proselytes by the local Jewish community.²⁸

1.6. What do We Mean by “a Believer in Jesus”?

(1) On the level of doctrine we want to include any type of Christology that accords a unique role to Jesus as the Messiah or the end-time, final Prophet, or any other role that makes him decisive as a saving figure. We will refrain from

²⁸It was clearly otherwise with proselytes whose conversion to Judaism was recognized prior to their coming to faith in Jesus. The book of Acts is quite clear on this point. When Peter addresses “Jews and converts to Judaism” (*Ιουδαῖοι τε καὶ προσήλυτοι*) from Rome on the day of Pentecost, he is not addressing Jews and Gentiles, but two categories of Jews (2:10–11). One of the “Hellenistic” Jewish believers chosen to be one of the seven leaders according to Acts 6:5 was “Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism” (*προσήλυτον*). By including such people in our definition of Jewish believers, we are thus following the precedent of our sources.

using heavily loaded normative terms like “orthodox” and “heterodox” when we characterize the faith and praxis of Jewish believers.

(2) On the social level, we have to relate in one way or other to the phenomenon of conversion. “Christians are made, not born.”²⁹ In the entire pre-Constantinian period, there was a strong consciousness among believers in Jesus, Gentile or Jewish, that their status as believers was not something they had been born into. Instead, it was the result of their own free choice. This consciousness was so deeply engrained that it persisted also when and where the “born” Christians were in the majority. In other words, the “normal” Christian was a convert, someone who had changed his/her religious affiliation. While this might be the “normal” Christian, being a convert was certainly not considered “normal” in society in general. People were expected to abide by the religious traditions of their ancestors. Changing one’s religious loyalties was frowned upon and would easily draw accusations of religious treason. If the “normal” Christian was a convert, it also means that viewed from the outside, the normal Christian was an apostate.

The reason we mention this rather obvious fact is in order to highlight the role that is played by such categories as conversion and apostasy in scholarly literature. For scholars rooted in the Christian tradition, conversion to Christianity is normally seen as an interesting and positive phenomenon, and is often approached from the angle that normative Christian doctrine establishes for such events: a convert is someone who has become convinced of the truth of the faith to which he or she converts. Conversions away from Christianity, e.g., to Judaism, are more often seen as anomalies that require other types of explanations. Scholars rooted in the Jewish tradition tend, in a similar way, to take the normative viewpoints of their own tradition more or less for granted. A Jew becoming a believer in Jesus after “the parting of the ways” is seen by definition as a deviant person, and often also as an apostate. This means that, from a Jewish point of view, the reasons for conversion to faith in Jesus are sought in the non-rational and often pathological dysfunctions of the human psyche. Converts to Christianity are regarded as divided or haunted souls, as obsessed by Jewish self-hate, as simple traitors or plain opportunists, and almost universally as having ulterior motives.

There are two remarks to be made with respect to this problem. (1) There is no reason why the historian should simply accept the normative definitions of clear-cut religious boundaries established by religious leaders among Jews and Christians. According to these definitions, and only according to these definitions, was it an intrinsic impossibility to combine Jewish and Christian identity. By their very existence, Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile Judaizers call these definitions into question. It is only when these definitions are taken for granted that Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile Judaizers stand out as anomalous, as

²⁹ *Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani.* Tertullian, *Apol.* 18.4.

trying to combine the incompatible, or as psychologically odd. (2) The “sincerity” of conversion is often assessed by comparison with an “ideal” model, according to which the only sincere conversion is taken to be the one in which an *intellectual conviction* of the *truth* of the new faith or way of life—and this alone—has been the driving force in the conversion process. But several sociologists of religion remind us that this type of conversion is rather the exception than the rule when it comes to “ordinary” conversions. In most cases, factors other than the contents of the new faith or way of life are the primary motivators. Rodney Stark claims that in most cases integration into new social networks is primary, and schooling in and assent to the new faith are secondary.³⁰ If this is taken to mean that the convert’s faith in such cases is insincere, it would mean that most existing religious faith is insincere. In this book we would rather like to “normalize” the phenomenon of conversion and not disqualify most normal conversions as insincere.

(3) With regard to the question of sincerity of faith, historians, like other human beings, have no direct access to the hearts and minds of people. We ought not pass value judgments on whose faith was sincere and whose was not. Instead, we have to stick to what can be observed. In this case, there are two main observable actions: verbal profession of faith, and participation in the external identity markers of believers in Jesus (baptism, common worship, the Eucharist, and the like). There is one phenomenon, however, in regard to which this cautious agnosticism breaks down, even among modern historians: “conversions” resulting from the use of coercion. Much historical experience and plain common sense go together in regarding such conversions as something “outward” only, which is rarely if ever accompanied by any corresponding inner conviction. To a great extent, this was how the ancient observers themselves regarded the matter. Even Augustine, with his *coge intrare*, clearly stated on more than one occasion that one can never produce genuine faith in somebody by the use of coercion alone. At best, moderate use of coercion can create outward conditions for the long-term and difficult task of instructing and persuading people into true and sincere faith. This was the view of the late Augustine; other Christians, among them some of his friends from his young days, were shocked that he could endorse any use of coercion at all.³¹ The best documented case of mass conversion of Jews in our period, brought about by Christian mob violence, occurred in Augustine’s old days. In February 418 on the island of Minorca, the entire Jewish community of some 540 persons accepted baptism and were made Christians. The local bishop of the island, Severus, was clearly apologetic in his report on the incident because he knew that use of force to produce such results was illegal according to

³⁰ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 13–21.

³¹ See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969, repr. 1975), 233–43; and Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970; repr., 1988), 133–53.

imperial law, as well as being frowned upon by many of his fellow bishops.³² We shall return to this incident during the course of this volume. But at this point, our question is simple: Are these 540 converts on Minorca to be included in our concept "Jewish believers in Jesus"? We feel that to do so would be to strain the meaning of "believer" beyond its natural meaning. We rather prefer to call these converts by a term which describes their situation, "converts by coercion." It is important to note, however, that within such groups it often happens that some of the converts, after some time, embrace the new faith or way of life and make it their own. With Jewish converts this means that after some time they may become "believers" in the "normal" meaning of that term. But this at the same time often implies a measure of assimilation into Christian surroundings which makes their status as "Jewish" problematic. In many cases, such "Jewish believers" will be a one—or maximum two—generation phenomenon. In general, the use of different forms of "power" by Christians in the post-Constantinian period, as far as conversion attempts are concerned (directed towards pagans and Jews), will have to be addressed at the appropriate place (cf. chapter 23, section 7).

(4) Finally, there is another interesting border case. It often happens that members of one religious community in times of deep need seek assistance outside the limits of "legitimate" (as defined by their leaders) religious sources for help. In our case, the sources contain stories of officially non-Christian Jews who in time of need sought help by invoking the name and power of Jesus. Are they to be included as believers in Jesus? In the ancient Christian sources they are often regarded as some kind of secret believers, who did not profess their faith publicly because of "fear of the Jews." In some cases this may be a pertinent characterization of their situation, in others not. People who in times of need sought help wherever they thought it might be found—e.g., with Jesus—cannot reasonably be called believers in Jesus. But again, a certain amount of agnosticism on the scholar's part seems advisable. In most cases, we simply cannot evaluate the subjective depth or shallowness of this type of faith. We have to take it for what it is; a not at all uncommon phenomenon on the level of popular religion.

2. Questions of Method and Sources

The ancient sources speak of two kinds of Christians: those of Jewish and those of Gentile origin. In this book we are concerned with the believers in Jesus who were of Jewish origin. We call them Jewish believers in Jesus, or more briefly Jewish believers. The task we have set us in this book is two-fold. Partly, we are out to find as much information as we can *about* Jewish believers in the ancient sources. This is the easiest part, since the sources are usually quite explicit in tell-

³² See the excellent edition of Severus, and study of the document and the incident, in Scott Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

ing when they speak about Jewish—not Gentile—believers. But in addition, we are out to identify some sources, fragments of sources, pieces of exegetical expositions, and the like, that *came from* Jewish believers, were *authored* by them. This part is more difficult. I shall briefly discuss some of the problems involved in recognizing Jewish believers in the ancient sources.

Shaye Cohen asks, “How do you know a Jew in Antiquity when you see one?”³³ His answer is that you can never be absolutely sure.

Jews [in the Diaspora] looked like everyone else, dressed like everyone else, spoke like everyone else, had names and occupations like everyone else, and, in general, closely resembled their gentile neighbors. Even circumcision did not always make male Jews distinctive, and as long as they kept their pants on, it certainly did not make them recognizable.³⁴

In general, people would have known Jews as Jews by some characteristics of their behavior:

If you saw someone associating with Jews, living in a (or the) Jewish part of town, married to a Jew, and, in general, integrated socially with other Jews, you might reasonably conclude that that someone was a Jew. Second, if you saw someone performing Jewish rituals and practices, you might reasonably conclude that that someone was a Jew. Each of these conclusions would have been reasonable, but neither would have been certain, because Gentiles often mingled with Jews and some Gentiles even observed Jewish rituals and practices.³⁵

This would indicate that in our case, the most difficult task of differentiation, with regard to the evidence in the ancient sources, is distinguishing between Jewish believers and Gentile believers who “Judaized” to a lesser or greater degree. It would seem that distinguishing between Jews who believed in Jesus and those who did not should be easier. But even this is difficult enough in some cases, especially in the realm of literature commonly called the Old Testament Pseudepigraphy. To say for sure whether a certain document was originally penned by a non-Christian Jew and then later edited or interpolated by a Jewish (or even Gentile!) believer, or that it was penned in its entirety by a Christian very familiar with Jewish traditions, is often very difficult. Recognizing a Jewish believer in the ancient sources when you meet one may therefore be even more difficult than recognizing a Jew in general.

These difficulties do not necessitate complete agnosticism, however. There is no reasonable doubt that the named and un-named Jewish believers of the New Testament writings in fact were Jewish believers. As a rule, when patristic sources say about some believers in Jesus that they were Jewish, there is no compelling reason to distrust that information. In single cases, like when Eusebius calls

³³The subtitle of chapter 2, pages 25–68 in Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*.

³⁴Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 67.

³⁵Ibid., 67–68.

Hegesippus “Jewish,” this information is clearly inferential, and we may think the basis for the inference is insufficient. There are other similar cases. But in general, there is no reason to systematically distrust information on ethnic background given in the ancient sources. When Gentile believers acted the part of Jews, they were usually taken to task for Judaizing, and the fact that they were not born Jews was often seen as aggravating the sin of Judaizing. In other words: they were known not to be Jewish.

What has just been said is no doubt the easiest part of this matter. But if we were to limit the ancient evidence on Jewish believers in Jesus to those passages in the ancient sources that explicitly speak about them, the story of Jewish believers would be rather slim, and we would no doubt miss out on much relevant evidence. This evidence is of necessity indirect, and therefore it is much more difficult to evaluate and use.

As I have explained, in this book we include among the Jewish believers those Jews who became “ordinary” Christians in a predominately Gentile Christian surrounding. These believers are, almost by definition, not easily distinguishable by their theology. And if no one happens to tell us that this or that person is Jewish by birth, how do we know?

It seems reasonable to assume that Jewish believers would have had a *greater competence in things Jewish* than their Gentile fellow believers. This, of course, is neither an infallible nor a very precise criterion, but it is not without value. In any case, we are not here seeking to establish the identity of specific individuals, but rather to trace the existence of a largely unnamed and anonymous category or group. As it happens, ecclesiastical writers used precisely this criterion in assuming Jewish identity of Christian authors whose theology they found entirely orthodox. We see this in Eusebius when he comments on Hegesippus:

He sets down certain things from the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Syriac [Gospel] and, in particular, from [writings in] *the Hebrew tongue*, thus showing that he was himself *a believer of Hebrew origin*. And he relates other matters as well, on the strength of *unwritten Jewish tradition* (*Hist. eccl.* 4.22.8).³⁶

The criteria followed by Eusebius here—good knowledge of Hebrew and of oral or post-biblical Jewish traditions—appear to be well-founded and probably based on firsthand experience with the situation in the late third and early fourth century. There is no reason to discard these criteria in our own work with the sources. Among the Gentile Christian authors that we know of in the Greek and Latin church, only Origen, Jerome, and a few others knew sufficient Hebrew or Aramaic to be able to make any use of these languages in terms of “etymological” explanations and the like. When this occurs in writers like Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, one has to expect that they rely on sources thatulti-

³⁶ Translation according to Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, *Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea: The Ecclesiastical History and The Martyrs of Palestine* (2 vols.; London: SPCK, 1928; repr., 1954), 1:128.

mately go back to Jewish believers. There might, of course, in the first two or three generations have been some Gentile believers with this kind of linguistic competence and this kind of Jewish scholarship. But given the rarity of such persons in the later period when we can control it, one should not make too much out of this possibility. I suggest that there is a strong *a priori* probability of Jewish Christian origin for Christian texts and traditions that are based on the Hebrew text of the Bible, or that in other ways presuppose a working knowledge of Hebrew/Aramaic. For Jewish but clearly non-Christian traditions, one should always consider the possibility that they were transmitted to Gentile Christians via Jewish believers (see further on this below).

Apart from this cultural-linguistic criterion, some Jewish Christian material in Gentile Christian authors stands out from its context by other fairly objective criteria:

(1) The most simple cases occur when the Fathers explicitly say that some quotation or *theologoumenon* derives from Jewish believers.

(2) Quite often pieces of evidence delimited by the above criteria seem to be deeply embedded in a wider context. This strongly suggests that they form one piece with this wider context, and that this context as a whole is of Jewish Christian origin.

In some cases a whole writing may be seen to be penned by a Jewish believer according to some or all of the above criteria, often supported by other, more specific criteria relevant to that particular writing.

In saying this, I have consciously tried to pinpoint criteria more specific than the general “Jewish” characteristics that are typical of very much of early Christian literature. In his classic monograph *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* Jean Daniélou demonstrated with great erudition that Jewish concepts, Jewish symbols and images, Jewish thought-forms, and Jewish genres and ways of speaking all permeate most of the earliest Christian writings and many of the later second century writings as well.³⁷ The least successful part of his book was its title, suggesting, as the book itself does, that these Jewish materials could be synthesized into one connected and coherent “theology of Jewish Christianity.” As many critics have pointed out, this theology is destined to remain a modern construct. Daniélou might have blunted this criticism if he had given his book a title more in line with its convincing argument—something like “the Jewishness of early Christianity.” What his book brilliantly demonstrates is the near ubiquity of the Jewish heritage in early Christian literature, also in strongly anti-Jewish authors.

This has considerable significance with regard to the history of Jewish believers. But this significance is of a rather general nature. Jewish elements may have entered into the literary productions of Gentile Christian writers by two channels, either (1) directly from non-Christian Jews, or (2) via Jewish believers. In

³⁷Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (vol. 1 of *The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*; trans. J. A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

both cases there may be one or more Gentile Christian middlemen, but at the back end of the line we are bound to find a Jewish source, a Jewish believer or non-believer in Jesus. In a few cases we can document that Gentile Christian authors took Jewish material from non-believing and/or believing Jews. In other cases this cannot be directly documented, but there remains a great *a priori* probability that such was the case. In the case of great scholarly luminaries like Origen and Jerome, direct exchanges with non-Christian Jewish scholars were no doubt natural. With less brilliant, less self-secure Gentile authors, it was probably more natural to prefer Jewish believers in Jesus as their informants on things Jewish. It seems reasonable to take as an *a priori* assumption that much, probably most, of the Jewish heritage in early Christian literature was transmitted to the early church via Jewish believers. Otherwise not easily recognized, they have left this unmistakable trace in the major part of early Christian literature.

In terms of the history of Jewish believers, not much more than the above can be said, based on this general Jewishness of the Christian sources. In this volume, therefore, we will not repeat or augment what Daniélou and others have been able to dig out of the early Christian sources, as far as Jewish traditions are concerned. Instead, we will focus more specifically on those instances in which Jewish Christian authorship of quoted or used sources can be shown to be certain or probable.

What has been said so far applies to literary sources written by believers in Jesus. Concerning sources written by non-believers, pagan writers like Celsus may contain valuable information. The methodological problems raised by the corpus of rabbinic writings are of an altogether different nature. I will here content myself with referring to Philip Alexander's discussion of these problems in his chapter on the rabbinical sources.³⁸

Imperial legislation from Constantine onwards and rulings by church synods may often shed considerable light on the relationships between Jews and Christians in general and the plight of Jewish believers in particular. One simple rule in interpreting such material is that prohibitions of a practice can normally be taken as proof that the practice occurred, and that repetitions of such prohibitions testify to the continued existence of this practice in spite of laws enacted against it.

Because the literary sources taken together present us with a very fragmented picture, it is of great interest to seek, as far as it is possible, to fill in some general traits in the picture by careful use of analogies from better documented periods and areas. Sociologists of religion like Rodney Stark have made interesting proposals concerning the social mechanisms of the growth of the pre-Constantinian Christian movement, based both on the growth rate itself and on analogies of modern movements with comparable growth rates. As it turns out, this method has interesting implications for the question of the extent to which Jews continued to be an important recruitment base for early Christian missions.³⁹

³⁸ See chapter 21 of this book.

³⁹ Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 49–71.

If it is often difficult to recognize a Jewish believer in Jesus in the written sources when you meet one, it is even more difficult to recognize one in the archaeological sources. At present, archaeologists are hard put to establish any hard and fast rules by which archaeological remains may be attributed to Jewish believers rather than Gentile believers or Jewish non-believers in Jesus.⁴⁰ This does not mean, however, that the results of archaeology are of no consequence. Archaeology contains much valuable information on the general relationships that existed between Jews and Christians, especially during the Byzantine period. The general picture supported by such archaeological studies is of consequence for our interpretation of the literary sources, very much along the same lines as the generalizations of the sociologists.

There is a kind of temptation attached to a project like this that attempts to write the history of a group often neglected and marginalized. The temptation is to "make the most out of it," to compensate for earlier neglect by magnifying the dimensions of the phenomenon in question. In this volume we have tried to avoid this temptation and to remain sober with regard to the extent of the phenomenon we are treating.

Finally there is the question of the best way to present our findings. Historians like to present history as good narrative story. In our case, we think the sources are too fragmentary and too difficult to interpret with certainty for that to be possible at the present state of knowledge. We have therefore chosen to present only lesser parts of this history as narrative history, and have treated other parts in a non-narrative, more analytic way, taking single sources or groups of sources by turn.

The final "Conclusion and Outlook" is, accordingly, of a very tentative and necessarily subjective nature, and is not meant to be anything like a definitive synopsis of the history of Jewish believers in our period. Any pretension in that direction would clearly be premature.

⁴⁰ See chapter 22 of this book.

*The Definition of the Terms Jewish Christian
and Jewish Christianity in the
History of Research*

James Carleton Paget

One of the major problems scholars face in studying Jewish Christianity or Jewish Christians is that neither term is witnessed in the ancient sources. These sources do, for instance, speak of Judaizers,¹ a term often associated with the study of Jewish Christians but never straightforwardly of Jewish Christians or of a party or religious entity called Jewish Christianity. We do on occasion meet phrases which come close to these terms. In his Gospel, John speaks of Jews who believed (John 8.31); in Origen we read of Jewish believers (*Cels.* 2.1), and believers who came from Judaism (Origen quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.4); in Eusebius we read of Hebrew believers who had continued from apostolic times (*Hist. eccl.* 4.5.2), and of a Gospel according to the Hebrews (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.5); in Jerome, coming closest perhaps to the term, we hear of the Nazoraeans, who according to Jerome wish to be both Jews and Christians but apparently end up being neither (*Epist.* 112.13)²; and in the church of Santa Sabina there is still visible a fifth century inscription which contrasts the “*Ecclesia ex circumcisione*” with the “*Ecclesia ex gentibus*.³ But none of these are precise equivalents, that is, combinations of the word for Jew and Christian, and what terms are used are never used consistently or to indicate an entity or party with specific views and opinions.⁴ Carsten Colpe’s

¹ See V. Déroche, “Iudaizantes,” *RAC* 19:130–42.

² See also Jerome’s description of the probably fictitious Ebion, supposed founder of the Ebionites, as “semi-christianus” and “semi-judaeus” (*Comm. Gal.* 3.13–14).

³ For a discussion of this inscription see Simon C. Mimouni, “La représentation figurative de l’*ecclesia ex circumcisione* et de l’*ecclesia ex gentibus* dans les mosaïques romaines,” in his *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 25–37.

⁴ Mimouni’s claim that Jerome uses “*iudei christiani*” in *Comm. Zach.* 3.14.9 in a sense approaching “Jewish Christian,” found in his article, “La question de la définition

description of the term “Jewish Christian” as “Wissenschaftssprache” is, then, true insofar as it conveys the novelty of the term in relation to the ancient sources which have given rise to its usage.⁵ When we add to this the fact that the term “Jewish Christian,” in whatever language it appears, is ambiguous, the true extent of our difficulties becomes clearer.⁶

In what follows I shall principally be concerned to say something about the ways in which the term “Jewish Christian” has been defined in the history of research. In the course of the essay I hope to make it clear that from a very early stage in research the term was thought to be a complex one and in need of precise definition, even if some of its most celebrated expositors implied a definition instead of giving one explicitly. I shall show how the study of Jewish Christianity itself gave rise to a number of other related terms whose usage was never consistently employed by scholars. I shall seek to make the obvious point that in part it is definition of the term that has determined other factors in the study of the subject. I shall also attempt to show how there has been no clear resolution on what the term means, thus raising questions about its usefulness and viability. But I wish to begin by saying a little about the question of the origins of the study of the subject.

1. The Origin of the Term “Jewish Christian”

It is traditional in accounts of the history of the study of Jewish Christianity to begin with the work of F. C. Baur. This is the case with Gustav Hoennicke, whose published *Habilitationsschrift* of 1908, *Das Judenchristentum im ersten und zweiten Jahrhundert*, presented one of the earliest *Forschungsberichte* of the subject. It is equally true of Klijn’s much-cited article in *New Testament Studies* of 1973–74,⁷ and of Gerd Lüdemann’s important study of 1983.⁸ There is some

du judéo-christianisme,” in his *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 62, is a misreading of the passage, which deals with those who hope for the restoration of sacrifice, in order that (Jerome says mockingly) instead of Jews becoming Christians, Christians may become Jews (“ut non iudei christiani sed christiani iudei fiant”). On this see James Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” *CHJ* 3:731 n.3.

⁵Carsten Colpe, “Das deutsche Wort ‘Judenchristen’ und die ihm entsprechende historische Sachverhalte,” in his *Das Siegel der Propheten: historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 3; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1990), 39.

⁶For the ambiguity of the term in English, German and French, see Marcel Simon, “Problèmes du Judéo-Christianisme,” in *Aspects du judéo-christianisme. Colloque de Strasbourg, 22–25 avril 1964* (Travaux du Centre d’études supérieures spécialisé d’histoire des religions de Strasbourg; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 1–17, 2. For a thorough discussion of the ambiguities of the German term, both in its substantive and adjectival form, see Colpe, “Das deutsche Wort ‘Judenchristen,’” 39–47.

⁷A. F. J. Klijn, “The Study of Jewish Christianity,” *NTS* 20 (1973–74): 419–43.

⁸Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 1–32. Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 181,

justification for such a decision. Baur's work, as we will note below, set the tone for much of the subsequent debate about Jewish Christianity precisely because in it he attributed to the phenomenon such a significant role in the formation of second century Christianity, and it was to his opinions that scholars reacted (and continue to react) either positively or negatively.

But in strict terms, an account of the history of research would do better to begin at a much earlier point. Baur clearly did have predecessors in the field of the study of Jewish Christianity. For instance, August Neander, himself a convert from Judaism, had, in a number of publications, written on the subject, and it is not unreasonable to think that one of the inspirations behind Baur's work was the well known Neander, even if Baur was to disagree with his (Neander's) more harmonizing reading of earliest Christianity.⁹ Interestingly Adolf Hilgenfeld, who was himself a notable contributor to the study of the subject, and one who was warm-hearted in his praise of Baur,¹⁰ chastised the latter for not paying enough attention to scholars of an earlier period, noting in particular Baur's failure to take sufficient account of the work of Johann Salomo Semler¹¹ who will be discussed a little later.

An indirect indication that Baur inherited a tradition of study is to be found in the fact that he refers to *Judenchristen* without any sense that he is using a term that is new or distinctive, and thus in need of detailed definition. But how early is our evidence for use of the term? The Grimm brothers' dictionary of 1877,¹² after defining it as a Christian term of Jewish origin, notes that the term is used in such a way in the early church, although, unsurprisingly given what we have asserted above, no evidence for such a usage as early as this is provided. The same entry

notes the existence of predecessors to Baur, but does not provide his readers with any information about them or what they said.

⁹ Of his works which bear directly on the subject see August Neander, *Genetische Entwicklung der vornehmsten gnostischen Systeme* (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1818), 361–421; *Paulus und Jakobus: Die Einheit des evangelischen Geistes in verschiedenen Formen* (Berlin: Deckersche Geheime Ober-hofbuchdruckerei, 1822); *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche* (Hamburg: F. Perthes, 1826), especially 80–90 and 602–27; *Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung durch die Apostel* (Hamburg: F. Perthes, 1832), especially 144–61, 283–84 and 293–302. In these works Neander showed a keen sense of many of the issues relating to the study of Jewish Christianity, including its relationship to Paulinism, its development in the second century and its diverse manifestations exemplified in such writings as the Pseudo-Clementines. Many of his observations were to find an afterlife in the opposition to Baur which arose from the 1850s onwards.

¹⁰ On Hilgenfeld and Baur, see Harris, *Tübingen School*, 113–26.

¹¹ Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1875), 193. Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (London: SCM, 1970), 127, acknowledges the fact that Semler had anticipated some of Baur's views in this area, citing in a footnote (n. 175) similar judgments by K. Bauer and M. Werner.

¹² Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Vol. 4; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1877). Unfortunately the new edition of Grimms's dictionary, being undertaken by Hirzel Verlag of Stuttgart, does not yet have an entry for "Judenchrist."

goes on to refer to more popular usage of the term, citing a novel of A. Paul of 1800, *Das Leben Fibels*, where the term is used of “*ein getaufter jüdischer Speculant*” (“a baptized Jewish speculator”—here used polemically), but there is no indication that this reference to a passage in Paul is anything but an example of its use rather than a reference to one of its earliest uses. Other German dictionaries, including *Duden*, are equally unhelpful with regard to the question of origin. In my own researches, which have involved me in, among other things, the reading of a large number of ecclesiastical histories dating back to the seventeenth century, I have come across expressions such as “*jüdischgesinnter Christ*” and “*gläubiger Jude*” from 1730s and 40s,¹³ and the phrase, “*pars Iudeorum Christianorum*,” here in the second edition of J. L. Mosheim’s highly influential *Institutes*, published in 1755,¹⁴ used to describe the Judaizing party who remained discontented even after the resolution of Acts 15. But I first met the term “*Judenchrist*” in the works of J. S. Semler, dating from the 1760s and 1770s.¹⁵ We will have reason to return to Semler, but first let us move away from Germany, so often the birthplace of important critical work on the history of early Christianity, to Britain. Here, intriguingly, it is much easier to discover early uses of the term “Jewish Christian” or “Christian Jew,” not, of course, the precise equivalent of *Judenchrist*, but the term by which *Judenchrist* is usually translated into English. So, for instance, already in 1618, in a letter dated February 14th, written by Sir Dudley Carleton to a certain John Chamberlain, we find the term being used to describe the figure of John Traske who founded a Christian sect which insisted on observing Jewish laws. Carleton writes of “one Trash or Thrash who was first a puritan, then a separatist, and now is become a Jewish Christian, observing the Sabbath on Saterday, abstaining from swines-flesh and all things commaunded in the law.”¹⁶ Usages of the term are intermittently witnessed throughout the century in English, more or less always to refer to those of a Judaizing tendency.¹⁷ But what is perhaps

¹³ For the term “*jüdischgesinnter Christ*” see S. J. Baumgarten, *Auszug der Kirchengeschichte von der Geburt Jesu an Erster Theil* (Halle: J. J. Gebauer, 1743), 460–61, here describing Nazoreans and Ebionites. The same author in the same volume uses the term “*gläubiger Jude*” (see Baumgarten, *Auszug*, 301, 304, 362).

¹⁴ J. L. Mosheim, *Institutum historiae ecclesiasticae antiquae et recentioris libri quatuor* (2d ed.; Helmstadt: Barthold Reuter, 1755), 56. In the English translations of Mosheim, of which there are a number, the Latin here is translated by the English “Jewish Christian.” Unfortunately I have not been able to see a copy of the German edition of the earlier Latin work.

¹⁵ See, for instance, J. S. Semler, *Versuch eines fruchtbaren Auszugs der Kirchengeschichte* (Vol. 1; Halle: C. Hermann Hemmerde, 1773), 37, and *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canons* (Halle: C. Hermann Hemmerde, 1773), Vorrede.

¹⁶ The passage is quoted in David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 23.

¹⁷ For this observation, I am indebted to my colleague, Mr. Scott Mandelbrote. Among other things, he referred me to some manuscripts of Thomas Barlow, dating from ca. 1660, which use the term “Jewish Christian” in the midst of a discussion of the Apostolic Council of Acts 15.

of greatest interest to us is that it is in England rather than Germany that we have evidence of the earliest scholarly engagements with the subject of Jewish Christianity and Christian origins, and that J. S. Semler, a possible source of Baur's ideas, probably had access to these English works.

Only the bare bones of this thesis, which supports a genealogy of ideas which leads from the shores of England to F. C. Baur, can be presented here. A much fuller and more detailed account is found in David Patrick's little cited but informative article in the *Theological Review* for 1877.¹⁸ The two characters to whose work I wish to refer are John Toland and Thomas Morgan. Toland (1671–1722) was an Irishman and a deist who published on a wide range of subjects. Morgan (d. 1743), also a deist, was a Welsh nonconformist minister who lost his charge in 1726.

Toland wrote the earlier work, a tome called *Nazarenus*, first published in 1718.¹⁹ With reference to the New Testament and patristic literature, including the Pseudo-Clementines, Toland argued strongly for the view that in origin Christianity consisted of two parties, the Jewish Christian party or the Nazarenes/Ebionites, characterised by their adherence to Jewish laws, and the Pauline party. These parties reached an amicable agreement at the Jerusalem conference described at Acts 15, and both agreed to preach different gospels to the circumcised and uncircumcised respectively, one essentially law observant (and continuous with Jesus' preaching), the other not (aside from the observance of those laws set out in the apostolic decree recorded in Acts 15). The fact that Paul's Christianity came to dominate the church, and Christian Jews (and Jews in general) were despised and excluded, represented a gross distortion of what was conceived to have been the case at the beginning of Christian history and a failure to take seriously the Christian mission to the Jews and the mission of Jesus himself. Toland played down what some took to be the carte blanche dismissal of Torah observance by Paul in Galatians and Romans, arguing that Paul's utterances there applied to Gentile Christians alone.

Morgan, in his diffuse and haphazard work, *Moral Philosopher: In a Dialogue between Philalethes, a Christian Deist, and Theophanes, a Christian Jew*, published between 1737 and 1740, presented the opposite case, arguing that in essence Jesus had preached a denationalised Judaism, that the original disciples—the Christian Jews, as he termed them—had failed to perceive this, preferring to preach a nationalistic, messianic faith excluding Gentiles,²⁰ and that Paul, with his emphasis on the law-free gospel to the Gentiles, retrieved the most important elements of

¹⁸ David Patrick, "Two English Forerunners of the Tübingen School: Thomas Morgan and John Toland," *Theological Review* 14 (1877): 562–603.

¹⁹ A new edition of this work has been published by Justin Champion (John Toland, *Nazarenus* [ed. Justin Champion; Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1999]) with a full introduction including a detailed discussion of the considerable textual difficulties arising from the fact that there was an edition of *Nazarenus* in French published in 1777.

²⁰ Morgan interestingly saw the best manifestation of their creed in what he took to be the authentic Revelation of John.

Jesus' original message. The Jerusalem conference represented a defeat for Paul and the beginning of a conflict with the apostles which was to cause him difficulties for the rest of his life. The two groups were only brought together under the external pressure of persecution. In their union the Gentile Christians became more like the Jewish Christians "setting up a hierarchy in the Church . . . [a] hierarchy they called the true, visible, Catholic Church, out of which there could be no salvation" (378–379), with Paul's true inheritors, the dissenters who denied the authority of the church, being falsely branded gnostics by the catholic authorities. In this reconstruction of early Christian history, the canon of Scripture is a product of "Catholicism" and, therefore, gives a false view of what is true about Christianity. As Morgan wrote: "If we consider by whom and upon what principles the canon of Scripture was at first collected, revised and published, it is no wonder if it leans strongly towards Judaism, and seems at first sight to connect two opposite and contradictory religions one with another." (441)

Much of the above may seem to have a Bauresque color to it, particularly in relation to the dissertation of Morgan.²¹ Indeed if one follows the debate that in particular the publication of *Nazarenus* inspired,²² we find that many of the fault lines in the subsequent debate about Jewish Christianity gained a sometimes detailed airing both in England, and in Germany.²³ Are we, then, able to posit a direct influence of British opinion upon Germany? A number of observations might point in this direction. First, attention should be drawn to the fact that both Toland's and Morgan's works were widely reviewed in Germany, although, as noted, the latter received more attention.²⁴ Such attention

²¹ For a list of the similarities of Baur with Morgan see Patrick, "Forerunners," 581–87. These include, among other things, the view that Paul and the Apostles represented different perceptions of the Christian gospel, the view that Acts 15 is to be regarded with the deepest suspicion when compared with Galatians 2, the view that Revelation is a Jewish Christian work, and the thesis that the canon is a later formation and reflects a "catholic" disposition. On this last point, however, it should be noted that, unlike Baur, Morgan knows nothing of mediating books in the canon. Toland obviously differs most clearly from Baur (at least the later Baur), in his view of an essentially harmonious relationship between Pauline and Petrine parties (here he is closer to the likes of Ritschl, Lechler and others). Where he came closest to Baur was in his willingness to use the Clementine writings and other patristic sources in his attempts to make sense of an earlier period in the church's history.

²² For a helpful discussion of the response to *Nazarenus* (Morgan's work went relatively unnoticed, at least in relation to that aspect of the work I have highlighted) see Toland, *Nazarenus*, 89–96.

²³ In England see in particular Thomas Mangey, *Remarks upon Nazarenus* (London: William and John Innys, 1718). In Germany, among a large number of responses, see J. L. Mosheim, *Vindiciae antiquae Christianorum disciplinae adversus celeberrimi viri Johannia Tolandi, Hiberni, Nazarenum* (Halle: Barthold Reuter, 1720; and extended in 1722). For further evidence of specifically German interest in the work, see Patrick, "Forerunners," 599–600, who mentions Thorschmid's *Freidenker-Lexicon* where pp. 188–278 are devoted to listing refutations of Nazarenus, including ten from German divines.

²⁴ For German responses to Morgan see Patrick, "Forerunners," 600–601.

accorded to deistic works from England was not uncommon in Germany during the eighteenth century.²⁵ Secondly, it is worth drawing attention to the figure of J. S. Semler.²⁶ In a series of works, Semler argued that at the beginning of Christian origins there were, as Paul implied, two gospels. One belonged to the Jewish Christians, defined as law-observant Christians,²⁷ and represented by the pillar apostles. The other belonged to Paul, the true spiritual gospel. As the spirit of Judaism grew within Christianity, the enmity between the parties grew. Out of them arose a third party, the Catholic. This party sought to discredit the two parties out of which it arose referring to them as Ebionite and Gnostic respectively. The New Testament, Semler argued, was a collection put together by the Catholic party in such a way as to incorporate books belonging to Judaists and Paulinists.²⁸ This observation about the origin of the canon allowed Semler to argue for a more liberal and less absolute approach to the canon of the New Testament, which for him, as for Toland and Morgan, was no more than a list of books. Such a convergence of opinions between Semler, on the one hand, and Toland and (especially) Morgan, on the other, is difficult to regard as coincidental. This view receives added support if we note that Semler was himself an enthusiast for English theology, and that the works of Morgan and Toland were widely known and reviewed in Germany, as previously noted. It is difficult, therefore, to imagine that Semler would not have been acquainted with them. Patrick believes that there is conclusive proof of this in Semler's own autobiography (vol. 1.117), where the author notes that he had been a reviewer for his teacher, Baumgarten's *Nachrichten von einer hallischen Bibliothek* between 1749 and 1751, precisely the time in which a review of *Nazarenus* ap-

²⁵The influence of English deistic thought upon Germany has long been acknowledged. See in particular Kümmel, *History of the Investigation*, 51–61; and Colin Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought: 1778–1860* (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth, 1984), 51–52 and accompanying endnotes. It is interesting to note that the first person to write a serious book about English deism was a German, G. V. Lechler, in his book *Geschichte des englischen Deismus* (Stuttgart/Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'sche Verlag, 1841).

²⁶See Kümmel, *History of the Investigation*, 62–69.

²⁷See, for instance, *Letztes Glaubensbekenntnis über natürliche und christliche Religion* (ed. Chr. G. Schütz; Königsberg: Nicolovius, 1792), 86: “*Juden-Christen behielten Gesetz Mosis, Beschneidung, Sabbat mit in ihren Grundartikeln . . .*” He adds, interestingly, “nahmen auch keine Schriften oder Lehrsätze Pauli an.”

²⁸A. Hilgenfeld gives a helpful outline of Semler's views on the origin of the canon in his *Der Kanon und die Kritik des Neuen Testaments* (Halle: C. E. M. Pfeffer, 1863), 112–19. In particular he points to Semler's *Paraphrasis in Epistolam II: Petri et Epistolam Judae* (Halle: Hemmerde, 1784). Note also G. Hörnig, *Johann Salomo Semler: Studien zu Leben und Werk des Hallenser Aufklärungstheologen* (HBEA 2; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), 197–200, who draws attention to Semler's famous *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canons* (Halle: C. Hermann Hemmerde, 1773) Vorrede, and the earlier “Beiträge zum genauen Verstande des Briefes and die Galater,” in *Auslegung der Briefe Paul an die Galater, Epheser und Philipper* (ed. S. J. Baumgarten; Halle: Gebauer, 1762, 891f), placing Semler's views in the context of his theory of accommodation.

peared in the journal, a review which, given Semler's clear involvement in the production of *Nachrichten*, he could have written.²⁹

The contention of this section of the paper must remain skeletal, but in brief it is this: that the origins of the serious study of Jewish Christianity, and in particular its role in the history of earliest Christianity, are to be located in Britain; that many of the neuralgic points of study were aired either in the works of Toland and Morgan, or in the debate that followed the publication of their books, in particular *Nazarenus*; and that perhaps through Semler, these ideas found their way into the writings of Baur.³⁰ To posit the influence of English deists upon German theologians is not to do something eccentric. Such influence is widely accepted and well-documented. Such a thesis may in turn explain the origins of the German term “Judenchrist”—it constituted a translation either of the term “Christian Jew” or “Jewish Christian,” understood in terms of Jewish converts to Christianity who continued to observe certain Jewish laws (and in the case of Morgan, understood to have an anti-Pauline aspect), both of which appeared in Toland's and Morgan's respective works, and had already appeared in English long before these works.

Of course, much of this is difficult to prove. Patrick's argument, supplemented by some of my own observations, has to contend with a number of silences, including Semler's failure to acknowledge any straightforward debt for his views on Jewish Christianity to Toland or Morgan,³¹ and the possibility that Semler arrived at his conclusions by other means than by reading deists.³² The

²⁹ See Patrick, “Forerunners,” 600–601. Note should also be taken of the fact that a disputation concerning Morgan's *Philosopher* also took place in Halle in 1745, and it is difficult to imagine that the young Semler would not have known about it. Patrick notes that at no point does Semler attribute his views on the twofold gospel and the canon to Toland or Morgan but that this may well have been because English deism was regarded in Germany with considerable suspicion at this time, and it was precisely with their views that Semler was associated.

³⁰ It is interesting to note that Lechler, *Deismus*, who devotes some thirty pages to a discussion of Toland (180–210), and some twenty-six to a discussion of Morgan (370–95), nowhere makes any connection with Baur's views. This is perhaps less odd in relation to his discussion of Toland's work where almost no interest is shown in *Nazarenus*. (Lechler does appear to know the work—witness in this respect his reference to Mosheim's *Vindiciae* at p. 205 n. 6, here in the midst of a discussion of Toland's *Amyntor*.) It is perhaps more surprising in relation to his discussion of Morgan. Here, while most space is given over to Morgan's views on the Old Testament, Lechler does discuss his views on the New Testament, and in particular his views on the origins of the New Testament canon, which seem to have a close affinity with Baur's. Lechler does in fact refer to Baur in a footnote (387 n. 1), but here only to refer to the latter's discussion of Marcion, whose views Lechler sees as close to Morgan's. The matter becomes stranger still when we note that Lechler himself was to engage in a refutation of Tübingen school opinions. Hörnig, *Semler*, also fails to refer to English deistic writings in his discussion of Semler's views on early Christianity and the origins of the canon, and appears not to have read Patrick's article.

³¹ See nn. 28 and 29 above.

³² See Hilgenfeld, *Einleitung*, 189, for the view that Semler's understanding of the origins of the Christian canon can be explained by reference to his Lutheranism rather than anything else.

contention that the terms *Judenchrist* and *Judenchristentum* derive from the English “Jewish Christian”/“Jewish Christianity,” is also problematic in that responses in German to Toland and Morgan do not contain the word *Judenchrist* or *Judenchristentum* (a point which itself may give further support to our contention that the word was not known in German until after the 1740s). In addition, the word *Judenchrist* is not a direct translation of the English “Jewish Christian,” being itself that most German of words, a combination of two substantives. Moreover, terms that seem more obviously to be a translation of the English “Jewish Christian” appear before the time of Semler (“jüdischgesinnter Christ” etc.), and the influential Mosheim, whose reliance upon English writers such as Toland and Morgan is less easy to demonstrate, may show knowledge of the term in the 1750s.

However one assesses the above argument, my main aim in presenting it has been to provide a partial corrective to traditional accounts of the historiography of Jewish Christianity, accounts which often fail to show what interest in the subject existed before Baur began to write. It does, however, remain the case that the dominant figure in the history of the study of the subject is F. C. Baur, even if his views should not be considered as original as some have perceived them.

2. Various Definitions since Baur

It is not my intention to give an account of Baur’s work on Jewish Christianity.³³ What is clear is that in pungent and detailed form he attributed to Jewish Christianity a vital place in what was a “total” account of Christian origins, and that it was precisely the comprehensiveness and the detail of his account that rendered his work so significant. It was Baur who gave lucid expression to the central questions in the study of Jewish Christianity. In this context one recalls in particular his discussion of evidence for the opposition between the Christianity of Paul and that of the apostles, in particular Peter, and especially his use of what he took to be second century literature, in particular the Pseudo-Clementines, in his assessment of this question. One also recalls his attempts to align Ebionite views with those of the earliest Jewish Christians and his attempt to explain the date of individual New Testament writings in relation to their tendency (Jewish Christian, Pauline, Catholic), and to understand the canon as a kind of diplomatic document evidencing the coming together of Jewish and Gentile Christian in the form of early Catholicism. All of this had been hinted at in previous work, as we

³³ Helpful accounts of Baur’s work as it developed from 1831 can be found in Otto Pfleiderer, *The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain since 1825* (London: Swann Sonnenschein & Co., 1890), 224–33; Kümmel, *History of the Investigation*, 126–44; Robert Morgan, “Biblical Classics II: F. C. Baur: Paul,” *ExpTim* 90 (1978–79): 4–9; Harris, *Tübingen School*, 181–237; and Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 1–7.

have shown, but none of it had been expounded with the same lucidity and as part of a unified narrative of Christian development.³⁴

The principal concern of this essay is to discuss the question of the various definitions scholars have adopted in their discussions of Jewish Christianity. Interestingly, Baur, the expositor par excellence, one might think, of the term, does not in any of his works dedicate a detailed discussion to defining it. The term simply appears as a given, assuming, as was implied above, an agreed definition. Implicitly, of course, Baur does define the term, and that definition is in some sense determined by what it opposes, namely Pauline Christianity. Where Pauline Christianity was universal and spiritual (here picking up on a significant aspect of Jesus' own ministry³⁵), Jewish Christianity was particular/national and legalistic. In essence, Jewish Christianity was Judaism plus the belief that Jesus was the messiah (a belief that in its conception was Jewish). As he wrote in his *Paulus*: "The only thing that divided them (Jewish Christians) from the rest of the Jews was the conviction at which they had arrived, that the promised messiah had appeared to Jesus of Nazareth."³⁶ A strong commitment to the Jewish law, in particular circumcision, and the Jewish nation over against the Gentiles, with a concomitant anti-Paulinism, are the central aspects of Jewish Christianity. At times in his narrative, Baur hints at divisions within the body he calls "Jewish Christian," implying the existence of a more liberal wing who did not oppose Paul,³⁷ but this is never fully developed in his later writings where he becomes bolder in his assertion of Paul's opposition to the views of the apostles. Of course, for Baur's view of Christian origins to be convincing, he had often to indulge in arguments from silence in order to prove the anti-Paulinism of a particular document (see especially in this regard his discussion of Revelation), and to

³⁴ Note Harris, *Tübingen School*, 181, who, after admitting Baur's reliance upon predecessors, goes on to state "that he (Baur) presented not just new solutions to individual questions but a new total-view, a comprehensive picture of the situation in the early church, and a new standard by which the New Testament narratives might be appraised."

³⁵ Baur saw Jesus' ministry as evincing, on the one hand, a moral universalism, manifest in particular in the sermon on the mount, and on the other hand, a messianic aspect that was particular and nationalistic. He argued that the messianism constituted the necessary clothing for the moral universalism in order to facilitate the latter's entry into the stream of history. For Baur some of Jesus' followers took the nationalism seriously (the Jewish Christians) while others (the Paulinists) took the universalism to heart. For this see in particular F. C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (trans. A. Menzies; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1878–1879), 1:48–49.

³⁶ F. C. Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine* (Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1875), 43.

³⁷ Baur was more explicit on this point in his article of 1831, F. C. Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christenthums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel petrus in Rom," *TZTh* (1831): 61–206, where he highlights the essential agreement between the apostles and Paul. The same thought is hinted at in Baur, *Paul*, 132–33, but here in a much less obvious way. For Baur Jewish Christianity is essentially monolithic. For the evolution of Baur's views in this regard see Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 3–4.

demonstrate that Jewish Christians changed their opinions, and it is in his discussion of this transformation that he hints at an understanding of Jewish Christianity as in some senses a mentality that went beyond simple legalism and nationalism and bound itself up with a type of moralism, with apocalypticism, a hierarchical view of religion, and an over-reliance on Old Testament categories,³⁸ elements of which were to find their new expression in the catholicism of the second century.³⁹ Baur's attempt to attribute to it a significant role in the formation of catholicism was itself an attempt to associate Roman religion with Judaism, a point that becomes more explicit in some later writers.⁴⁰

Baur's pupil, A. Schwegler, sought in his *Das nachapostolische Zeitalter* of 1846, to radicalize his teacher's views by arguing that the early period of Christian history was essentially Jewish Christian, or as he preferred to term it, "Ebionite" in character and that the catholic church was not formed out of a conflict between Jewish Christianity and Gentile/Pauline Christianity, but rather out of Jewish Christianity itself.⁴¹ This involved Schwegler in a considerable diminution of Pauline Christianity's influence in the early period, and in a correspondingly more complex presentation of the development of Jewish Christianity than that of Baur. Schwegler's definition of the term was, implicitly at least, very general and simply related to everything that was not Pauline. But on occasion, he attempted a more positive definition. So on page 34 of his magnum opus he writes that Jewish Christianity is characterised by the failure to acknowledge the essential and basic difference between Christianity and Judaism, between law and gospel.⁴² Such a broad definition appeared to include in its embrace such figures as Justin Martyr, who had been seen by Baur as marking the transition point be-

³⁸ See in particular his discussion of the epistle to the Hebrews, Baur, *Church History*, 114–21.

³⁹ See Baur, *Church History*, 112–13. In his reconstruction, Paulinism contributes the idea of universalism to the catholic church, "but it was Jewish Christianity which applied the forms of organisation and erected the hierarchical edifice upon this basis." In such a statement there is definite continuity with the work of Thomas Morgan as described above.

⁴⁰ See in particular Paul Wernle, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (trans. G. A. Biemann; 2 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1903), 2:102–3, where he speaks of Roman Catholicism as "from our point of view, the Judaizing of Christianity," and continues, "It is not without reason that the Reformation means a reawakening of St. Paul, the opponent of the Jews." For the thesis that much of nineteenth century German Protestant theology had an anti-Catholic bias, in part inspired by the work of Baur, see John O'Neill, "The Study of the New Testament," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* (ed. Ninian Smart, et al.; 3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3:143–78.

⁴¹ Schwegler's work is discussed by Harris, *Tübingen School*, 198–207.

⁴² "... die Nichtannerkennung eines prinzipiellen und grundwesentlichen Unterschieds zwischen Christlichem und Jüdischem, zwischen Evangelium und Gesetz ist es, was jene Epoche in eigentümlicher Weise charakterisiert, und darum fällt sie auch, alles zusammengenommen, unter dem Gesichtspunkt des Judenchristentums." [A. Schwegler, *Das nachapostolische Zeitalter in den Hauptmomenten seiner Entwicklung* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1846), 34].

tween Jewish Christianity and Catholicism.⁴³ Outside of observance of the law, Schwegler implied that things Jewish Christian could pertain to matters christological, chiliastic, ascetic, moralising and constitutional, and like Baur, he saw many of these things as reemerging in Catholicism.

By the time Albrecht Ritschl came to write the second edition of his *Die Entstehung der altchristlichen Kirche* in 1857, it seemed to him at least that there was a need to look again at the question of defining “Jewish Christianity.”⁴⁴ Interestingly, however, he did not begin by attacking Baur or Schwegler’s definitions of the term. Rather he took as his starting point the definition of A. Schliemann which had appeared in the same author’s work on the Clementines published in 1844.⁴⁵ Schliemann, who had begun his brief discussion of the definition of the term by noting the confusion (*Verwirrung*) that surrounded the term “Jewish Christian” and related concepts such as “Judaizing Christian” or “Ebionite,” defined *judenchristlich* in terms simply of racial origin, i.e., Christians who had once been Jews,⁴⁶ adding, somewhat subjectively, that he understood by a Jewish Christian perspective (*Auffassung*) one in which the Jewish heritage was discernible without being detrimental. Where such a perspective was detrimental, as was the case, in his opinion, with a text like *Hermas*, we would do best to describe that as Judaizing or Judaistic, a term that related to an orientation (*Richtung*) and had no reference to racial origins. For Ritschl such a definition involved, on the one hand, a subjectivity that was difficult to apply in any scientific way,⁴⁷ and on the other hand, the creation of a definition of “Jewish Christian” that would incorporate a figure like Paul as well as Barnabas, and of “Judaistic” that could potentially incorporate Catholic Christianity. Ritschl’s definition of the term took its starting point from the *Epistle of Barnabas* 4.6. Here it is stated by those apparently opposed to Barnabas that the covenant belongs both to them (the Jews) and to us. Ritschl understood this verse to mean that the law given through Moses is also the central element in Christianity (cf. also *Rec.* 4.5; *Hom.* 8.6).⁴⁸ For Ritschl these words, with their insistence on the centrality of Jewish law, brought out most clearly his understanding of the definition of the word in

⁴³ Baur had argued that Justin could not be called Pauline because of his strong interest in the Old Testament. See Baur, *Church History*, 147.

⁴⁴ A. Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altchristlichen Kirche: Eine kirchen- und dogmengeschichtliche Monographie* (2d ed.; Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1857), 104–8.

⁴⁵ Adolph Schliemann, *Die Clementinen nebst den verwandten Schriften und der Ebionitismus: Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Hamburg: F. Perthes, 1844), 371–72, n. 1.

⁴⁶ The term was not to be regarded as referring in any way to what Schliemann called a “Richtung,” i.e., orientation.

⁴⁷ Ritschl, *Entstehung*, 105. Ritschl brings this point out on the next page by asking how the scholar might judge the eschatology of Paul over against that of Revelation. Could one legitimately call one Jewish Christian (and therefore illegitimate) and one Judaistic (and therefore legitimate)?

⁴⁸ “Das Gesetz, welches Gott durch Moses gegeben hat, ist auch das Wesen des Christenthumes” (Ritschl, *Entstehung*, 106).

terms of the identity of Judaism and Christianity.⁴⁹ The terms *Judaistisch* or *Judaismus* were to be used to describe ongoing Jewish influences within the church expressed in ways other than those one would associate with Jewish Christianity as defined above (in this respect, Paul could be conceived of as Judaistic—here the term almost had the sense of “alttestamentlich”).⁵⁰ Ritschl then went on to distinguish between, on the one hand, the apostles and other Christians of Jewish origin who continued to observe the law out of a sense that it was appropriate for Jews so to behave but accepted the law-free Gentile mission associated with Paul, and other strict Jewish Christians who took the view that a law-free mission to the Gentiles was anathema (what Ritschl termed “pharisaic Jewish Christians”) and who appeared more clearly to comport with his definition of the term. These people could only conceive of a Christianity that was nothing other than national. The successors of these two groups are seen in the Nazarenes and the Ebionites respectively, the latter of whom were in part influenced by Essenes, and both of whom ceased to have any real influence on church affairs after the Bar Kokhba revolt. In essence, then, Jewish Christianity conceived of in this narrower sense, rather than being a central lynchpin in the development of the catholic church, was from a relatively early stage a sect without real influence. The rise of catholicism in the middle of the second century could more easily be accounted for by reference to tendencies within Pauline/Gentile Christianity.⁵¹

Ritschl’s attack upon Baur, Schwegler and others provided an alternative and popular route towards understanding the origins of the church, and in turn, hinted at a more complex perception of Jewish Christianity, conceived of in heretical and orthodox terms, in terms of a mild (*mild*) and strict (*schroff*) form of the phenomenon.⁵² Certainly Ritschl’s thesis did much to question the idea that there was a united Jewish Christian front, which, though able to develop, was monolithic. According to him, there were different parties of Jewish Christians that differed on various points. This point, for instance, was to be accepted even by those who were more sympathetic to Baur’s ideas, like Hilgenfeld.⁵³ Moreover, by distinguishing what was “judenchristlich” and what was “judaistisch” in the way

⁴⁹ Ritschl did not limit this definition to born Jews but to Gentiles who entertained such opinions as well. See Ritschl, *Entstehung*, 107.

⁵⁰ Ritschl, *Entstehung*, 107. After noting that Paul is strongly ‘judaistisch’ insofar as he sees Christianity as the true fulfilment of Judaism, he goes on to note that the difference between Paul and the Jewish Christians lies in the former’s placement of Christianity in continuity and agreement with the divine promise but in opposition to the Mosaic law.

⁵¹ A helpful summary of Ritschl’s views is found in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 12–16.

⁵² Such a distinction, which was to become standard, had already been anticipated by, among others, Neander and K. Hase. See in particular the latter’s *Die Tübinger Schule: Ein Sendschreiben an Herrn Dr. Ferdinand Christian Baur* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1855), 63–64.

⁵³ Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Judentum und Judenchristenthum: Eine Nachlese zur Ketzergeschichte des Urchristenthums* (Leipzig: Fues’s Verlag, 1884). For a discussion of Hilgenfeld’s contribution to the study of Jewish Christianity, see Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 18–21.

he did, Ritschl allowed for the possibility that things Jewish could be mediated to Christianity through individuals, like Paul (Baur took such a non-Jewish view of Paul that this conclusion should be regarded as significant), who need not themselves be described as Jewish Christian (Paulinism, the phenomenon with which Jewish Christianity was most frequently contrasted by the Tübingen School, had within itself Jewish elements). By the same route Ritschl narrowed considerably the definition of the term “Jewish Christian.” What he wished to term “judaistisch” would have been termed “judenchristlich” by Baur and in particular Schwegler with their implicitly broader understandings of the term.

Some criticized Ritschl’s definition. So, for instance, Uhlhorn in his article entitled “*Judenchristen-Judenchristenthum*” in Herzog’s *Enzyklopädie der protestantischen Theologie*,⁵⁴ stated that Ritschl had misused the word *judaistisch* when he gave it the meaning “*alttestamentlich*.” In fact this term, together with the less good word *jüdenzend*, were better understood as relating to what Uhlhorn termed, a “false intermingling of the Jewish and the Christian,” “false” because it incorporated a misconceived emphasis on the unity of Judaism and Christianity at the expense of what was new in the latter.⁵⁵ On account of this Uhlhorn preferred to give *Judenchristenthum* (sic) the broadest definition “so that it portrays that view of Christianity which above all else emphasises the continuity of the Old and New Testament revelation with the result that under the umbrella of the term Jewish Christianity *the most diverse* tendencies can be placed, ranging from those who in no way underestimate progress as well as continuity [1 Peter and the epistle of James are cited as examples of this type of Jewish Christianity] to those who see continuity in terms of an absolute identification (between Judaism and Christianity understood)” (the Ebionites and the Pseudo-Clementines are cited).⁵⁶ In this respect, it was legitimate, as Ritschl and others had argued, to distinguish between, for instance, a mild and a harsh Jewish Christianity.

In a sense Uhlhorn’s definition raised more questions than it answered. While he was right to question Ritschl’s understanding of the term *judaistisch* (Uhlhorn’s own interpretation comported more with general usage), his own understanding of *judenchristlich* seemed vague and not fully developed. Evidently Uhlhorn was trying to broaden the meaning of the term relative to Ritschl. But in so doing he was not clear, as Ritschl had been, about how precisely to define continuity between the Old Testament and the New, the central plank in his own definition. Also lurking beneath the surface of his definition was, as with many of his

⁵⁴ G. Uhlhorn, “*Judenchristen-Judenchristenthum*,” *Enzyklopädie der protestantischen Theologie* (Vol. 7; Stuttgart and Hamburg: Rudolf Besser, 1857), 132–35.

⁵⁵ “‘Judaistisch’ always contains within itself the sub-category of a false mixture of Judaism and Christianity and is therefore better used for those forms of Jewish Christianity which through a false emphasis on the unity of Judaism and Christianity impair the element of the new in the latter” (Uhlhorn, “*Judenchristen-Judenchristentum*,” 132–33; my translation).

⁵⁶ Uhlhorn, “*Judenchristen-Judenchristentum*,” 132–33; my translation and italics.

predecessors, a view of what constituted an acceptable or unacceptable degree of Jewish influence within a text or writer.

Harnack, who like Ritschl before him, wished to play down the significance of Jewish Christianity for the history of the church (he would describe it as a “Gegenstand der Neugierde” in the original German),⁵⁷ seemed to be responding to such broad definitions as those provided by Uhlhorn and others. He stated in this regard that Christianity’s claim to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises did not in any sense align it with Judaism and thus with Jewish Christianity. “To describe the appearance of the Jewish, Old Testament, heritage in the Christian faith . . . by the name Jewish Christianity must, therefore, lead to error and it has done to a very great extent,” he wrote.⁵⁸ When Christians called themselves the true Israel, they were indulging in a claim that was there from the beginning and could only be denied by a view that was alien to Christianity itself. He continued: “The eschatological ideas of Papias were not Jewish Christian, but Christian, while, on the other hand, the eschatological speculations of Origen were not Gentile Christian, but essentially Greek.”⁵⁹ The Montanists were not Jewish Christians but simply afficianados of the Old Testament. To view the appropriation of the Old Testament religion as Jewish Christian was arbitrary, for Christianity had laid claim to the Jewish heritage. It would, claimed Harnack, be quite wrong on these grounds to call a text like the *Didache* Jewish Christian.⁶⁰ For Harnack, the application of the term Jewish Christian was only appropriate when applied to those Christians “who really maintained in their whole extent, or to some degree, the national and political forms of Judaism and the observance of the Mosaic law in its literal sense, as essential to Christianity, at least to the Christianity of born Jews, or who, though rejecting these forms, nevertheless assumed a prerogative of the Jewish people even in Christianity.”⁶¹ Such a perspective was opposed, not by Gentile Christianity, but by Christianity itself insofar as it is conceived of as universalistic and anti-national in the strict sense of the term.⁶²

Similar observations, although slightly differently conceived, appeared in Hort’s lectures on “Judaistic Christianity”—not “Jewish Christianity”—published posthumously as a book in 1904.⁶³ Hort began his introductory lecture by

⁵⁷ A. Harnack, *The History of Dogma* (7 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1894–1899), 1:290: “From the standpoint of the universal history of Christianity, these Jewish Christian communities appear as rudimentary structures which now and again, as objects of curiosity, engaged the attention of the main body of Christendom in the east, but could not exert any important influence on it, just because they contained a national element.”

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1:288.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1:288.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1:287, n. 1.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1:289. In this regard Harnack quoted a passage from the *Clementine Homilies* XI.26, where it is stated “if the foreigner observes the law he is Jew, but if not, he is a Greek.”

⁶² For Harnack Christianity is the religion of Israel perfected and spiritualised.

⁶³ F. J. A. Hort, *Judaistic Christianity* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904). Note the review of the original lectures by W. F. Slater in *The Expositor* 1895B: 128–50.

distinguishing his own use of the term from at least three other uses. “Judaistic Christianity,” Hort argued, was not to be confused with a Christianity that was “Judaistic in tone and spirit only.”⁶⁴ The whole course of Christian history, he stated, was full of beliefs, practices and institutions that were based on a misunderstanding of the Gospel dispensation, upon “the beggarly spirits” against which Paul warned his congregations. “Such a Christianity, however, though strictly analogous to the Judaistic Christianity of the apostolic age, is not itself strictly, i.e., historically, Judaistic.” Judaistic Christianity was equally not to be likened to those forms of Christianity which arose “from a recognition of the authority of the Old Testament unaccompanied by a clear perception of the true relation of the Old Testament to the New.”⁶⁵ Nor could Judaistic Christianity be associated with forms of Christianity that accord significance to the Old Testament (that was the mistake of Marcion). Rather Judaistic Christianity, in Hort’s view, should be used to refer to that form of Christianity which falls back to “the Jewish point of view,” i.e., to that opinion which ascribed perpetuity to the Jewish law rather than recognising its limited role until Christ, the universalist, came (hence the term “Judaistic” understood in a way not dissimilar to Uhlhorn). “Judaistic Christianity, in this true sense of the term might with at least equal propriety be called Christian Judaism.”⁶⁶ Jewish Christianity thus defined was a phenomenon that, broadly speaking, was confined to what Hort termed “the first ages of the church,” and of no particular significance in the history of the church’s development.

Harnack’s and Hort’s efforts at defining Jewish Christianity, hinted, as had Ritschl’s before them, at a need to exclude from the evidence of Jewish Christian influence the presence of apparently Jewish ideas in the churches. These ideas were often associated with the development of catholicism in the second century, but were also associated with the fact of Christian reliance upon the Hebrew Scriptures and phenomena like apocalyptic. Indeed such influence was accepted in many cases as resulting from the ongoing influence of Judaism upon Christianity.⁶⁷ Such a view of what was Jewish Christian hinted at a broader understanding of the term than they were willing to countenance. Such restrictive approaches to the definition of the term, while not always precisely clear themselves, highlighted the fact that many scholars had, either consciously or unconsciously, operated with broader understandings of the term.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, 1.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁷ Among many others, this view is represented by P. Wernle, *Die Anfänge unserer Religion* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901).

⁶⁸ This point is explicitly made by W. R. Sorley, *Jewish Christians and Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1881). After defining the term as used by the Tübingen School as “a distinct party or sect of Christians, according to whom Christianity was conditioned by, or was indeed a mere supplement to, the national ideas and legal observances of Judaism” (14), he goes on to criticise Baur’s designation of Hebrews as

Something of the confused state of affairs in relation to the question of definition was reflected in Gustav Hoennicke's work of 1908.⁶⁹ After his helpful review of research on Jewish Christianity from the time of Baur to his own day, Hoennicke noted that difficulties surrounded the term,⁷⁰ as they did the terms "Ebionitismus" and "Judaismus." He began by outlining a number of definitions of "Jewish Christianity" that had been used up to his time. He criticised Baur for seeing Jewish Christianity as simply the opposite of Paulinism—like Ritschl and others before him he noted that Paul's theology had not escaped the influence of Judaism. He criticised a simple ethnic definition on the grounds that it was difficult to define what was characteristic of the theology of Jews who became Christians. And he also accused those who saw Jewish Christianity as marked by a certain national affinity with Judaism of being vague.⁷¹ Hoping to clarify matters a little, he went on to present his own definition. Accepting the view that Jewish Christians were converted Jews, he argued that such people believed that all salvation could only be mediated through Judaism, thus preserving the link between religion and nationality.⁷² But rather than calling the reality so defined "Judenchristentum," he called it "Judaismus," appearing in part at least to echo the views of Uhlhorn. "Judenchristentum," he went on to argue, should be used to describe the ongoing influence of Judaism upon Christianity, particularly where this was reflected in a heavy emphasis on what he termed Old Testament-Jewish elements (*altestamentlich-jüdische Elemente*). Of course, he continued, such a definition could be applied to all of early Christianity at the beginning and so the term should be narrowed down to refer to manifestations of Christianity in which the Old Testament-Jewish element did not correspond to the essence of the Gospel.⁷³ Hence the book's two main chapters discuss "Judaismus," and the influence, in broader terms, of Judaism on Christianity. At the end of the discussion of the latter Hoennicke can affirm the extraordinary importance of Judaism's influence upon early Christianity, and of its role in the formation of early catholicism, con-

Jewish Christian, and Schwegler's definition of *Barnabas*, the Ignatian Epistles, and Justin by the same term, by noting that "they must be understood as using the word "Jewish Christian" in another than its technical sense as already defined" (56).

⁶⁹ G. Hoennicke, *Das Judenchristentum im ersten und zweiten Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1908).

⁷⁰ "Schwierigkeiten bereitet der Ausdruck 'Judenchristentum'" (Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 17).

⁷¹ "Indes, diese Bestimmung ist zu weitschichtig. Denn schon das ist zu beachten, dass auch dem Paulus Israel stets doch das auserwählte Volk geblieben ist" (Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 18).

⁷² "... alles Heil kann nur durch Vermittlung des Judentums gewonnen werden, dass sie bei Verkündigung des Evangeliums Jesu das Jüdische Nationalprinzip geltend machen und das Band zwischen Religion und Nationalität festhielten" (Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 18).

⁷³ "... im Grunde von Judenchristentum nur da gesprochen werden kann, wo altestamentlich-jüdische Elemente innerhalb des Christentums auftreten, welche dem Wesen des Evangeliums nicht entsprechen" (Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 18).

ceived of in terms of a certain type of moralism, of hierarchy and ritualism, eschatology, and an excessive use of the Old Testament.⁷⁴ In this respect, Hoennicke argued, Baur had been right to emphasise the influence of Judaism upon early Christianity.⁷⁵ Where he had been wrong was to ascribe such influences to Jewish Christianity, as he, Baur conceived it. What Baur had understood as Jewish Christianity was in fact “Judaismus” which had ceased to have any real influence relatively early in Christian history. What Hoennicke had granted to Baur with one hand, he had taken away with the other.⁷⁶

Hoennicke’s discussion of the definition of Jewish Christianity might be said to act as a kind of summary of the discussion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It reflected a growing tendency among scholars to move away from a view of the phenomenon as a highly influential force in the formation of what some termed catholicism. Among other things, an essentially narrow interpretation of the term facilitated such a view, one which tended to play down anti-Paulinism, at least as an explicit aspect of the definition, and play up the concepts of “nationality” and law. Out of this emerged a more diverse movement than Baur and his followers had been willing to countenance. At the same time Hoennicke’s discussion highlighted an ongoing confusion over terminology in particular in relation to the terms *Judenchristentum*, *Judaismus*, and *Ebionitismus*. So what Hoennicke defined as *Judaismus* was, more or less, what Ritschl and Harnack had called *Judenchristentum*. But what Hoennicke called *Judenchristentum* seemed not so far from catholicism, even if his use of the term was not strictly consistent.⁷⁷ Moreover, and perhaps most significantly, Hoennicke’s discussion reflected a genuine consciousness on the part of scholars of the ongoing importance of Jewish categories for developing Christianity, and a genuine anxiety about this fact which involved some scholars in subjective judgments as to what level and what type of Jewish influence could be understood as deleterious. When Hoennicke defined *Judenchristentum* in terms of a Jewish influence on Christianity which in some sense affected the essence of Christian faith, what precisely did he mean, especially when he was not referring to Jewish understandings of nationhood and the law?⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 369–70. Note in particular Hoennicke’s discussion of the Apologists from 371–72.

⁷⁵ “Damit ist die Bedeutung des jüdischen Einflusses erwiesen. Ferdinand Christian Baur hatte es also vollkommen Recht, wenn er betonte, dass bei der Betrachtung der Entwicklung des Urchristentums die jüdischen Einflüsse sehr hoch zu taxieren seien” (Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 373).

⁷⁶ “Die national-jüdische Auffassung des Evangeliums wurde, wie wir gezeigt haben, verhältnismässig früh in der Christenheit überwunden” (Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 373–74). He went on: “Nur die Nachwirkung jüdischer Elemente in Christentum war noch lange von der grössten Bedeutung.”

⁷⁷ For the lack of consistent usage of the terms *judaistisch* and *judenchristlich* see in particular Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 373.

⁷⁸ Something of this confusion is reflected in R. Seeberg’s discussion of Jewish Christianity in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (4 vols.; Leipzig: A. Deichert’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1908–1920), 1:249–67. While he notes that one can understand the term

This subjectivity and “vagueness,” by no means untypical, hinted at an essentially Protestant disquiet about Christianity’s Jewish origins, a Jewishness they often saw carried forward in Roman Catholicism. Scholarly debate about Jewish Christianity exemplified, at least partially, the truth of O’Neill’s judgment that “Marcion the historian had his greatest success in the nineteenth century.”⁷⁹

Much of the work dedicated to Jewish Christianity had inevitably concentrated upon the reports in patristic sources relating to Ebionites/Nazarenes/Elchasaites and it had often been the case that Jewish Christianity found itself exclusively bound up with Ebionitism—a clear throwback to Baur. One of those who wished to revive interest in this form of Jewish Christianity was Hans Joachim Schoeps. In a book entitled *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*,⁸⁰ through extensive use of patristic sources, and in particular the *Pseudo-Clementines*, Schoeps, eschewing the view of many of his predecessors that we possessed little reliable information about such people, went on to reconstruct what he termed a theology of the Ebionites. He, too, emphasised their strong commitment to Jewish observances but also highlighted their developed approach to the interpretation of Scripture, their singular Christology, and their strongly anti-cultic tendency. Schoeps argued that this group’s theology could in part be seen to have derived from certain forms of pre-Christian Judaism and that in some respects, it could lay claim to representing a very early form of Christianity associated with the apostles, a claim which Ritschl, Hort, Harnack and others had explicitly denied. Also contrary to the tendency of study at the time, Schoeps appeared to maintain that the Ebionitism that he was seeking to describe was not a part or sub-section of the broader phenomenon of Jewish Christianity, but was in fact Jewish Christianity itself. Here, as in other respects, Schoeps came close to reviving views associated with Baur and the Tübingen School, even if he attributed to the movement much less importance than Baur had.⁸¹ Here, then, was a bold and coherent account of Jewish

to mean “the religious and moral way of thinking of national Jewish Christianity,” one could also understand by it “a way of thinking which was so filled with specifically Jewish perspectives and tendencies, that it served to modify earliest Christianity in terms of its essential content” (250; my translation). While he goes on to combine these two views of the term in his own definition—it is Christianity “insofar as it bound Christianity to the Judaism from which it emerged, its rules, customs and tendencies,” perhaps coming closer to the more nationalist understanding of Harnack et al.—his discussion seems to hint at a more theological understanding of the term.

⁷⁹ O’Neill, “Study,” 171.

⁸⁰ Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949).

⁸¹ Schoeps explicitly acknowledged his proximity to Tübingen School perspectives: “In manchem werden unsere Bemühungen die späte Rehabilitierung eines geläuterten Tübinger Standpunktes darstellen, um so ein altes Unrecht gutzumachen” (Schoeps, *Theologie*, 5).

Christianity which gave to the movement a clear ideological/theological profile, and resurrected the view of it as a party.⁸²

Jean Daniélou's *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, first published in 1958, but subsequently translated into English as *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*,⁸³ constituted an attempt to broaden, rather than to narrow (as had been the case with Schoeps), the definition of Jewish Christianity. Daniélou suggested that in the early church there existed three types of Jewish Christianity. The first type, which he associated in particular with the Ebionites, he termed heterodox Jewish Christianity, not least because of its christological views. The second he termed orthodox Jewish Christianity. These were Jews by birth who, like the first apostles in Jerusalem, observed the Jewish law without imposing it upon others and entertained orthodox christological views. In later Christian history the sect of the Nazarenes, as described by Jerome and Epiphanius, came closest to this group. A third type of Jewish Christianity, and the subject of his book, he identified as "a type of Christian thought expressing itself in forms borrowed from Judaism."⁸⁴ Such a form of Jewish Christianity contained within its number those who were not necessarily associated with the Jewish community including men who had broken completely with the Jewish world but continued to think in its terms. Thus the Apostle Paul, although by no means a Jewish Christian in the first two senses of the term, was certainly one in this third sense, as were a number of other Christians. Indeed the period of church history up to the Bar Kokhba revolt could be described as the Jewish Christian period of the church's history, as distinct from the Hellenistic and Latin periods, the subject of Daniélou's subsequent two volumes. Such a form of Christianity was marked by a certain affiliation with what Goppelt had termed "Spätjudentum," that is, with theology associated with the Pharisees, Essenes and zealots, but in particular with Apocalypticism. The identification of a Jewish Christian work has a chronological aspect (it must fall into the period up to about the middle of the second century), a generic aspect (it must comport with a particular genre of literature witnessed within Judaism, even though Jewish Christian traditions can be found in works from a later period), and a doctrinal criterion. To quote: "Jewish Christianity expresses itself in certain characteristic categories of ideas, notably those of apocalyptic . . ."⁸⁵ the term understood broadly to refer to a gnosis relating to the hidden things of the world and the coming of revelation.

⁸² See also Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 9: "Jewish Christianity is not used as a designation of origin, but as the designation of the point of view of a party." For further discussion of Schoeps's contribution to the study of Jewish Christianity see Carleton Paget, "Jewish Christianity," 736–37.

⁸³ Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (vol. 1 of *History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicea*; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

⁸⁴ Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, 9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

What Daniélou had done was make clear how important and widespread was the influence of Judaism upon Christianity of the first century and beyond, something that most of his predecessors had acknowledged. But unlike many of his predecessors he had straightforwardly termed Christianity so influenced, “Jewish Christian,” (here in part harking back to a broader definition of the term against which Ritschl, Harnack and others had protested) and he had done so without any sense of embarrassment or anxiety. But whether Daniélou had done nothing more than identify a religious atmosphere prevalent at the time of Christian origins rather than a religious movement, or as he put it, “a first form of Christian theology expressed in Jewish-Semitic forms,”⁸⁶ seemed altogether less clear, as many of his critics did not hesitate to point out.⁸⁷

Another Frenchman to busy himself with the question of the definition of Jewish Christianity was Marcel Simon. In *Verus Israel*,⁸⁸ which appeared in its original French version before the publications of Schoeps and Daniélou, in a chapter devoted to Jewish Christianity, Simon began by noting that the term had traditionally been used in an ethnic (Jews who converted to Christianity) and religious sense (Christians who continued to lead a Jewish way of life after conversion). Sometimes scholars combined these two definitions into one, holding a Jewish Christian to be an ethnic Jew who had converted to Christianity but continued to lead a Jewish way of life. Such a definition would not do, claimed Simon, because it too easily excluded Judaizers from the definition. Jewish Christianity should not be too tightly defined, he averred. After noting the ambiguity of the phrase “Jewish” (Marcion, after all, had considered all catholic Christianity Jewish), he appeared to opt for a definition based upon practices, while noting that within that spectrum were contained groups with a diverse body of opinions. Judaizers differed in this respect from Ebionites who differed from what he somewhat obscurely called syncretistic forms of the phenomenon. “We can say,” Simon

⁸⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁷ Klijn, “Study,” 426, argues that where Baur had attributed Jewish ideas to a group, Daniélou had shown how widespread such ideas were among Christians. But Klijn’s comment could be seen to be misleading. While Daniélou was not willing to limit the influence of his ideas to a group in the sense that Baur conceived of such a term (all Christians of early Christian history, according to Daniélou, seem to be Jewish Christians), he still spoke of what he had identified as “a distinct entity.” (Daniélou, *Theology*, 405). On this point see in particular Robert Murray, “Recent Studies in Early Symbolic Theology,” *HeyJ* 6 (1965): 414–15; and Robert A. Kraft, “In Search of ‘Jewish Christianity and its Theology: Problems of Definition and Methodology,’ *RSR* 60 (1972): 81–92. See especially Kraft’s comment, “It seems to me legitimate to ask whether any historically identifiable and selfconscious entity (person or group) ever existed behind Daniélou’s ‘Jewish Christian theology?’” (87). Later on, after quoting a number of places where Daniélou spoke of a “common mentality,” or “overall view” in his *Jewish Christianity*, Kraft wonders: “But it must be asked was there any conscious awareness of this ‘common’ bond on the part of these ‘Jewish Christians?’”

⁸⁸ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135–425* (London: Littman Library, 1986), 237–40.

concluded this part of the discussion, “that there existed not a single phenomenon, Jewish Christianity, but several Jewish Christianities.”⁸⁹ In an essay published after *Verus Israel*, Simon was clearer that practices should be the criteria by which one defined Jewish Christianity. As he wrote: “The criterion of observance seems to be uncontestedly the most secure.”⁹⁰ To the question “What observances?”, he answered those that go beyond the bare minimum of what is said to have been required of Gentiles at the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15, although here he is a little vague.⁹¹ In the same essay, which contains a helpful review of some other attempts at defining the term, Simon goes on to examine the question of a type of theological definition of Jewish Christianity, such as we find in Daniélou. While criticising his compatriot on a variety of grounds, he still appears inclined to adopt a broader definition than in previous publications. Simon argued that one is entitled to speak of Jewish Christianity in relation to doctrinal positions, liturgical practices, and theological thought which is on the one hand distinguished from Christianity of a Hellenistic type, and on the other hand offers clear affinities with elements of thought associated with one or more of the Jewish sects of the era of Christian origins. He cites the *Pseudo-Clementines* as an example of such a type of Christianity, as well as the Christianity of Ephesus, Rome and Edessa.⁹²

More recent work on Jewish Christianity has exhibited similarly diverse understandings of its character and history. Michael Goulder, for instance, has sought to keep elements of the Baur flag flying, and in the process has made somewhat questionable use of sources such as Ignatius’s epistles and the *Pseudo-Clementines* to illuminate the theology of the earliest Jewish Christians.⁹³ Gerd Lüdemann has also wandered the Baur route by, like Goulder, playing up the anti-Pauline character of Jewish Christianity.⁹⁴ But many scholars, eschewing an

⁸⁹ Ibid., 240.

⁹⁰ Simon, “Problèmes,” 7. For similar thoughts see Marcel Simon, “Réflexions sur le judéo-christianisme,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Graeco-Roman Cults. Essays in Honour of Morton Smith at Sixty* (ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 53–76.

⁹¹ “Sera judéo-chrétien celui qui ira au-delà de cet ἐπαύγκες, qui se pliera à d’autres prescriptions de la Loi rituelle juive” (Simon, “Problèmes,” 8).

⁹² See also the same author’s *Recherches d’Histoire Judéo-Chrétienne* (Paris: Moulton, 1962). In his brief “avant-propos” to the book, Simon notes that the term “Jewish Christian (*judéo-chrétien*)” is susceptible of a number of meanings. It can mean Torah-observing Christian, but it can also have a more general sense. In this sense it can characterise what the two religions have in common and what divides them. Hence the essays collected together in the volume pertain to examples of what Simon terms a kind of syncretism between the religions, to subjects which reflect their continuity with each other, and to questions of polemic. One half suspects that this broad-based definition of the term arose in part from a desire on the part of Simon to justify his decision to bring this diverse body of essays into one volume. For a discussion of Simon’s contribution to the study of Jewish Christianity see F. Blanchétière, “La contribution du Doyen Marcel Simon à l’étude du judéo-christianisme,” in *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états* (ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 19–30.

⁹³ Michael D. Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions* (London: SCM, 1994).

⁹⁴ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, especially 28–32.

old-fashioned “party” definition of the term which plays up anti-Paulinism as a central feature of the movement, have settled for one based upon the ongoing attachment to certain Jewish practices. So, for instance, Mimouni has in his recent collection of essays on Jewish Christianity defined the phenomenon as “a recent formulation designating those Jews who recognised Jesus as messiah, who recognised or did not recognise the divinity of Christ, but who continued to observe the Torah.”⁹⁵ Such a definition is not, of course, without its problems. As we noted when discussing Simon’s endorsement of a praxis-based definition, it is not straightforwardly clear in such a formulation which laws one would need to observe in order to be called a Jewish Christian, and scholars’ views on this matter vary,⁹⁶ even if a majority would appear to make circumcision central.

Two further issues emerge from Mimouni’s definition. The first relates to the role of ethnicity in any definition. For some the Jewish origins of a Christian convert are enough to render him a Jewish Christian, although for others this is to render the definition meaningless given the very diverse ways in which Jewish converts to Christianity reacted to their Jewish heritage.⁹⁷ For Mimouni, in contrast to Simon, Jewish Christians are Jews who have been converted to Christianity, and continue to observe Jewish laws, even if their opinions vary as to the necessity for Gentile converts to observe these laws. In this respect he follows a number of recent interpreters.⁹⁸ In this definition Judaizers of Gentilic origin must be put in another category.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Simon C. Mimouni, “La question du definition,” in his *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 70. This essay originally appeared in *NTS* 38 (1992): 161–86. For similar praxis-based definitions see Joan Taylor, “The Phenomenon of early Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?” *VC* 44 (1990): 326; Jean-Daniel Kaestli, “Où en est le débat sur le judéo-christianisme?” in *Le déchirement: Juifs et chrétiens au premier siècle* (ed. D. Marguerat; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 243–72; and Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” 733–42.

⁹⁶ For a variety of recent responses to this question see Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” 735–36.

⁹⁷ From an earlier period see Ritschl’s criticisms of Schliemann, and Hoennicke’s criticism of such a definition. For more recent times see G. Strecker, “*Judenchristentum*,” *TRE* 17:311.

⁹⁸ Note, for instance, Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 143; and Gunther Stemberger, “*Judenchristen*,” *RAC* 29:229. The latter places Jewish Christians between Judaizers of pagan origin and Christians of Jewish origins who absorbed themselves into the Gentile Christian community.

⁹⁹ Wolfram Kinzig, “‘Non-Separation’: Closeness and Co-operation between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century,” *VC* 45 (1991): 27–53, 44–45, appears to follow Simon when he states that “on the institutional level the Jewish Christians and the Judaizing Christians were clearly distinct,” but as far as religious practices were concerned, “there was a wide overlap.” Interestingly, Kinzig sees the prevalence of Judaizing in the fourth century as a direct consequence of the decline of Jewish Christian groups. For further interesting comments on the categorization of Judaizers see B. Visotzky, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities,” *AJSR* 14:61–62.

¹⁰⁰ Visotzky, “Jewish-Christianities,” 47–70, esp. 56–60.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, there is already implicit in this definition a sense of the diversity of the phenomenon, expressed for Mimouni in terms of Christology, but expressed for others such as Visotzky not only in terms of doctrine, but in terms of the type of Jewish laws practiced by Jewish Christians, a point we have already hinted at in the previous paragraph.¹⁰⁰ Current secondary literature, following Simon, tends to talk about Jewish Christianities. Sometimes these Jewish Christianities are divided into orthodox and heterodox types,¹⁰¹ sometimes into more complex groupings.¹⁰² Some form of legal observance is invariable part of the definition of Jewish Christianity. Jewish ethnicity is either a necessary or unnecessary requirement. All this has its origin in the literature of an older age that was responding to Baur. Taken together, this has a number of consequences. One is obviously further to erode the model associated with Baur of a Jewish Christianity opposed to a Gentile Christianity.¹⁰³ More significantly it may lead some to question the legitimacy of the term Jewish Christianity. If we incline to this sceptical view, perhaps the future of study lies more straightforwardly in the detailed examination of sources relating to sects traditionally associated with Jewish Christianity rather than in studies of *Judenchristentum* with what that term appears to imply about the unity of the phenomenon. Such a thing already manifests itself in the work of Koch on the Ebionites,¹⁰⁴ Pritz on the Nazarenes,¹⁰⁵ and Luttikhuizen on the Elchasaites,¹⁰⁶ even if the *raison d'être* for such work does not overtly lie in a scepticism about the concept of Jewish Christianity.

Two further points need to be made. First, the study of Jewish Christianity has to a certain extent been affected by an ever-increasing appreciation of the diverse character of Judaism at the time of Christian origins. Such an acknowledgement of diversity and its accompanying understandings of Jewish self-definition have in a sense contributed to the ongoing perception of the plural character of those designated "Jewish Christian." Their diversity reflects a diversity already present in Judaism itself. But such a recognition has also contributed to a perhaps greater appreciation of the complex issue of who and what to term "Jewish Christian" conceived of in terms of what might or might not be tolerated within the

¹⁰¹ See in this respect Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 73–90.

¹⁰² See, for instance, Raymond E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 74–79; and Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 148–59.

¹⁰³ On this see Brown, "Types."

¹⁰⁴ G. A. Koch, "A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius' Knowledge of the Ebionites" (PhD diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1976).

¹⁰⁵ Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (StPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988).

¹⁰⁶ Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (TSAJ 8; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985).

Jewish community. An understanding of Jewish Christianity, therefore, is to a certain extent dependent upon one's perception of the Jewish-Christian schism, now widely held to be an event that is by no means uniform or precisely datable.¹⁰⁷ In this respect Colpe is quite right to note that the term *Judenchristentum* is necessarily connected to one's understanding of the reasons for and the processes by which Christianity was transformed from a movement within Judaism to an independent phenomenon, Christianity, outside of Judaism.¹⁰⁸ But here we should be a little cautious—a person may be conceived of as a Jewish Christian without being a part of the Jewish community. It is, in the parlance of J. Louis Martyn, only a Christian Jew who can be thought of as within Judaism.¹⁰⁹ But arriving at a clear view of who is and who is not a Christian Jew or a Jewish Christian, conceived in the above terms, is made difficult precisely because determining Jewish reactions to Christians is itself so difficult.¹¹⁰

A second and related point concerns the ongoing influence of a definition of the term not so very distant from that advocated by Daniélou, i.e., one that plays up a broadly ideological definition of the term¹¹¹ (this despite the fact that Daniélou has come in for considerable criticism¹¹²). This influence is perhaps most strikingly evidenced in the work of Bagatti, Testa and others on the archaeology of Jewish Christianity, not least because they rely so heavily upon

¹⁰⁷ For a general engagement with the subject of the “parting of the ways” and a strong argument in favor of a late date see *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. A. H. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed; Texts and studies in ancient Judaism 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), and Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For the possible consequences of this for an understanding of Jewish Christianity see Skarsaune at a later point in this volume (ch. 23).

¹⁰⁸ Note Colpe, “Judenchristen,” 38: “Unter den ‘Transformationen’ in der Religionsgeschichte ist diejenige, die vom Judentum zum Christentum geführt hat, vielleicht immer noch der historisch schwierigste Fall, obwohl ihr mehr Untersuchungen als anderen Transformationen gewidmet werden sein dürfen. Der Begriff ‘Judenchristentum’ drückt nicht mehr als die Schwierigkeit dieses Tatbestandes aus.”

¹⁰⁹ J. Louis Martyn, “Glimpses into the History of the Johannine Community,” in his *The Gospel of John in Christian History* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 90–121, especially 104. See also Bruce Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism? Toward a Hypothetical Definition,” *JSJ* 7 (1976): 46–57. See also n. 120 below.

¹¹⁰ In this context it is worth noting the work of Daniel Boyarin. In his *Border Lines* he posits an essentially late date for the division between Christianity and Judaism (4th century). Against this background, he is not so much interested in the existence of a phenomenon, Jewish Christianity, but why people were so keen to denounce it as heretical, especially so late. He argues strongly that this had much to do with Christian and rabbinic desire to reinforce the purity of their respective orthodoxies. On this, see further Skarsune in ch. 23 in this volume.

¹¹¹ See Lüdemann’s comment: “Unless my impression is mistaken, Daniélou’s understanding of the matter . . . enjoys the greatest success.” (*Opposition*, 29).

¹¹² In this regard special note should be taken of Murray “Recent Studies”; and Robert A. Kraft, “In Search of Jewish Christianity and its Theology: Problems of Definition and Methodology,” *RSR* 60 (1972): 81–96.

Daniélou's analysis of so-called Jewish Christian symbols for their identification of Jewish Christian artifacts and sites.¹¹³ But his influence, unacknowledged or acknowledged, is also seen in the somewhat profligate use to which the term Jewish Christian is put in modern scholarship. A tradition is more often than not deemed Jewish Christian not because it can be demonstrated that it emerged from a community that observed certain Jewish laws, but because it has a Jewish character about it, however we might define such a thing. We have already noted how even a scholar such as Simon, who endorsed an essentially praxis-based understanding of Jewish Christianity, at the same time flirted with a more ideologically based definition. Richard Longenecker can still in his careful definition write that the term can be applied to Christians whose conceptual frame of reference and whose expressions were rooted in semitic thought generally and Judaism in particular.¹¹⁴ Klijn, admitting to the immense Jewish influence on the church, can state that "The object of the study of Jewish Christianity is to detect the presence, the range, the development and the disappearance of this influence,"¹¹⁵ in this context understanding "this influence" to have a heterodox character.¹¹⁶ Gunther Stemberger, who is insistent upon the praxis-based aspect of any definition, can still state that any definition of the term expresses itself in what he describes as "*die Ausprägung des Glaubensbekenntnisses*,"¹¹⁷ although he admits that there are difficulties with unravelling the precise meaning of such a phrase. Of course, this type of definition, which appears to be intentionally broad, need not be held outside of a praxis-based definition¹¹⁸ (as the case of Stemberger, for instance, makes plain), but very often it is.

¹¹³ Bagatti's views are set out in *The Church from the Circumcision* (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1971). For the relationship of his and others' work to that of Daniélou, see Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 12, who is herself maximally sceptical of Bagatti's et al.'s findings. For a less sceptical assessment see Mimouni, "La question," 317–452.

¹¹⁴ Richard W. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM, 1970), 3.

¹¹⁵ Klijn, "Study," 426.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 431.

¹¹⁷ Stemberger, RAC 29:229. Note also Mimouni *Judéo-christianisme*, 231–55, who in spite of the definition he espouses, still terms the strikingly antinomian *Barnabas* Jewish Christian.

¹¹⁸ Daniélou had explicitly stated this when outlining his own understanding of the term. Richard Bauckham, in his discussion of the theological profile of the Epistle of Jude, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), 8–10, betrays a certain uneasiness about adopting such a position. He categorizes the text "apocalyptic Jewish Christian" but is uncertain as to whether Jude or the community he addressed observed the Jewish law. His categorization appears to derive more clearly from the fact that Jude betrays knowledge of certain apocryphal Jewish texts, and from its apocalyptic profile. See also his categorisation of *The Apocalypse of Peter*, as discussed in "Jews and Jewish Christians in the land of Israel at the time of the Bar Kochba war, with special reference to *The Apocalypse of Peter*," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G. N. Stanton and G. G.

This ongoing tendency to use the term “Jewish Christian” in this vague way to describe what seems at first sight to be nothing more than material that shows evidence of Jewish influence is understandable. We need not attribute it to the overarching influence of Daniélou (few, for instance, would follow him in believing that the different things they describe form what Daniélou called “a distinct entity”). Tendencies in the wider world of New Testament studies, and to a lesser extent patristics, may account for the matter. One of these lies in the much greater emphasis scholars are now willing to place upon Christianity’s Jewish heritage. This emphasis has been present within scholarship for a long time, but in recent times it has become notably prominent, in part stimulated by its post-holocaust setting, in part inspired by a recognition of Jewish diversity. The ongoing recognition of Christianity’s debt to Jewish thought and theology is held by some best to be expressed with the term “Jewish Christian.” A difficulty with such an application lies, among other things, in determining on the basis of the definition what is not Jewish Christian, assuming the multi-faceted nature of Judaism. Another difficulty lies in the fact that the term, given the history of its application, can imply a unified ideological perspective that is difficult to eke out of the vaguer theological definition.

3. Concluding Observations

In antiquity no one, as far as we know, called himself a Jewish Christian or spoke of belonging to an entity called “Jewish Christianity.” The terms are invented ones, introduced to describe a supposed phenomenon of early Christianity. When we add to this the fact that the terms as used in English or any other modern language are ambiguous as they stand, and that they may be taken to imply different things in different languages (“Judenchrist” is not *prima facie* the same as a “Jewish Christian”), the problem of definition becomes more complex still.

Those in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who sought to define the term were usually insistent that a law-observant and national aspect should be central to any definition. In the light of Baur’s thesis about the formation in the second century of what was termed “catholic Christianity,” scholars differed as to the influence and unified character of Jewish Christianity. By the end of the century many scholars saw the movement as minimally influential and variegated

Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228–38. Here he defines Jewish Christianity as “refer[ring] to communities of Christian Jews who maintained their Jewish identity” (235 n.1), but is only able to show that the community of *The Apocalypse of Peter* maintained such a thing in relation to its apocalypticism, mode of writing etc. That is not to say that this community did not maintain its Jewish identity by observing certain Jewish laws. It is merely to state that, lacking such evidence, we must assume an understanding of the term on the part of Bauckham that is theological in profile.

in its character, assuming, for instance, a mild and more extreme form of the phenomenon. Many had moved away from Baur's view of the movement as essentially anti-Pauline. At the same time it should be noted that scholars were only too aware of the influence of Judaism upon early Christianity and in particular so-called "early catholicism," and that in the light of this some continued to operate with definitions of "Jewish Christian" that did not always straightforwardly emerge from an understanding of the term as "Judaizing." This explains, for instance, Ritschl's, Harnack's, and Hort's insistence that the term "Jewish Christian" not be mixed up with Christianity's obvious indebtedness to Jewish theology and Scripture—hence Hort's "Judaistic Christianity." When scholars like Hoennicke (and, to a lesser extent, Seeberg), talked of Jewish influence of a deleterious kind upon Christianity, they reflected this ongoing difficulty with defining the term and with establishing a universally accepted form of vocabulary.

More recent study of Jewish Christianity has taken further many aspects of the previous era of study. Baur's view of the influence of Jewish Christianity upon the Christianity of the second century has now been more or less abandoned. The notion of Jewish Christians as belonging to a unified entity called "Jewish Christianity" has also come under attack with the tendency now to speak in the plural of "Jewish Christianities." Broadly speaking the view is taken that such people, while professing a belief in the messiahship of Christ, were united by their commitment to certain Jewish laws, although scholars disagree about which ones,¹¹⁹ and that they entertained a variety of opinions on the need for Gentiles to implement such laws, as well as on questions of doctrine. Some scholars still wish in this context to speak of heretical and orthodox forms of the phenomenon. Scholars remain divided about the role of ethnicity in such a definition, and are consequently uncertain as to how to categorise Gentile Judaizers. Some, taking seriously the apparent collapse of any kind of meaningful ideological profile for Jewish Christians, have defended an old view—one that might at one level be said to bring out most clearly the sense of "Judenchrist"—that ethnicity alone should determine whether someone should be categorized as a Jewish Christian, independent of questions of an ongoing commitment to certain Jewish laws. In such a tepid and probably unworkable definition, "Jewish Christian" comes under what the editors of this volume have designated "Jewish believer in Jesus."

As implied above, one of the major changes in the more recent period of study has been the almost complete abandonment of the kind of historical narrative into which Jewish Christianity was made to fit by Baur. Nowadays we do not so easily speak as we once did about Catholic Christianity and its formation in the second century. In such a narrative, Jewish Christians were normally perceived as a central cog in the history of Christianity, and their profile within Judaism was regarded as much less important. That is not to say that it was not considered at all. Neander, for instance, took an interest in such a problem, as did Graetz, and those

¹¹⁹This is broadly the definition adopted in this volume: a Jewish Christian is a Jewish believer in Jesus who maintains a Jewish lifestyle. This is admittedly vague.

other scholars who busied themselves with finding references to Christians in Rabbinic literature. But nowadays, in part following the lead of Schoeps and Simon, and stimulated by an ever-growing interest in the question of Jewish self-definition in antiquity, such a concern has increased, witnessed to in part by the growing participation of Jewish scholars in the discussion of the subject.¹²⁰

We concluded the final section of the main part of this chapter by noting the ongoing presence in New Testament and patristic circles of a use of the term Jewish Christian to describe a thought, viewpoint, religious motif, or literary form which seems to have a Jewish aspect to it. We noted that such an understanding of the term, which had been discussed most fully by Daniélou, but also informed the work of many other scholars who were not necessarily themselves conscious followers of the Frenchman, was altogether more diffuse than the traditional, sectarian use of the term with its strong emphasis on Jewish practices. More often than not it was impossible to show that the presence of an apparently Jewish motif or idea in an individual writing betrayed its origin in a Jewish Christian community, or that it belonged to an overarching entity we could call Jewish Christian theology. But this “vaguer” use of the term, employed to express the widespread influence of Judaism on ancient Christianity, persists in one form or another, and sets up a potential contrast with other uses of the term with their concern for questions of practices and sectarian groups like the Ebionites and Nazarenes.

The history of scholarly attempts to define the terms “Jewish Christian” and “Jewish Christianity” demonstrates the ongoing difficulty with the terms. In part, the difficulty may be said to lie in fulfilling the two conditions, first set out by Richard Longenecker over thirty years ago, for any successful definition. According to Longenecker, a successful definition must have a sufficient degree of particularity and specificity to enable precision of treatment, as well as a breadth of designation that will allow for variations in the entity studied.¹²¹ But there may be a sense in which we have become overly concerned with the creation of a hold-all definition precisely because our instinct is to think of the term in a sectarian way. In this respect the shadow of Baur still looms over us. Perhaps we should simply accept the breadth of the term and the multiple uses to which it has been put. This seems to have been the attitude of the most recent gathering of experts in the field where the question of definition was left entirely open.¹²² This may, of

¹²⁰ See Visotzky “Jewish-Christianities,” esp. 61, where he notes different tendencies in Christian and Jewish approaches to the subject of Jewish Christianity; and Alan F. Segal, “Jewish Christianity” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (ed. Gohei Hata and H. W. Attridge; StPB 42; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 327–51. Also see Peter Tomson, “The War against Rome, the Rise of Rabbinic Judaism and of Apostolic Gentile Christianity, and the Judaeo-Christians: Elements for a Synthesis,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry; WUNT 158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 1–31, 2.

¹²¹ Longenecker, *Christology*, 3.

¹²² See Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones, eds., *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états* (Paris: Cerf, 2001). See also Pritz, *Nazarene*, 9: “In the end it may prove fruitless to

course, mean that each author who uses the term is forced to define what s/he means by it before commencing substantive discussion. Alternatively, it may mean that we adopt different designations to describe different definitions of the term. In such a scheme, “Jewish Christianity” means one thing, “Judaizing Christianity” another, “Judaeo-Christianity” another and so on. After all, one feature of the study of the subject has been its capacity to make use, in an often inconsistent way, of terms related to Jewish Christianity but apparently describing something different. Attempts at such standardization may of course not succeed.¹²³

To some retaining the term, with all its difficulties, many of which have emerged in the preceding discussion, may seem counter-productive. The term is simply too slippery and has too complex a history to be worth preserving, the argument might go. In this context we should point to Michael Williams’ attempt to do away with the term Gnosticism and replace it with a more general category of “biblical demiurgical traditions” which, in his opinion, better describes the content of those texts usually called “gnostic.”¹²⁴ Part of his argument relates to the fact that it is by no means clear that many of those designated ‘gnostic’ did in fact refer to themselves as such (this is particularly the case with the Nag Hammadi finds where the term does not appear);¹²⁵ and in part to the fact that attempts at a typological designation too easily misdescribe the texts they seek to define and lead, consequently, to a misreading of these same texts.¹²⁶ Similar criticisms could be aimed at the category “Jewish Christian.” First, as we have already stated, there are *no* ancient texts in existence in which individuals call themselves “Jewish Christians”; and secondly it is quite clear that certain typological definitions have led to a misreading of material in particular where genetic relations are supposed to have existed between different texts associated with so-called Jewish Christians. While some may think that this problem has largely been overcome by the introduction of the idea of Jewish Christianities, others may still deem it unhelpful, not least because of the ‘Jewish’ aspect of its name. Not only is it difficult to determine the amount of Jewishness that makes a text Jewish Christian, and the extent to which such a term implies a positive relationship to non-Christian Judaism but, given the ongoing affirmation of the dependence of early Christian culture on Judaism, the term Jewish Christian might simply appear tautologous. Why not simply settle on a term like “Torah observant” and then introduce sub-categories like Ebionite, Elchasaiter etc.? This would, among other things, do away with the problem of the Jewishness of “Jewish Christian,” outlined above, and

define it because it is so varied, but all should agree that needless argument over the differing concepts of “Jewish Christianity” can be avoided.”

¹²³ See, for instance, Riegel, “Jewish Christianity,” 414–15, for a not entirely successful attempt at such a thing. He, of course, is not the first to undertake such a task.

¹²⁴ *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for the Dismantling of a Dubious Category* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29–43.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43–53 and much of the rest of the book.

transcend such complex issues as the role of ethnicity in the definition as well as the place of a term like “Judaizer.”

I leave this as a not unproblematic option at the end of this chapter. Some may think it unrealistic, not least because the term has for so long been a part of scholarly discourse.¹²⁷ But that in itself is no reason to retain it. When one looks at its complex history and the ongoing complications of the debate about its meaning, a new start might be thought to be desirable.

¹²⁷ Kurt Rudolph presented this as a possible argument for the retention of the term “gnosticism” in “‘Gnosis’ and ‘Gnosticism’—The Problems of Their Definition and Their Relation to the Writings of the New Testament,” in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McLachlan Wilson* (ed. A. Logan and A. Wedderburn; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 21–37.

P A R T T W O

*Jewish Believers in Jesus in the New Testament
and Related Material*



James and the Jerusalem Community

Richard Bauckham

1. The Community's Self-Understanding

The original group of Jewish believers in Jesus were distinguished by their claim that Jesus of Nazareth was the expected royal Messiah of Israel. Their basis for this claim was also distinctive. They believed that Jesus, who had been crucified as a messianic pretender, had been declared truly God's Messiah by God himself, in that God had raised Jesus from death and exalted him to share God's own throne in heaven. Thus the coming of God's kingdom, which Jesus had proclaimed and practiced in his ministry, was now decisively underway. It entailed, in the first place, the restoration of God's effective rule over his own people Israel in the way that the prophets had foretold. The community of believers in Jesus understood themselves to be the nucleus of the renewed Israel. The outpouring of God's Spirit that they had experienced was their entry into the new life of God's people in the dawning new era of God's eschatological presence. God was now calling all Israelites to share in this newly constituted Israel through repentance and commitment to Jesus as the Messiah, through receiving the Spirit and participating in the community of believers in Jesus.

The core of the earliest community in Jerusalem were people who had been followers of Jesus during his earthly ministry, though many others soon joined them. The majority of those who had identified themselves with Jesus' movement before his death were Galileans, and many of these must have continued living in Galilee and formed communities of Christians there. But a considerable number evidently moved permanently to Jerusalem and, along with others, formed the first Christian community there. It is this community in Jerusalem that all the traditions we know regard as the original community, the one from which faith in Jesus as Messiah spread, the mother church of the emerging Christian movement. Until the great revolt of 66 and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, the Jerusalem church had a quite special and unrivaled status, acknowledged even by Paul, who of the early missionaries was probably the most independent in his relationship

to the mother church. It is clear that from the beginning the Jerusalem church adopted into its own self-understanding the unique significance that the city of Jerusalem had for Jews throughout the world.¹

Jerusalem was geographically the center of the Jewish Diaspora, which stretched as far east as it did west (cf. Acts 2:9–11). Jews in the Diaspora looked to it as their religious and national center, to which large numbers also traveled on pilgrimage. This was, of course, because of the temple in Jerusalem, the unique place of God's presence on earth and therefore also of cultic worship. Constant interaction between the center and the Diaspora took the form not only of pilgrimage to Jerusalem and temple tax sent to Jerusalem, but also of official letters sent out to the Diaspora from the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. Moreover, in the expectations nourished by biblical prophecy Jerusalem was to be the center to which the tribes of Israel would be re-gathered in the messianic age and to which also the nations would come to worship the God of Israel.

The Jerusalem church, located at this literal and symbolic center of the Jewish world, rather naturally assumed the corresponding role of center for the renewed Israel, the Christian movement. It must have been from the beginning in touch with visiting Jews from the Diaspora and with nascent Christian communities throughout the Diaspora. The letter of James (see section 8) is a circular letter sent out from the leader of the mother church to Christian groups throughout the Jewish Diaspora. The “apostolic decree” is a halakic ruling promulgated by the Jerusalem church and communicated in official letters to Christian communities elsewhere (Acts 15:23–29). The widespread acceptance of its authority (see below) shows the extent to which the Christian movement at large, Gentile as well as Jewish, looked to the mother church as its authoritative center. As we shall see, the Jerusalem church maintained its place in Judaism through its attachment to the temple, but also saw itself as the new temple of the eschatological age. It most probably placed itself at the center of its continuing hope for the eschatological ingathering of all Israel and the conversion of the nations to the God of Israel.

Insight into the Jerusalem church's understanding of itself can be gained from the various designations it used of itself:

(1) The way (ἡ ὁδός): This was evidently the term the first Jewish Christians used for their form of Judaism. The absolute usage occurs five times in Acts (9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22; cf. 22:4: “this Way”), where we also find “the Way of the Lord” (18:25) and “the Way of God” (18:26). These fuller forms have plausibly suggested to many scholars that the Christian use of the term derives from Isa 40:3 (“In the wilderness prepare the way of YHWH, make straight in the desert a high-

¹ See further R. Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. R. Bauckham; vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 417–27; R. Bauckham, “James at the Centre,” *EPTA Bulletin: The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 14 (1995): 23–33.

way for our God”). But the source need not be limited to this one verse. The way to which Isa 40:3 refers is the way on which the Lord will travel when leading his people from exile to the restored Zion. It features in several other passages in Isaiah describing the eschatological redemption (35:8; 42:16; 48:17; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10; cf. also 52:11–12), where it is also called “the way of my people” (57:14) or “the way of the people” (62:10) and “the holy way” (35:8). In Isa 30, a prophecy of Israel’s restoration which would readily be connected with these passages about the way, even the absolute use of “the way” could be found (30:11, 21). For this earliest Christian community the task of preparing the way (Isa 40:3; 57:14; 62:10), proclaimed by John the Baptist (cf. Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23), might well have been considered already complete. They were now traveling the way. There is much to suggest that the prophecies of Isaiah, especially chapters 40–55, were the most important part of the Hebrew Scriptures for the early Christians’ understanding of the place of Jesus and themselves in the divine purpose for Israel and the world. The term “Gospel” itself comes from them (Isa 40:9; 52:7). It seems very likely that the earliest Christian community found its own place in these prophecies in the image of the highway on which God leads his people to salvation in the restored and glorified Zion.

(2) The holy ones (the saints) (*οἱ ἁγιοί*): In Acts, this term as a designation for Christians occurs only four times (9:13, 32, 41; 26:10), but there is good reason to suppose that it goes back to the early Jerusalem church. In the New Testament, it is not only frequent throughout the Pauline literature, but also occurs in Hebrews (6:10; 13:24), and Jude (3) and is frequent in Revelation (5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 22:21). Moreover, Paul himself uses it regularly for the Jerusalem church (Rom 15:25, 26, 31; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12), and when speaking of his collection for the Jerusalem church can refer simply to “the saints” without further specification (1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12). The early Christian use of this term is quite remarkable, because in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish literature it usually refers to angels and only very rarely to the people of God, whereas in early Christianity it hardly ever refers to angels. The explanation is probably that, as a designation for the Christian community, the term derived from the phrase “the holy ones of the Most High” in Dan 7:18, 22, 25, 27 (in v 22b “the holy ones” and in v 27 “the people of the holy ones of the Most High”). This is consistent with evidence that Dan 7 was an important passage for early Christians, who identified the human-like figure with Jesus and connected Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God with the kingdom that is there given both to the “one like a son of man” and to “the holy ones of the Most High.”

(3) The church of God (*ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ*): From 1 Cor 15:9 and 1 Thess 2:14, it seems likely that this was the full form of the term originally used by the Jerusalem church. It corresponds to the biblical “congregation (*qahal*) of YHWH” (as in, e.g., Num 16:3). What is notable is that, whereas the usage of *qahal* in the Hebrew Bible usually refers, often quite emphatically, to the actual assembly of the people of Israel when they gather together, *ἐκκλησία* in the New

Testament seems very rarely to have this sense, but merely refers to the people who together compose the church, whether actually gathered together or not. Thus, for the actual assembly of the Jerusalem church, Acts requires another word (*τὸ πλῆθος*:² 6:2, 5; 15:12, 22; cf. *συναγωγή* in Jas 2:2 compared with *ἐκκλησία* in 5:14; *ἐπισυναγωγή* in Heb 10:25). This may indicate that the reason for the choice of the term to describe the community was not simply descriptive but, as with other designations, scripturally significant. It was chosen to recall the congregation of Israel after the exodus in the wilderness and designated the first Jewish believers in Jesus the community of the new exodus.³

(4) The disciples (*οἱ μαθηταί*): The use of this term (Acts 6:1–2, 7; 9:1; 15:10 etc.) indicates continuity with the group of Jesus' followers during his ministry. The community practiced the way that Jesus had taught.

(5) The brothers and sisters (*οἱ ἀδελφοί*): Jews commonly used this term of each other (e.g., Acts 2:29), and early Christian usage (e.g., Acts 6:3; Jas 1:2) is therefore not surprising. But it gained new meaning in the light of Jesus' designation of those who do his Father's will as his brothers and sisters (Mark 3:35). It no longer expressed merely the kinship of born Jews, but the community bond of those who voluntarily joined the renewed Israel.

(6) The Nazarenes (*οἱ Ναζωραῖοι*).⁴ From Acts 24:5 (the only occurrence of this term in the New Testament) we know that the term "Nazarenes" was already used of the first generation of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Whereas the term "Christians" originated in Antioch among Latin-and Greek-speakers (Acts 11:27) and was to become standard in those languages, "Nazarenes" must have originated in Aramaic and was to remain the standard designation for Christians in Semitic languages. Since in fact it is the only term we know to have been used to designate Jewish Christians by non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem, it is likely to have been used from a very early stage, as soon as the first Christians were a distinctive and significant enough group for others to need a word for them. Although the etymology of the Greek form *Ναζωραῖος* has been much debated,⁵ it is now generally agreed that it is adequately explained as a Greek form of an Aramaic word with the geographical sense "of Nazareth."⁶ It is no different in meaning from the

² On this term, see Joan Taylor, "The Community of Jesus' Disciples," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 21 (1998): 25–32.

³ I have compared these first three designations with the usage of the Qumran community in R. Bauckham, "The Early Jerusalem Church, Qumran and the Essenes," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. James R. Davila; STDJ 46; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 63–89.

⁴ See R. Bauckham, "Why Were the Early Christians Called Nazarenes?" *Mishkan* 38 (2003): 80–85.

⁵ For a brief history of research, see Simon C. Mimouni, "Les Nazoréens: Recherche étymologique et historique," *RB* 105 (1998): 212–15.

⁶ Michael O. Wise, "Nazarene," *DIG* 571–74, explains the Greek *ω* as a form of pronunciation evidenced by the orthography of 1QIsaa. Klaus Berger, "Jesus als Nasoräer/Nasiräer," *NovT* 38 (1996): 323–25, differs from the recent consensus in arguing that *Ναζωραῖος* corresponds to Hebrew *nazir*, "Nazirite" (LXX *ναζίρειος*).

alternative Greek word Ναζαρηνός (both Greek words are used of Jesus in the Gospels and Acts). The use of “Nazarenes” for Christians must be derivative from the use of the same word to describe Jesus outside Christian circles (where he was “Jesus the Messiah”). To distinguish him from other bearers of this not uncommon Jewish name, people called him “Jesus the Nazarene,” meaning “Jesus from Nazareth.” Such a usage was entirely natural and need not have been at all derogatory, though it could also be an implied rejection of the claim that he was Messiah, in that the Messiah was not expected to come from Nazareth. It is easily intelligible that Jesus’ followers, though not themselves from Nazareth, should have been called, by analogy, “Nazarenes.”

However, we know from Matt 2:23 that Christians saw more significance than the purely geographical in the use of Ναζωραῖος of Jesus.⁷ It could be understood as an exegetical pun, designating Jesus the messianic “shoot” of David (Isa 11:1; Hebrew *nēṣer*/נֶשֶׁר) and perhaps also alluding to the term *nāzîr*/נָזִיר (Greek ναζίραιος), meaning “someone consecrated to God” (Nazirite, as in Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17). But *nēṣer*/נֶשֶׁר was also used in Scripture of the Messiah’s people, the eschatological Israel (Isa 60:21), while a further punning connection could be made with the root *nšr*/נְשַׁר meaning “to watch, to preserve,” and so with “the preserved (*nēṣîrē*/נְשִׁיר or *nēṣûrē*/נְשֻׁרֶׁ) of Israel” whom the Messiah is to restore according to Isa 49:6 (a significant text for early Christians: cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47).⁸ The early Christians would have seen themselves as the beginning of Israel’s restoration by the Messiah: the *nēṣîrē*/נְשִׁיר restored by the *nēṣer*/נֶשֶׁר. So they could themselves have been responsible for the self-designation “Nazarenes,” with deliberate allusion to Isa 49:6 along with the obvious reference to Nazareth. It is more likely, however, that the term was first used of them by other Jews and only given more than obvious significance as a secondary development by Christians.

In addition to these designations for the community, there are two aspects of the leadership of the community that offer insight into its self-understanding:

(1) The twelve (apostles): The Twelve, who as a collective body are prominent in the early chapters of Acts, probably corresponded to the twelve princes of the tribes in the original constitution of Israel in the wilderness (Num 1:4–16).⁹

⁷ There is a bibliography of recent discussion of Ναζωραῖος in Matt 2:23 in J. A. Sanders, “Ναζωραῖος in Matthew 2.23,” in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner; JSNTSup 104; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 117 n. 1.

⁸ Cf. especially Håkan Ulfgard, “The Branch in the Last Days: Observations on the New Covenant before and after the Messiah,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context* (ed. T. H. Lim; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 233–47.

⁹ William Horbury, “The Twelve and the Phylarchs,” NTS 32 (1986): 503–27. For the association of the Twelve with the tribes, see Matt 19:28. They could not have been drawn one from each of the tribes, since they include two pairs of brothers, but a group of twelve leaders, even if not themselves from all the tribes, could stand representatively for the whole people (1 Esd 5:8).

They belong therefore to the community's consciousness of itself as the nucleus of the restored Israel, reconstituted through a new exodus as the new "congregation of YHWH."

(2) The pillars: Paul uses this term to describe three of the Jerusalem leaders: James the brother of Jesus, Peter, and John the son of Zebedee (Gal 2:9). It is clear from his account that this was how they were known in the Jerusalem church. The term may well have been applied also to other such leaders. It probably reflects the image of the community as a building, the pillars therefore being leaders who act as key supports for the whole building. This is an instance of the portrayal of the church as the new temple, the messianic temple built by God, which is common in early Christian literature, and shows that the image goes back to the Jerusalem church.¹⁰ In principle, if the eschatological temple was understood as people rather than literally a building, the image would be set free from any necessary geographical reference, as in fact it was in the course of its use in early Christianity. But, so prominent is Jerusalem in the biblical prophecies of the messianic age, it was natural for the first believers in Jesus to connect the new temple with Jerusalem and to locate its major architectural features, such as the pillars, there.

In these various terms for the community and its leaders, therefore, we see the community's strongly eschatological understanding of itself as the nucleus of the messianically renewed Israel.

2. The Community's Life and Practice

From Luke's summary description of the life of the Jerusalem church (Acts 2:42–47), it is evident that it centered on two locations. One was the temple, where the believers in Jesus attended the public prayers at the times of the twice daily burnt-offerings (2:46a, 47a; 3:1, 11). Luke probably means to ascribe their favorable reputation among the people of the city generally to this exemplary practice of cultic piety (2:47a). Their strong attachment to the temple and its cult need not be inconsistent with the community's understanding of itself as the new temple, destined to take the place of Herod's building. No doubt they knew Jesus' prophecies of the destruction of the temple, but they could well have thought that, while the temple still stood, its cult remained authorized by God. This makes them decisively different from the Qumran community, which also understood itself as a temple, but as a temporary substitute for the Jerusalem temple, which the members of the community boycotted because they considered its service corrupt and invalid. More than anything else this defined them as a sectarian group, since it was especially common participation (even from a distance) in the temple cult that united most Jews in a common practice of Judaism despite the

¹⁰ Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," 442–48; Christian Grappe, *D'un Temple à l'autre: Pierre et l'Eglise primitive de Jérusalem* (Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses 71; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 88–115.

sharp disagreements of parties such as the Sadducees and the Pharisees. By contrast with the Qumran sect, the Jerusalem church did not hold aloof from the temple. On the contrary, its outstandingly devout participation in the temple cult maintained its place within common Judaism, a distinctive party, as Pharisees and Sadducees were, but not a sectarian or schismatic movement.

From this point of view it is also worth noting that, according to Acts, other Jews regarded the Nazarenes as a “party” (*αἵρεσις*).¹¹ This is the term—not in itself pejorative—which Luke also uses of the Sadducees and the Pharisees (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 26:5). Since this is also Josephus’s usage for the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes (e.g., *Ant.* 13.171), and unless Luke is dependent on Josephus, it must reflect a standard Jewish Greek terminology for the various parties within first-century Palestinian Judaism, based on comparing them, as Josephus explicitly does, with Greek philosophical schools. Acts 24:5; 28:22 thus clearly depict Christians as one of these parties within Judaism, by no means necessarily one of which the speaker would approve, but not a group outside the accepted parameters of Jewish faith and practice.

The Jerusalem church not only attended daily prayers in the temple, but also assembled daily in the outer court to hear the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42, 46; 5:12; in Luke’s terminology “the apostles” are the Twelve). This was no doubt the only available space where the whole community could assemble for this purpose. But the purpose was also evangelistic. These gatherings were occasions on which the Twelve addressed the crowds (3:11–26), and many of their healing miracles may have taken place there (cf. 2:43; 5:12–16). These too were evangelistic, since they were performed in the name of Jesus and witnessed that Jesus was alive and continuing, from heaven and through his apostles, the same ministry of inaugurating the kingdom that he had practiced on earth (3:1–16; 4:10–12; cf. Jas 5:14–15).

As well as attending the temple, the Jerusalem Christians also met in smaller groups in homes (2:46b; cf. 4:23–31; 12:5, 12). As with some other Jewish groups who fostered a distinctive form of religious life together, these meetings focused on a common meal. Any such meal in an ancient context would carry connotations of participation in a common life and relationship to God, but in the case of the Jerusalem church the meals were probably understood as continuing Jesus’ own meal practice (as the term “breaking of bread” probably indicates), especially but not necessarily only his “last supper” with the disciples. For the common and distinctive identity of these Jewish believers in Jesus, this regular eating together must have been crucial. Whether the practice of meeting in a number of groups in various houses was also a medium for diversity, even division into seriously differing groups, as has often been suggested, is much less certain. (We shall discuss the distinction between “Hellenists” and “Hebrews” below.)

¹¹This term is often translated “sect,” but the sociological connotations that now attach to that term are not appropriate. Whether or not Pharisees, Sadducees or Jewish Christians should be considered “sectarian” groups, this is not what the term *αἵρεσις* means.

The community of goods practiced by the Jerusalem church, according to Acts (2:44–45; 4:32–5:11), has often been regarded as a fictional idealization by Luke. But the fact that community of goods was practiced not only by the Qumran community, but also by many Essene groups in the towns and villages of Jewish Palestine makes the Acts account entirely plausible,¹² especially as the Jerusalem church's practice can also be seen as an extension of the practice of Jesus himself and the disciples who traveled with him, in living from a common fund (Luke 8:3; John 12:6). The echo of Deuteronomy 15:4 ("there will be no one in need among you") in Acts 4:34 suggests that the practice was designed to fulfil the requirements of Torah in the renewed Israel, and may be connected with the idea of the eschatological jubilee announced by Jesus (Luke 4:18–19; Isa 61:1–2). In the background lies the economic hardship of many Palestinian Jews under Roman or Herodian rule, which undoubtedly fed into the other messianic and revolutionary movements of the pre-70 period. Since many of the poor were peasants who had been forced off their land by debt, part of the religious ideology of these movements was the implementation of the neglected provisions of the Torah for regular remission of debt (including Deut 15:1–4). When the Sicarii entered Jerusalem in 66, they burned the archives containing the records of debt (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.426). The community of goods in the Jerusalem church can be seen as alternative strategy for realizing the ideals of the Torah in a community which probably attracted many of the landless and unemployed. References to the continuing need for assistance for the poor of the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:29; Gal 2:10) are not evidence for the failure of the scheme, as has sometimes been suggested, but of the continuing attraction of the church to victims of the harshening economic conditions of the time. Luke certainly portrays the community of goods not as a failed experiment, but as an aspect of his picture of the original Jerusalem church as a model for all the churches. While this practice as such was not, so far as we know, copied elsewhere,¹³ what it did pass on to the early Christian movement more generally was a concern for the sharing of possessions to the benefit of the poor in less formally organized ways (cf. Jas 2:15–16; 2 Thess 3:6–12; 2 Cor 8:8–14).¹⁴

¹² Brian Capper, "The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. R. Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. B. W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 323–56, also argues for some more specific parallels between Essene practice and that attested in Acts. See also J. Draper, "The Social Milieu and Motivation of Community of Goods in the Jerusalem Church of Acts," in *Church in Context/Kerk in Konteks* (ed. C. Breytenbach; Pretoria: NGK Boekhandelaar, 1988), 79–90.

¹³ But cf. Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus* 13: Christians "despise all things equally and regard them as common property."

¹⁴ Cf. Brian Capper, "Reciprocity and the Ethic of Acts," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (ed. I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 499–518; John D. Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 427–30.

Acts 6:1 makes a distinction between two groups in the Jerusalem church: the “Hellenists” and the “Hebrews.” From F. C. Baur¹⁵ to Martin Hengel¹⁶ this has been the peg on which a highly influential theory about the development of the early church has hung. What appears in Acts to be a dispute about the fair distribution of the community’s economic resources was more fundamentally, according to this theory, a major ideological divide about the observance of Torah by Jewish Christians. The “Hellenists,” Diaspora Jews with allegedly more “liberal” views of Torah and temple than conservative Jews of Palestinian origin, were critical of the law and the temple. Their views are voiced by Stephen in Acts 7, and it was they, not the “Hebrews,” who were subsequently objects of persecution (8:1) because of these views. Dispersed from Jerusalem, they became the pioneers of the “law-free” Gentile mission, paving the way for Paul’s mission with its critique of the Torah. The departure of the “Hellenists” from Jerusalem left the Jerusalem church in the control of the conservative “Hebrews” under the leadership (then or later) of James. The Jerusalem church thus comes to represent ultra-conservative Jewish Christianity, opposed to Paul and to the Gentile mission. (Some who accept this general picture see James, on the basis of Acts 15, as a mediating rather than an extreme figure.) This theory has been comprehensively refuted in an important study by Craig Hill,¹⁷ and opposition to it is growing among other scholars also.¹⁸

Deconstruction of the theory involves the following, among other, considerations: (1) It is now generally agreed that the terms “Hellenists” and “Hebrews” refer to language-use, i.e., the “Hellenists” are Jews whose mother tongue is Greek, because they were born in the western Diaspora, while the “Hebrews” are Jews born in the land of Israel (or—a usually neglected point—in the eastern Diaspora), who may well be able to speak some Greek but whose first language is Aramaic.¹⁹ Of course, some cultural differences would accompany the language differences. We know (from Acts 6:9) that groups of Jews from the Greek-speaking Diaspora who had settled in Jerusalem formed distinct communities,

¹⁵ For Baur’s theory and a brief review of subsequent scholarship, see Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 5–17.

¹⁶ See Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1983), chapters 1 and 3; Hengel, *Earliest Christianity* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1986), 71–80. A recent study adopting this theory is Wolfgang Kraus, *Zwischen Jerusalem und Antiochia: Die “Hellenisten,” Paulus und die Aufnahme der Heiden in das endzeitliche Gottesvolk* (SBS 179; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999).

¹⁷ Hill, *Hellenists*.

¹⁸ Edvin Larsson, “Die Hellenisten und die Urgemeinde,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 205–25; Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” 428–29, 462–75; Oskar Skarsaune, “Were the Hellenists ‘Liberals?’” *Mishkan* 24 (1996): 27–35; Barry L. Blackburn, “Stephen,” *DLNT* 1123–26; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 240–47.

¹⁹ The widespread acceptance of this view derives especially from C. F. D. Moule, “Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?” *ExpTim* 70 (1958–59): 100–102.

but it should not be overlooked that there could be significant cultural differences between these immigrant communities as well as between them and the “Hebrews.” (2) The notion that Jews from the western Diaspora resident in Jerusalem would take a more “liberal” view of Torah and temple is mistaken. Most would have settled in Jerusalem precisely out of devotion to the temple and to the Torah, fervent observance of which would be facilitated by proximity to the temple. They might be expected to be, if anything, more “conservative” or “orthodox” than many Jews of Palestinian origin. (3) Though Stephen, in Luke’s narrative, is accused of attacking Torah and temple, Luke is clear that this is false witness (Acts 6:13). (4) Stephen’s speech is not critical of Torah or temple, but a self-defense against these charges.²⁰ Solomon’s temple (7:47), the speech argues, was the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham (7:7). As a house built by human hands, it is not the ideal and permanent—heavenly and eschatological—dwelling-place of God, made by God’s own hands (7:48–50), and so (Stephen implies) will not last for ever. Few, if any, Jews would have disagreed. (5) According to Luke’s narrative, Stephen’s speech successfully defends him against the charges brought. His audience are angry (7:54) because of the way he has cleverly turned the charges against them (7:51–53). But his stoning is not due to the speech at all. It is the penalty for the perceived blasphemy in his claim to see Jesus at God’s right hand (7:55–57). In summary, there is nothing idiosyncratically “Hellenist” about Luke’s Stephen: he voices what Luke surely regards as the common theology of the Jerusalem church. If it is not a historically reliable picture, we have no other evidence on which to base another account of the Hellenists. (6) The common view, based on 8:1, that the “Hellenists” (not mentioned in that verse) were persecuted for their distinctive theological views, while the apostles, representing “the Hebrews,” were not, is a misinterpretation. Luke does not say that the apostles were not persecuted, but that they were not scattered from Jerusalem. They may have been imprisoned. They may have escaped temporarily from the city and then returned. Luke’s point in mentioning them is that this is not the point at which their leadership of the Jerusalem church ends, whereas the next persecution (chapter 12) drives Peter away from the city. (7) That it was some of the “Hellenists” who pioneered the mission to Gentiles in Antioch (11:20) presupposes only their linguistic and greater cultural affinity with such Gentiles, not a different theology. There is no need to doubt Luke’s further report that Barnabas, a “Hellenist” acting precisely as an official delegate of the Jerusalem church, joined their work with enthusiasm (11:22–24).

Beyond all these specific points, there is one general problem with the hitherto influential theory about Hellenists and Hebrews, which is also a wider problem affecting much discussion of the Jerusalem church and its relation to the wider Christian movement. This is the confusion between two quite different issues about the Torah: Should Jewish believers in Jesus continue to practice the entire

²⁰ Edvin Larsson, “Temple-Criticism and the Jewish Heritage: Some Reflexions on Acts 6–7,” *NTS* 39 (1993): 379–95.

Torah? and: Should Gentile converts to the Christian faith be required to obey the Torah? These are independent questions. A negative answer to the second does not presuppose a negative answer to the first, while a positive answer to the first cannot in itself decide the second. All our evidence suggests that it was entirely taken for granted in the Jerusalem church that Jewish Christians remained Torah-observant. This issue was not debated, and there was no division between “Hellenists” and “Hebrews” on this issue. There were, as we shall see, disagreements as to whether or to what extent Gentile Christians should obey the law of Moses, but these were not between “Hellenists” and “Hebrews.”

Of course, various Jewish groups disagreed as to the interpretation of Torah. Such legal differences were, for the most part, the most important differences between them, dividing even Pharisees into adherents of one or other of the “houses” of Shammai and Hillel. The Jerusalem Christians may have followed Jesus in disregarding Pharisaic oral traditions of interpretation of the law, and would not have been the only Jews to do so. They may have followed Jesus in stressing the overriding significance of the commandments to love God and the neighbor, without any implication that any of the other commandments were abrogated. The letter of James could be evidence for this (cf. 2:8–13), and it could also suggest that, as with Jesus, their preferred mode of expounding Torah was wisdom instruction rather than halakic debate and definition. Perhaps an insistence on interpreting the law in the style of and with the authority of Jesus lies behind the (mis)perception of some in the Hellenist synagogues that Stephen was attacking the law (Acts 6:10, 13–14). In any case, it is notable that, whereas in earlier chapters of Acts the Christians are represented as popularly respected for their exemplary piety (2:47; 5:13), popular opposition arises for the first time in the synagogues of the Jewish immigrants from the Diaspora (6:9–14). It may not have been Stephen’s message but his audience that accounts for the difference.²¹ These immigrants were among the most zealous of Jerusalem Jews for the Torah and the temple, the most sensitive to any hint of priorities differing from their own.

Finally, in this section, we should note two forms of activity that must have been of considerable importance in the Jerusalem church, as well as constituting some of its most important contributions to the rest of the Christian movement. One is the handing down of traditions of the sayings and deeds of Jesus. Many of the oral traditions that have reached written form in the Gospels we know must have taken form in the early Jerusalem church. Moreover, since Greek was an important language in the Jerusalem church, not only because of the “Hellenists” within it but also because of its continuous ministry of preaching to Diaspora Jews on pilgrimage to the temple, Gospel traditions must already, as Hengel has stressed,²² have taken form in Greek, as well as in Aramaic. It is intrinsically likely that the first written collections of Gospel traditions were produced in Jerusalem,

²¹Cf. Skarsaune, “Were the Hellenists,” 32–34.

²²Hengel, *Between*, 27–28.

but we have no means of identifying them with any probability. Studies of the relationship of the letter of James to Gospel traditions, while showing affinities to sayings in Q and special Matthean traditions, have not proved able to demonstrate that James knew one strand of Gospel traditions identifiable to us.

The second activity is more certainly a literary, indeed scholarly one. This is the development of Christian “pesher” interpretation of the biblical prophetic texts in which the first Christians read the events of eschatological fulfillment in which they were involved. Evidence such as the letter of Jude, which contains one of the most elaborate pieces of sustained exegesis in the New Testament,²³ and the speech of James in Acts 15:14–21,²⁴ evinces highly skilled use of contemporary methods of Jewish scriptural exegesis, such as we can observe in the Qumran pesharim as well as elsewhere in Jewish literature. While working with the accepted methods of Jewish exegesis, the exegesis itself does not simply follow an established pattern, but is creative and must have been, in fact, the medium in which the theological creativity of the earliest Christian circles mainly operated. The fruits of it are probably to be seen in many places in the New Testament where texts from the Jewish Scriptures are deployed in a creatively Christian way. We can be sure of this in instances, like Psalm 110:1, where the use of a particular text is very widespread across the early Christian writings and must therefore be of very early origin. But such quotations are merely the surviving fragments of much more extensive exegetical work (of the kind we see in Jude 5–19, 1 Pet 2:4–10 or Heb 1). We must postulate something like an exegetical school within the early Jerusalem church whose members could be considered the first Christian theologians.

3. Leadership

Christian traditions later than the New Testament call James the brother of Jesus the first bishop of the Jerusalem church (the best evidence is probably the Jerusalem bishops list discussed below). The actual term “bishop” may not go back to his lifetime, but there is no doubt that it is appropriate in the sense that for a considerable period up to his death in 62, James had a singular and unrivaled position as head of the Jerusalem church, with the status in the wider Christian movement that was also implied by his position as head of the mother church. Some traditions suggest that he occupied this position of eminence from the beginning. Clement of Alexandria, for example, wrote that, after the ascen-

²³ R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), chapter 4 (“Jude’s Exegesis”).

²⁴ See R. Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles (Acts 15.13–21),” in *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. B. Witherington; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 154–84; Jostein Ådna, “James’ Position at the Summit Meeting of the Apostles and the Elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15),” in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (ed. J. Ådna and H. Kvalbein; WUNT 127; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000), 125–61.

sion of Jesus, the apostles Peter, James (the son of Zebedee) and John appointed James the Lord's brother bishop of Jerusalem (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.1.3). In Acts, however, apart from the reference to the brothers of Jesus in 1:14, James goes unmentioned until 12:17, at the point in Luke's narrative where Peter leaves Jerusalem, to be found there again only at the apostolic council (15:7–11). This has often been taken as Luke's way of indicating that James effectively replaced Peter as head of the Jerusalem church. But it has also been suggested that Acts portrays Peter, the most prominent member of the Twelve, not as principal leader of the Jerusalem church (the position James had held from the beginning) but as leader of the church's outreach to non-believers.²⁵ The Twelve, with Peter at their head, do play the latter role—and this is certainly the principal emphasis in Luke's narrative, of which the expansion of the Christian movement is the main theme—but it is also clear that Acts 6:1–6 depicts the Twelve as leaders of the Jerusalem church itself. Probably, therefore, we should think of James only gradually reaching the position of pre-eminence in the church that he appears to have in Acts 15 and certainly has in Acts 21. He was already a significant figure when Paul paid his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (Gal 1:19). Paul's reference to the three “pillars” with whom he consulted in Jerusalem—James, Cephas [Peter] and John (Gal 2:9)—seems, with its striking positioning of James first, to document a stage in this rise of James to pre-eminence in Jerusalem. It seems likely that when many members of the Twelve were no longer permanently resident in Jerusalem, as was certainly the case with Peter, while at least one had died (Acts 12:2), James stepped into the leadership gap. Any remaining members of the Twelve would have become members of the college of elders with whom James presided over the church (Acts 21:18).²⁶

There is no doubt that James became a much more important person in the early Christian movement than a casual reader of the New Testament is likely to imagine. His prominence in later Christian traditions,²⁷ even though their details are mostly legendary, testifies at least to his historical importance, to be ranked with Peter and Paul in his influence. He was the eldest of the four brothers of Jesus (Mark 6:3), and so there is a certain “dynastic” character to his role. But even the most fulsome later depictions of him never represent him as Jesus’ successor. There was no question that the exalted Jesus governed his community himself from the heavenly throne and needed no successor. James himself, perhaps mindful of Jesus’ own depreciation of family relatedness to him (Mark 3:32–35; Luke 11:27–28), claimed authority not as brother but as servant of the Messiah (Jas 1:1). Yet he, like his three brothers, was commonly known as “the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19; 1 Cor 9:1; Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*

²⁵ John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 42–44.

²⁶ See further Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” 427–42.

²⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988), xli–lxii; Painter, *Just James*, chapters 5–7.

2.23.4), and there was probably a widespread sense that, like the royal family in any ancient court, it was appropriate that the relatives of the King should hold major offices in the kingdom. James was far from being the only member of his family who exercised leadership in the Christian movement.²⁸ His brothers Joses, Judas (Jude) and Simon were well known traveling missionaries (1 Cor 9:1), as were, probably, his uncle Clopas (Joseph's brother) and Clopas's wife Mary (John 19:25).²⁹ Jude's two grandsons, Zoker and James, who farmed the family small-holding in Nazareth, were also leaders of the Palestinian Jewish Christian communities around the end of the century (Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.19.1–3.20.7),³⁰ while James's own successor as leader of the Jerusalem church was his cousin Simeon the son of Clopas (see below). Julius Africanus, reporting Palestinian Jewish Christian tradition at the beginning of the third century, wrote, of the relatives of Jesus in general, that starting from Nazareth and Kochaba (a Galilean village near Nazareth) they traveled throughout the land of Israel. This is a rare glimpse of early Christianity in Galilee: evidently, while James led the mother church in Jerusalem, Nazareth and Kochaba were bases for other members of the family who worked as traveling missionaries.³¹

Saying 12 of the *Gospel of Thomas* reads:

The disciples said to Jesus: “We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be great over us?” Jesus said to them: “Wherever you shall have come, you are to go to James the Righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.”

The saying probably derives from the original Jewish Christian mission to the area of east Syria, which thus expressed the unique authority of the leader of the mother church, and it may well go back to James's own lifetime. The quasi-surname, “the Righteous,” which is widely attested for James, is no mere tribute to his personal piety. Only a few great biblical figures (Enoch, Noah and especially Abraham) were commonly accorded this epithet, and the only post-biblical figure to whom it was standardly attached is the high priest Simeon the Righteous, legendary in Jewish memory as the last truly righteous high priest whose ministry had been blessed with the constant evidence of divine favor. This is not to say that James was regarded as a high-priestly figure, which has sometimes been argued on very slender evidence,³² but it does reflect the ascription to James of a central

²⁸ For a summary of what is known of the relatives of Jesus in the early church, see R. Bauckham, “The Relatives of Jesus,” *Themelios* 21.2 (1996): 18–21.

²⁹ Chapter 6 (“Mary of Clopas”) in R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

³⁰ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 94–106.

³¹ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 57–70; the attempt by Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 31–35, to deny that these relatives of Jesus were Christians is wholly implausible.

³² For an alternative understanding of the relevant traditions in Hegesippus, see R. Bauckham, “For What Offence Was James Put to Death?” in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NovTSup 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 206–15.

role in salvation history, as the man who oversaw the establishment of the messianic people of God and whose exemplary righteousness modeled its life. It follows that it could be said of him, as Jewish theology said of Abraham, the representative righteous person: “James the Righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.” It is also therefore not surprising that Jewish Christianity developed an exegetic tradition in which references to him were found in Scripture. For example, a version of Isa 3:10 (referring to “the righteous one”) was understood to refer to his lynching (Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.15; (*Second*) *Apocalypse of James* 61.14–19, and Psalm 118 was read as though James were the speaker.³³

Among the Jewish Christian traditions about James that Hegesippus recorded around the middle of the second century there is the puzzling information that he was called “Oblias, which is, in Greek, ‘Rampart of the people’” (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.7). I have suggested elsewhere³⁴ that this should be seen in the context of the Jerusalem church’s understanding of itself as the messianic temple, which, as we have already noticed, accounts for the description of James, Peter and John as “pillars” (Gal 2:9), as well as that of Peter as the rock on which the church was built (Matt 16:18) or of the apostles and prophets as the foundations (Eph 2:20). The description of the new Zion in Isa 54:11–12 was an obvious source for reference to such architectural features and was understood at Qumran to refer to various different offices in the community (4QpIsad). Hegesippus’s Greek word *Oblias* may be a corruption of the Hebrew *gebul-ām*, “wall of the people.” *Gebūl* גְּבֻלָּם is the word used in Isa 54:12 to describe the surrounding wall of the city or temple. It was doubtless selected to refer to James’s special role in the messianic people of God because, unlike other features of the description in Isa 54:11–12, it is singular. But it may also refer to James as the powerful and indefatigable intercessor whose prayers protected the city (Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.6). In the traditions in Hegesippus the Roman siege of Jerusalem is, unhistorically, represented as immediately following the martyrdom of James (2.23.18): the protective wall removed, the city fell prey to God’s judgment. There is a remarkable parallel in the late first-century Jewish apocalypse of Baruch, where Baruch is told to leave Jerusalem prior to its destruction, because “your works are for this city like a firm pillar and your prayers like a strong wall” (2 Bar. 2:1). In these traditions about James’s eminent role in salvation history we seem in touch both with the early Jerusalem church’s self-understanding and with the reverent reflection with which James was regarded in traditions that developed after the fall of Jerusalem.

A list of fifteen Jewish Christian bishops of Jerusalem, beginning with James, is preserved by Eusebius and, probably independently and in a slightly variant form, Epiphanius. They knew it as a list extending to the time of the Bar Kokhba

³³ Bauckham, “For What Offence,” 212–13.

³⁴ Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” 448–50; “For What Offence,” 207–8 (see 207 n. 21 for other attempts to explain Oblias).

War (132–135), after which Jews were banned from Jerusalem and the succession of Gentile bishops of the city began. The second on the list, Simeon the son of Clopas, was executed in the reign of Trajan, no earlier than 100 and plausibly several years into the second century.³⁵ That leaves thirteen bishops to fill a period of about thirty years.³⁶ Eusebius's explanation, that they were very short-lived (*Hist. eccl.* 4.5.1), is scarcely convincing. One possible explanation is that the third name on the list (Justus in Eusebius's version) was the last Jewish bishop of Jerusalem, and the remaining twelve names are those of a college of twelve elders with whom James presided over the church.³⁷ Another possibility is that the list in fact extends beyond 135 and includes a succession of Jewish bishops of Jerusalem in exile, covering a period contemporary with the early Gentile bishops of the city.³⁸ In support of this could be the probability that already between 70 and 132 the bishops of Jerusalem were only nominally so, since, although the issue is still disputed, it seems most likely that Jerusalem was unpopulated, other than by Roman soldiers, between the two Jewish revolts.³⁹ Presumably Simeon the son of Clopas was a bishop of Jerusalem in exile, probably east of the Jordan (see section 6 below), and so may all his Jewish Christian successors have been.

4. Mission and Gentile Believers

On the basis of Old Testament prophetic expectations of the messianic age, as well as some sayings of Jesus, it must have been clear that the eschatological character of the Christian community, as the nucleus of the renewed Israel, gave

³⁵ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 92–93.

³⁶ Frederic Manns, “La liste des premiers évêques de Jérusalem,” in *Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents* (ed. F. Manns and E. Alliata; Studium Biblicum Franciscanum: Collectio Maior 38; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), 419–31, still maintains this understanding of the list.

³⁷ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 70–79, developing the argument of R. van den Broek, “Der Brief des Jakobus an Quadratus und das Problem der jüdenchristliche Bischöfe von Jerusalem (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* IV,5,1–3),” in *Text and Testimony* (ed. T. Baarda, et al.; Kampen: Kok, 1988), 56–63. The argument is supported by the fact that six of these twelve names appear in the apocryphal Letter of James to Quadratus as names of Christian leaders in Jerusalem contemporary with James, though it could be that the author of this apocryphon merely assumed that those whom he knew from the bishops list were later to be bishops of Jerusalem would already have been leaders in James's lifetime. Y. Lederman, “Les évêques juifs de Jérusalem,” *RB* 104 (1999): 211–22, considers all the names after Simeon to be those of local church leaders in the early second century, but his attempt to relate them to the rabbinic tradition of the five disciples of Jesus is very unconvincing. (For a different view of that tradition, see R. Bauckham, “Nicodemus and the Gurion Family,” *JTS* 46 (1996): 1–37; here 34–37.)

³⁸ A problem for this view is that Eusebius apparently acquired the list from the archives of the Jerusalem church (*Hist. eccl.* 5.12.2), which are unlikely to have recorded such bishops in exile.

³⁹ Hillel Geva, “Searching for Roman Jerusalem,” *BAR* 23, no. 6 (1997): 36–37.

it universal significance—both for all Israel and for all nations. It would be the focus both for the restoration of Israel and for the conversion of the nations to the God of Israel. In discussions of the origins of the Christian mission to the world, it has been usual to distinguish the idea of a “centripetal” movement to the center in Jerusalem from the rest of the world and the idea of a “centrifugal” movement out from the center in Jerusalem to the rest of the world. The former is the dominant picture in Old Testament prophecies of the return of exiled Jews to Zion and of the pilgrimage of the nations to worship in Zion. In accordance with this picture, it might have seemed sufficient for the messianic community simply to wait in Jerusalem for the further eschatological events to transpire. In fact, however, there is no evidence that the Jerusalem church ever adopted this approach. From the beginning there was missionary activity of a kind. The apostles proclaimed Jesus as Messiah—not only to residents of Jerusalem, but also to the much larger number of Jews from the whole of Palestine and from the Diaspora who were constantly visiting Jerusalem for the festivals. From the beginning there must have been many such visitors who heard and believed the Gospel message in Jerusalem, were baptized, and returned to their homes in effect as missionaries. Preaching the Gospel at the center of the Jewish world, in Jerusalem, was an extremely effective means of reaching the whole Diaspora, which was not much less than coterminous with the whole of the known world. The apostles in Jerusalem thus set in motion a centrifugal movement—the word of the Lord going forth from Zion, as the prophet foresaw (Isa 2:3)—which would have been expected to lead to the centripetal movement of eschatological assembly in Zion.

Thus it was not in principle a radically new departure when members of the Jerusalem community itself traveled from Jerusalem to proclaim the Gospel elsewhere. In Luke's account in Acts, this apparently does not happen until members of the Jerusalem church (other than the Twelve) are forcibly scattered by the persecution following the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19–20). But Luke's account is somewhat schematic and no doubt simplifies the complexity of the history. It ignores, for example, the links between the Jerusalem church and the Christian communities of Galilee, as well as the precedent set by Jesus' own preaching tours with his disciples. There may well have been traveling missionaries from the very beginning of the church. In Acts the evangelistic outreach of the Jerusalem church within Jewish Palestine is represented especially by the activities of Philip, who was among those dispersed from Jerusalem by persecution and worked as a pioneer evangelist (Acts 8:4–40), and Peter, who traveled to visit already established Christian communities, though not without evangelistic effect on outsiders (Acts 9:32–43). But the missionary outreach of the Jerusalem church's members went much further. Others of those who left the city at the time of the persecution went to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 9:19), while Barnabas and Mark later, after splitting with Paul, became missionaries in Cyprus and no doubt also elsewhere (Acts 15:39). Paul refers to the presence in Rome of the apostles Andronicus and Junia, who must have been among the early members of the Jerusalem church, since Paul says that they were “in Christ” before him

(Rom 16:7). They may have been among those who first preached the Gospel in the Jewish communities of Rome. Moreover, there is other evidence of close links between the churches of Jerusalem and Rome: others who had been members of the Jerusalem church and are later found in Rome are Peter, John Mark and Silas (Silvanus) (1 Pet 5:12–13; cf. Col 4:16). Probably the most reliable tradition about the foundation of the church of Edessa attributes it to Addai, a missionary from Jerusalem,⁴⁰ while there must have been some historical root to the association with the apostle Thomas that characterizes the early Christian literature of east Syria. The brothers of Jesus (presumably not James, who remained in Jerusalem, but Jude, Simon and Joses) were well known as traveling missionaries (1 Cor 9:1), though we do not know whether they traveled outside Palestine. Their base may have been their Galilean homes in Nazareth and nearby Kochaba,⁴¹ but they will also have had close links with the Jerusalem church under James's leadership.

The Jerusalem church maintained a directive and supervisory role in relation to this whole expanding Christian movement. This is the significance of the travels of Peter and John within Palestine (Acts 8:14–25; 9:32, 43), of Barnabas's presence in Antioch (Acts 10:22–24), of the conference in Jerusalem when Paul and Barnabas consulted with James, Peter and John about the principles of their Gentile mission (Gal 2:1–10), of the visit of "certain persons from James" to Antioch (Gal 2:12), of the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 and the implementation of its decree (see below), and of saying 12 of the Gospel of Thomas, which we have already noticed. Probably Paul was unusual in the extent to which he worked independently of the Jerusalem church, but even Paul acknowledged its unique place in the Christian movement.

The authority of the Jerusalem church came into play most obviously and decisively when the issue of Gentile believers in Jesus became a matter of controversy. It was never, it seems, a matter of controversy that there could be Gentile believers in Jesus,⁴² nor does anyone seem to have thought that such Gentile believers should constitute a distinct people (or peoples) of God apart from the community of Jewish believers in Jesus. The question was whether such Gentile believers could join the one messianic people of God only by converting to Judaism as full proselytes (involving circumcision for men and obedience to the whole Torah for men and women) as well as believing in Jesus and receiving the Spirit, or whether faith, baptism and the Spirit alone were necessary. Since there

⁴⁰ Probably the earliest reference to Addai is in the *First Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,3) 36:15–25, where he is treated as a contemporary of James. The discussion of Addai by Marie-Louise Chaumont, *La Christianisation de l'empire Iranien des origines aux grandes persécution du IVe siècle* (CSCO 499; Louvain: Peeters, 1988), 14–16, still takes no account of this text and dates Addai's mission to Edessa ca. 100.

⁴¹ Cf. Julius Africanus in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.14, discussed in Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 66–69.

⁴² See especially Peter Stuhlmacher, "Matt 28:16–20 and the Christian Mission in the Apostolic and Postapostolic Age," in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (ed. J. Ådnå and H. Kvalbein; WUNT 127; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000), 17–43.

were many Gentiles who worshipped the God of Israel and attended synagogue, without actually becoming Jews, and since some of these even visited the temple in Jerusalem, it is quite possible that there were some Gentile believers in Jesus very soon after the beginning of the Christian movement, but we should probably assume that such Gentiles were required to become Jews and that initially this was uncontroversial. A deliberate strategy of mission to Gentiles was not adopted, probably because mission to Jews had priority in the expected sequence of eschatological events; the conversion of Gentiles would be expected to follow the renewal of the Jewish people of God. According to Acts, a deliberate strategy of proclaiming the Gospel to Gentiles first began in Antioch, where Greek-speaking former members of the Jerusalem church pioneered it, soon joined by Barnabas, who gave it the Jerusalem church's blessing (Acts 11:20–24).

The conversion of the centurion Cornelius and his household in Caesarea, through the preaching of Peter (Acts 10), occurred probably some considerable time before this (Luke recounts it out of chronological sequence) and was an isolated event, not itself the beginning of a mission to Gentiles.⁴³ But it was of great importance (and hence its prominence in Acts) in establishing in principle the terms on which Gentiles could join the messianic people of God. What Peter learned was that God no longer required the separation of Jews and Gentiles that the Mosaic law had been designed to ensure. In order to understand the issue at stake here, it is vital to realize that Jews generally regarded Gentiles not as ritually impure, but as morally impure. Only Jews could contract ritual impurity, the sort that comes through sexual functions, contact with corpses and so forth, is transmitted through physical contact and proximity, and is not a matter of moral culpability. But life in Gentile society was characterized by those especially culpable sins—idolatry, murder, sexual immorality—that were morally defiling.⁴⁴ Many Jews therefore considered that close association with Gentiles—visiting Gentiles in their homes or sharing a meal, as well as, of course, intermarriage—was forbidden by the Torah because of the danger of moral contamination, of being drawn into or condoning the idolatrous and immoral practices common to Gentile life. This—rather than, as many scholars have thought, the danger of ritual defilement (which was minimal) or of disobedience to the Mosaic food-laws (which Jews dining with Gentiles could keep by avoiding meat)—was the issue in Peter's visiting Cornelius in his home (Acts 10:28; 11:3) and in his later sharing of table-fellowship with Gentile Christians in Antioch (Gal 2:12). What Peter learned through revelation and through the evident gift of the Spirit to Cornelius and his household was that reception of the Spirit and baptism, given to Gentile believers in Jesus, cleansed them from moral impurity (Acts 15:8–9) without any

⁴³This paragraph and the next summarize the detailed argument in R. Bauckham, "Peter, James and the Gentiles," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NovTSup 115; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 91–142.

⁴⁴For the two categories of impurity, see especially Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

need for circumcision and wholesale adoption of the Torah. Those who, in the course of the controversy, took the alternative view (Gal 2:4, 12–13; Acts 15:1), held that Gentiles could become morally pure only through circumcision (for males) and obedience to the whole Torah—by ceasing to be Gentiles. This issue of what was required of Gentile believers was inevitably closely connected with the issue of close association between Jews and Gentiles. For Peter, the separation, enforced by the Torah, between Jews and Gentiles was no longer necessary in the case of association between Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus, because the latter were now morally pure, but for others, such association with uncircumcised Gentiles was scandalous (Gal 2:12).

The issue was discussed a number of times in meetings of Christian leaders and of the whole Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1–18; Gal 2:1–10, 14; Acts 15)⁴⁵ before a final resolution was achieved. It was the success of the evangelization of Gentiles in Antioch and in the early missionary travels of Paul and Barnabas that exacerbated the controversy and made an authoritative decision essential. Paul's position, as presented in Galatians, was essentially the same as Peter's, and he may well have learned it from Peter when they spent a fortnight together at an early stage of Paul's apostolic career (Gal 1:18). Peter's withdrawal from table-fellowship with Gentile Christians in Antioch, under pressure of some kind from Jerusalem (Gal 2:12), must have been a matter of expediency which Paul saw as betraying the principle. At the Jerusalem council it was James's careful argument from Scripture, citing a prophecy in which it was clear that Gentiles who join the messianic people of God do so precisely as Gentiles (Acts 15:14–19), that finally settled the matter. Based on James's argument, the so-called apostolic decree, issued by the council, denied that Gentile believers must obey the Torah, with the exception of four specific prohibitions (Acts 15:29) drawn from those the Torah itself requires not only of Israelites but also of Gentiles resident in Israel (Lev 17–18).⁴⁶ In effect, observing these prohibitions would make clear that Gentile believers had indeed been morally purified by faith and the Spirit, such that there need be no barrier to fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus.

The evidence suggests that this resolution of the issue was remarkably successful.⁴⁷ There is little or no evidence, after this date, of Jewish Christians who argued that Gentile Christians must be circumcised and obey the whole Torah. Moreover, observance of the four prohibitions in the apostolic decree was widespread in Christianity down to the third century, a fact very hard to explain unless they were issued, as Acts 15 represents it, by a council of the mother church in

⁴⁵ In my view the private consultation between Paul, Barnabas and the three pillars (Gal 2:1–10) was a different event from the council of Christian leaders and the whole Jerusalem church in Acts 15.

⁴⁶ On James's argument and the apostolic decree, see Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles"; Ådna, "James' Position."

⁴⁷ This paragraph summarizes the detailed argument in Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," 462–75.

Jerusalem with the unrivaled authority of James at its head. A view that has been very influential in modern scholarship, according to which the Jerusalem church represented a “conservative” insistence on Gentile Christian obedience to the Torah and opposition to Paul’s Gentile mission in principle, is mistaken. Of course, the decision of the Jerusalem council made no difference to Jewish Christian obedience to the Torah, which was taken entirely for granted. What damaged Paul’s subsequent reputation in Jerusalem, at least to some degree, was not his policy towards Gentile converts, but the rumors that he was encouraging Jews to abandon observance of the whole Torah (Acts 21:21).

5. Opposition from the Jewish Authorities in Jerusalem (up to the Death of James)

According to Acts, the Twelve were subject to harassment and arrest by the temple authorities in the early period of their preaching in Jerusalem (Acts 4:1–3; 5:17–18). We know of three subsequent periods when serious action was taken against the Jerusalem church, including the execution of some its leaders. The first was the persecution that began with the execution of Stephen and in which Paul played a major role (Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–2). The second (ca. 42 C.E.) was instigated by King Agrippa I (called Herod in Acts 12:1), who had the apostle James the son of Zebedee put to death (Acts 12:1–3). The third occurred in 62 C.E., when James the brother of Jesus was executed along with some others (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.199–203).

It is noteworthy that in every known case action against the Jerusalem church or its leaders was taken when the reigning high priest was one of those who belonged to the powerful Sadducean family of Annas (Ananus). Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas, had presided over the trial and condemnation of Jesus and was still high priest when Stephen was tried before his council and stoned. Matthias the son of Annas was probably high priest when Agrippa I had James the son of Zebedee executed and Peter arrested. According to Acts, the king was motivated by a desire to curry favor with “the Jews” (Acts 12:3, cf. 4, 11), but this would have meant especially an attempt to placate the high priest Matthias and his family. Agrippa had previously deposed Matthias’s brother Theophilus, replacing him with a member of the rival family of Boethus, but now had his own political reasons for wanting the support of the family of Annas.⁴⁸ So Agrippa’s action against Christian leaders no doubt reflects the policy of the family of Annas in their opposition to the followers of Jesus. Finally, James the brother of Jesus was put to death by another son of Annas, Ananus II, who took advantage of a period when the previous Roman governor had died and the next had not yet arrived in Jerusalem, presumably to carry out some trials and executions which

⁴⁸ Crossan, *The Birth*, 508–9, following D. R. Schwartz.

he did not expect a Roman governor to be easily persuaded to accept. We may suspect something of a family vendetta against the followers of a man whose movement Caiaphas had expected but failed to stamp out.

However, there is also a striking continuity in the charges on which Christian leaders were arrested, tried and executed. So far as we are able to discern these, they are all connected with the position Christians ascribed to Jesus, claiming that (in fulfillment of Ps 110:1) God had exalted Jesus to his right hand in heaven, i.e., to participate in God's own cosmic rule.⁴⁹ If this claim was judged erroneous, then it was also easily judged blasphemous according to the interpretation of the law about blasphemy (Lev 14:10–23) that seems to have been deployed by the temple authorities in this period (a broader interpretation than that in *m. Sanh.* 7:5, which may have been the interpretation favored by the Pharisees in this period).⁵⁰ Moreover, this blasphemous claim was, according to the Gospels, the offense for which Caiaphas and his council had condemned Jesus himself to death. The blasphemy did not consist in the claim to be Messiah as such, but in the claim to participation in God's own rule over the world, expressed in allusion to Psalm 110:1 (Mark 14:62). It was this exaltation to God's heavenly throne (cf. Acts 2:32–36) that Peter in the early chapters of Acts claimed was being demonstrated by miracles enacted in the name of Jesus, which were the focus of the attempts of the chief priests to suppress the apostles' preaching (Acts 3:12–16; 4:8–12; 5:16–18, 31).

The charges against Stephen, brought by members of the synagogues of Diaspora Jews in Jerusalem, were initially that he was blaspheming by speaking against the temple and the law (Acts 6:11–14), but, despite a very common misinterpretation of Luke's account, it was not on these charges that Stephen was condemned. His speech was a successful refutation of these charges, which angered the members of the high priest's council because of the way in which Stephen ended by turning the charges against them (Acts 7:51–54). But the blasphemy for which he was stoned (the punishment prescribed for blasphemy in Lev 24:16) was altogether different. It was when he claimed to see "the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56), that they reacted as one should to blasphemy (7:57) and took him to be stoned. Whatever misunderstandings lay behind the trumped-up charges originally brought against Stephen, comparable with the charge against Jesus with regard to the temple, which had to be dismissed (Mark 14:55–59), it was for attributing divine status to Jesus, associating him with God's sovereignty over the world, that Stephen was put to death. Argu-

⁴⁹ For the significance of this claim in its Jewish context, see R. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), chapters 1–2; R. Bauckham, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (ed. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila and G. S. Lewis; SJSJ 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43–69.

⁵⁰ Bauckham, "For What Offence," 223–25.

ably, it was the exalted christological claims made by the Christian movement that also aroused Paul's zeal in persecuting it⁵¹—until his experience on the road to Damascus led him to regard those claims as correct.

Like Stephen, James the brother of Jesus was executed by stoning and must therefore have been charged with an offense for which the Torah was understood to prescribe stoning. The only plausible offenses in this category are blasphemy or being a *maddiah*, i.e., someone who leads the people to go astray by worshipping other gods (Deut 13:6–18). In either case, James must have been condemned for making exalted christological claims about Jesus. Hegesippus's rather legendary account of his death (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.8–18) attributes to him a statement about “the Son of man” very like that made by Jesus at his trial in the Synoptic Gospels, but it is very likely borrowed from the Gospels and cannot be treated as good evidence about James. However, a more promising clue to the evidence brought against James is the question that, according to Hegesippus, his opponents put to him: “Who is the gate of Jesus?” This is probably a slightly garbled reminiscence of an exegesis of Psalm 118:20 (“This is the gate of YHWH; the righteous shall enter through it”), in which James may have interpreted “YHWH” as Jesus, and explained that the gate through which the righteous enter the eschatological temple is Jesus the Savior.⁵²

The consistency of this evidence shows that a high Christology was characteristic of the Jerusalem church. The low Christology later adopted by the Ebionites should not be projected back onto the Jerusalem church, as has often been done.⁵³

6. After James

Hegesippus and the Jerusalem bishops' list agree in naming Simeon the son of Clopas, first cousin to Jesus and James, as James's successor in the leadership of the Jerusalem church. In a passage substantially derived from Hegesippus, Eusebius says that the election of Simeon took place “after the martyrdom of James and the taking of Jerusalem which immediately ensued” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.11). This statement entails Hegesippus's erroneous idea that the fall of Jerusalem followed immediately the martyrdom of James. Since James in fact died in 62, it seems hardly likely that it was not until after 70 that his successor was appointed, and so we should probably suppose Simeon to have succeeded James in 62. Hegesippus also refers to an unsuccessful candidate for election, Thebouthis, who “because

⁵¹ Larry W. Hurtado, “Pre-70 Jewish Opposition to Christ-Devotion,” *JTS* 50 (1999): 50–54.

⁵² This paragraph summarizes the detailed argument in Bauckham, “For What Offence.”

⁵³ For the origin of Ebionite Christology, see R. Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” in *The Image of the Judeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry; WUNT 158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 162–81.

he was not made bishop, began secretly to corrupt" the church with heresy (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.5). In Hegesippus's account, Thebouthis takes a key role in a highly schematized genealogy of heresies, becoming the source initially of several Jewish and Samaritan sectarian groups, then of the main varieties of Gnosticism. This is not credible, but evidently Thebouthis was well remembered as the source of some schism among Palestinian Jewish Christians, and it is probable that the split between him and Simeon was doctrinal (the idea that Thebouthis started his heresy because he was not made bishop is doubtless a polemical slur). Possibly this was the ultimate origin of the distinction between Nazarenes and Ebionites, who emerge as the two main forms of Jewish Christianity in the mid-second century.⁵⁴

The outbreak of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 must have faced Jewish believers in Jesus, as it did all Palestinian Jews, with difficult decisions. We certainly cannot assume that all Jewish Christians adopted the same attitude to the revolt. Jesus' own refusal to take the option of armed rebellion and sayings of Jesus which recommend non-violence may have dissuaded many from active support of the revolt. Also important, however, especially for the Jerusalem church, must have been the strong tradition that Jesus had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.⁵⁵ This would have made it easy for followers of Jesus to conclude that the outcome of the revolt was not going to be Jewish victory but the fall of Jerusalem. Such a conviction would in itself have supplied a strong motivation for members of the Jerusalem church to leave the city, even apart from the pressure to support the revolt that Christians in Jerusalem would also have experienced. The church in Jerusalem was a prominent group in the city; the revolutionary leaders in the city would have wanted to know its attitude, as a group, to the revolt; it would have been difficult, especially for the leaders, merely to abstain from expressing support for the revolt and not to be noticed.⁵⁶ In a situation such as that of Jerusalem during the war, explicit dissent from the war aims of the city's leaders and especially demoralizing expectation of defeat are unlikely to be tolerated and Josephus's account gives a cumulative impression that they were not.⁵⁷ All these considerations suggest that many members of the

⁵⁴ This paragraph summarises the fuller discussion in Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 82–90.

⁵⁵ This tradition is represented by various sayings in a number of strands of the Gospel tradition. Few scholars would claim that all of these are "prophecies" written after the event, even though many think that some are.

⁵⁶ I therefore disagree with J. S. McLaren, "Christians and the Jewish Revolt, 66–70 C.E.," in *Ancient History in a Modern University* (2 vols.; ed. T. W. Hillard, R. A. Kearsley and A. M. Nobbs; Macquarie University: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre/Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 2:54–60, who argues that most Jewish Christians would either have been actively involved in the revolt or would have avoided the war by carrying on with life as usual.

⁵⁷ Jesus son of Ananias, who prophesied woe to the city and the temple for several years until the Roman siege, was considered mad, was not silenced but, according to Josephus, was assaulted daily (J.W. 6.300–309).

Jerusalem church, especially the more prominent members, could well have left the city at an early stage of the war.

Eusebius claims that “the people of the church in Jerusalem were commanded, according to an oracle given by revelation to trustworthy persons there before the war, to leave the city and to live in one of the cities of Perea, which they call Pella” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.5.3). The historicity of this event has been much debated.⁵⁸ At least one independent source—the Jewish Christian source incorporated in book 1 of the Clementine Recognitions—corroborates Eusebius’s account in part, without mentioning Pella (*Rec.* 1.37.2 Syriac), and shows that the story goes back to Jewish Christian tradition. (Eusebius’s source was probably the mid-second-century writer Aristo of Pella.) What makes it plausible is that the Jerusalem church must in some sense have survived the war, since the Jerusalem bishops’ list names successors to James in the period after 70. As we have already noticed, these can hardly have been attached to a Christian community in Jerusalem, which was unpopulated after 70, but they must have had a real connection with the pre-70 Jerusalem church in order to be regarded as bishops of Jerusalem in exile. That their place of exile was east of the Jordan is plausible in view of the fact that the main centers of Palestinian Jewish Christianity in the second century were east of the Jordan (including Pella). Eusebius’s story probably has at least some historical worth.

However, this certainly does not mean there were no Jewish Christians west of the Jordan after 70. Many communities outside Jerusalem likely remained through and after the war. The action taken by Bar Kokhba against Christians (see below) probably indicates that there were still many Christians in Judea at the time of the second revolt (132–135). We know of some specific Jewish Christian leaders in Galilee between the two revolts: the two grandsons of Jude, Zoker and James (see section 3 above), and Jacob of Sakhnin, who was remembered in rabbinic tradition (*t. Hul.* 2:24; *Eccles. R.* 1.8 §3; *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 16b–17a) and may be the same person as James the grandson of Jude.⁵⁹ The historical kernel of the story told by Hegesippus about the grandsons of Jude is probably that they were

⁵⁸The most important recent discussions that reject historicity are: Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (trans. M. E. Boring; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 200–213; J. Verheyden, *Die vlucht de christenen naar Pella* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1988); Verheyden, “The Flight of the Christians to Pella,” *ETL* 66 (1990): 368–84. Those that defend historicity are Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the end of the New Testament Period until its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (STPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 122–27; Craig Koester, “The Origin and Significance of the Pella Tradition,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 90–106; Vicky Balabansky, *Eschatology in the Making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache* (SNTSMS 97; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100–134.

⁵⁹Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 106–21, where I argue that little historical information can be gleaned from these traditions other than the existence of a Christian leader called Jacob of Sakhnin around the end of the first century, and that another figure called Jacob of Sama in rabbinic tradition is not the same person (as is often assumed) and cannot be certainly known to have been a Christian.

arrested (and released) by the Roman authorities because of their claim to Davidic descent. According to Hegesippus it was on the same charge that Simeon son of Clopas, cousin and successor to James the brother of Jesus, was put to death at the beginning of the second century.⁶⁰ These stories reflect the concern of the Roman authorities about the revolutionary potential of Jewish messianism in the period after the first revolt and indicate that Jewish Christians could come under suspicion as supporters of Davidic messianism. But the fact that Jewish Christianity was a form of messianism not associated with the failed militancy of the revolt, together with the way in which the fall of Jerusalem and the temple could be seen as vindication of Jesus and his followers, who had predicted it, could have made Christianity quite popular in this period. Though hard evidence is lacking, we may guess that the period between the revolts was a time of growth for Palestinian Jewish Christianity.

Yet it would also have been in this period that it began significantly to lose its place of prominence in the world-wide Christian movement and even for Jewish Christians in the Diaspora. This must have been the consequence of the fact that there was no longer a Christian community in Jerusalem itself and that pilgrimage to the temple, which maintained the close links between the Jerusalem church and the Diaspora, will have entirely or largely ceased. The bishops of Jerusalem in exile could not have had the same position of power and influence beyond Palestine that James had earlier had.

It so happens we are better informed about what happened to Christians in Judea during the second Jewish revolt in Palestine (132–135) than we are in the case of the first revolt. Justin Martyr, writing soon after the events, says that the leader of the revolt, Bar Kokhba (Justin calls Simon bar Kosiva by this messianic nickname), ordered that Christians be punished unless they denied Jesus as Messiah (*1 Apol.* 31.6). We know from the Bar Kokhba letters that severe measures were taken against Jews who refused to join the revolt, and Christians would have good reasons not to do so: they could not regard Bar Kokhba as Messiah, as his followers did, and they could not support the goal of the revolt, which was to rebuild the temple, since they saw its destruction as its final end prophesied by Jesus.

We also possess one literary work, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which was very probably written by a Palestinian Jewish Christian during the war. It portrays Bar Kokhba as a false Messiah who is persecuting the followers of the true Messiah Jesus. As well as this theme of the true Messiah, the apocalypse also deals with the themes of the true temple and the true people of God, which must also have been pressing concerns for Jewish Christians experiencing hostility from their fellow Jews at this period. Instead of a temple on mount Zion, which Bar Kokhba was proposing to rebuild, the apocalypse promises the followers of Jesus entry into the sanctuary of God in heaven, though treated as apostates from Israel by other

⁶⁰ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 92–93.

Jews, the followers of Jesus are assured that they will inherit the eschatological promises to Israel along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.⁶¹

It is likely that the Bar Kokhba war was something of a turning-point in the relationship of Jewish Christians in Palestine with other Jews. A wide spectrum of Palestinian Jews would have perceived the failure of Jewish Christians to support the revolt as a betrayal of the national religious cause, a betrayal by which they aligned themselves with the Roman oppressors. In the context of the extraordinarily severe measures taken by the Romans in Judea after the war, surviving Jewish Christians would have been unpopular, as would Jewish Christians in Galilee, to which many Judean Jews moved. It is not surprising that most of our evidence for Jewish Christianity in Palestine from this date onwards relates to areas to the east of the Jordan. To the west of the Jordan there may have been few remaining Jewish Christians after this period.

7. Prosopography of the Jerusalem Church

The following list is of named persons who were certainly or probably members of the Jerusalem church at any time before 70 C.E.⁶²

Addai. According to the Syriac Teaching of Addai (ca. 400?) Addai the apostle was sent to Edessa by Judas Thomas (the name of the apostle Thomas in east Syrian Christian tradition) and founded the church there. The version of the story in Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 1.13.11–21) calls him Thaddaeus, one of the Twelve (Mark 3:18), probably as a result of trying to find reference in the New Testament to this otherwise unknown apostle. Addai also appears in the *First Apocalypse of James* (NHC V,3) 36.15–25, where he is given the gnostic role of writing down esoteric traditions of Jesus' teaching received from James of Jerusalem. The rare name (hypocoristic form of Adaiah) and obscure person of Addai suggest that a real person, the first Christian evangelist in Edessa, was remembered even though the stories about him are legendary. Other literature from the region testifies to some connection with the apostle Thomas and with James (*Gos. Thom.* 12).

⁶¹ For fuller discussions of the Apocalypse of Peter and its context, see R. Bauckham, "Jews and Jewish Christians in the land of Israel at the time of the Bar Kochba war, with special reference to The Apocalypse of Peter," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228–38; R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), chapter 8, especially 176–94, 235–46.

⁶² The twelve persons named in the Jerusalem bishops list who, I have suggested, may have formed a council of elders who presided over the Jerusalem church with James (*Jude and the Relatives*, 70–77), have not been included because their status is very uncertain. Persons named in the Gospels who may well have been members of the early Jerusalem church but are not listed here include Nathaniel, Lazarus, Martha and Mary of Bethany, Salome, Bartimaeus, Malchus.

Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10–11). One of several prophets who were members of the Jerusalem church. Like some other early Christian prophets, he evidently also traveled to other churches. His two prophecies reported in Acts are the only early Christian prophecies to have survived within the New Testament, apart from the Book of Revelation and some debatable examples.

Ananias (Acts 5:1–10). He and his wife Sapphira were early members of the Jerusalem church who sold their property, as others also did, in order to contribute the money to the church's common fund, but pretended to donate the whole proceeds of the sale while in fact retaining part of the sum. Their subsequent deaths were remembered as exemplary judgments. In favor of the historicity of these two is the fact that the Aramaic name Sapphira "is found almost exclusively among the Jerusalem rich of the 1st century."⁶³

Andrew. One of the Twelve, originally a fisherman from Bethsaida, brother of Simon Peter.

Andronicus (Rom 16:7). See *Junia*.

Bartholomew. One of the Twelve.

Clopas and Mary. Since Clopas was a very rare name, Clopas the brother of Jesus' putative father Joseph (Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.4) and Clopas the husband (this is the most probable relationship) of Mary (John 19:25) are certainly the same person. Cleopas (Luke 24:18) is probably the Greek name Clopas used as the Greek sound-equivalent of his Semitic name. If both were in Jerusalem as followers of Jesus at the time of his death, as these traditions suggest, then they were probably among the founding members of the Jerusalem church. Like other relatives of Jesus, they probably also kept their association with the family homes in Galilee and may have been traveling missionaries.⁶⁴

James the brother of Jesus. See sections 3, 4 and 5.⁶⁵

James the son of Alphaeus. One of the Twelve. He may be the same person as "James the little" (a reference to his height, not his age or importance), whose mother Mary and brother Joses were evidently also known in the early church (Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1; Luke 24:10; cf. Matt 28:1).

⁶³ Margaret H. Williams, "Palestinian Jewish Personal Names in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. R. Bauckham; Vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans), 79–113, 95.

⁶⁴ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 15–18, 60–68; Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, chapter 6.

⁶⁵ Recent studies of James include Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church"; Pierre-Antoine Bernheim, *James, Brother of Jesus* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1997); Painter, *Just James*; Chilton and Evans, *James the Just*; B. Chilton and J. Neusner eds., *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

James the son of Zebedee (Acts 1:13; 12:2). A fisherman from Capernaum (with his father and his brother John) before becoming a disciple of Jesus. Although, during Jesus' ministry, he was one of the inner group of three among the Twelve, he is not mentioned along with Peter and John in Acts 3–4 and 8. But he was a significant enough leader of the Jerusalem church for king Agrippa I to have him put to death (see section 5), probably the first of the Twelve (other than Judas Iscariot) to die.

John the son of Zebedee (Acts 1:13; 3:1–4:31; 8:14–25; Gal 2:9).⁶⁶ A fisherman from Capernaum (with his father and his brother James) before becoming a disciple of Jesus. During the ministry of Jesus, he was one of the inner group of three among the Twelve, and this prominence among the Twelve continues in the accounts which pair him with Peter in the early chapters of Acts (3:1–4:31; 8:14–25) and in Paul's reference to him as one of the three "pillars" (see section 1) with whom he and Barnabas conferred about the principles of their mission to the Gentiles (Gal 2:9). There he is named third after James the brother of Jesus and Peter (Cephas). These are the only New Testament references to him outside the Gospels, unless he is credited with the authorship of the letters of John (as in the traditional identification of him with the "disciple Jesus loved" of the Fourth Gospel and with the author of both this Gospel and the Johannine letters) and/or the book of Revelation (few now consider that the same author could have written both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, whose author calls himself prophet but not apostle or disciple of Jesus). According to Philip of Side (5th century) and George the Sinner (9th century), Papias wrote that John was killed by the Jews, like his brother James. This would suggest an early martyrdom in Jerusalem and there are a few other traces of a tradition that John was martyred.⁶⁷ Mark 10:39 has been considered either the source of the tradition or an additional—and early—evidence of it. This tradition would be an alternative to the much more widespread tradition that John moved to Ephesus, where he died a natural death at an advanced age. I have argued elsewhere that the earliest evidences of this tradition refer, not to John the son of Zebedee, but to another John, also a disciple of Jesus, who lived in Ephesus and was remembered in the second century as the "disciple Jesus loved" and the author of the Fourth Gospel. This John, called John the Elder by Papias, was only later identified with John the son of Zebedee.⁶⁸ The tradition of the latter's early martyrdom could scarcely survive alongside this identification.

⁶⁶For an account of the figure of John in the New Testament, in tradition and in modern scholarship, see R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

⁶⁷Culpepper, *John*, 170–74; Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1989), 158–59.

⁶⁸R. Bauckham, "Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel," *JTS* 44 (1993): 24–69.

John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37–39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24; 1 Pet 5:13).⁶⁹ A Jerusalem resident from a wealthy family (see Mary the mother of John Mark) related to Barnabas (Col 4:10). His Latin name, Marcus, was one of the most common of Latin *praenomina* and was probably adopted when he traveled outside Palestine.⁷⁰ Barnabas may have been instrumental in Mark's becoming a Christian, and it was Barnabas, with Paul, who took Mark to Antioch, presumably to assist in that church's flourishing mission to Gentiles, as well as Jews. As an assistant to Barnabas and Paul, he accompanied them on their missionary journey to Cyprus (where, presumably, like Barnabas, he had family connections), but left them soon after they landed in Asia Minor and returned to Jerusalem. For this reason Paul refused to take Mark on a later missionary journey, with the result that Barnabas and Mark instead embarked on evangelistic work without Paul in Cyprus. But the breach with Paul must have been overcome later, when Mark appears as once more a coworker of Paul's (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24). The references in Colossians and Philemon could place Mark in Ephesus, Caesarea or Rome, depending on the view taken as to the place of Paul's imprisonment when he wrote those letters. First Peter 5:13 places him in Rome, with Peter and Silvanus, consistently with the tradition recorded by Papias (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16) that Mark acted as Peter's interpreter and wrote the Gospel of Mark on the basis of Peter's preaching.⁷¹

Joseph Barnabas (Acts 4:36–37; 9:27; 11:22–26, 30; 12:25–15:39; 1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:13; Col 4:10). An apostle (1 Cor 9:6), which in Paul's terminology means he had been commissioned in a resurrection appearance of Jesus, and so probably also a founder member of the Jerusalem church. He is also called a prophet and teacher (Acts 13:1). He was a Levite and a native of Cyprus (and therefore presumably a "Hellenist," having Greek as his mother tongue), who seems still to have owned land there until he sold it and put the proceeds into the common fund of the Jerusalem church (Acts 4:36–37; but his field may have been in Judea). Since Joseph was a common name, he acquired also an Aramaic nickname Barnabas, evidently given him by the members of the Twelve and supposed to mean "son of encouragement/exhortation" (though this was probably a false, popular etymology), no doubt a reference to his teaching ministry. On Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, Barnabas introduced him into the church, which was initially highly suspicious of him (Acts 9:26–27). This mediation was presumably possible because Barnabas was both a very senior member of the church and, like

⁶⁹ For an account of the figure of Mark in the New Testament, in tradition and in modern scholarship, see C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

⁷⁰ Williams, "Palestinian Jewish Personal Names," 105.

⁷¹ The plausibility of Papias's claim is enhanced by the fact that, contrary to what many scholars think, Papias's purpose is not to bolster the authority of the Gospel of Mark but to excuse Mark's failure to put his material into accurate chronological order.

Paul, came from the Diaspora and mixed in the circles of Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem. This also explains why he became the Jerusalem church's delegate to Antioch when the Gentile mission, undertaken by Greek-speaking Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, began there. He became deeply involved in this mission in Antioch, brought Paul in to join in the work, and was sent by the church of Antioch with Paul on a missionary journey to Cyprus (perhaps chosen not only for its proximity to Antioch but also as Barnabas's native land) and south Galatia (Acts 13–14). In Luke's account, they are initially "Barnabas and Saul" (13:2, 7), indicating that Barnabas was the senior partner, but then "Paul and Barnabas" (13:43, 46, 50 etc.), perhaps suggesting that Paul soon emerged as the natural leader of the group (which also included Barnabas's relative John Mark, until he dropped out: 13:13). At the Jerusalem council, where Barnabas's seniority was again relevant, the order "Barnabas and Paul" recurs (15:12). The two missionary colleagues went their separate ways after disagreeing as to whether to take Mark with them on the next journey (Acts 15:37–39). That Barnabas had joined Peter and the other Jewish Christians in withdrawing from fellowship with Gentiles at Antioch, leaving Paul to take his stand alone (Gal 2:13), may also have helped to precipitate a parting of the ways between them. Barnabas and Mark went on to missionary work in Barnabas's native Cyprus again (Acts 15:39), and no more is known of his career unless Paul's two subsequent references to him (1 Cor 9:6; Col 4:10) mean that he was personally known to the Christians in Corinth and Colossae. These references at least testify to his reputation as a well known apostle.

Joseph Barsabbas Justus (Acts 1:23). He had been a disciple of Jesus throughout his ministry (cf. Acts 1:21–22) and so was eligible to take Judas's place among the Twelve. His Aramaic nickname Barsabbas, needed because Joseph was a common name, means "son of the Sabbath," indicating that he was born on the Sabbath.⁷² His other additional name, Justus, is a Latin name used by Jews as an equivalent of Joseph because of its similar sound, and was probably adopted because he became a traveling missionary outside Palestine. Papias, who heard a story about him from the daughters of Philip, calls him "Justus, who was also called Barsabbas," which is how he would have been known when his Latin name was substituted for its Hebrew sound-equivalent. The story is that he drank deadly poison without harm (Papias, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.5), a story that perhaps lies behind Mark 16:18.

Joseph of Arimathea.⁷³ A Jerusalem aristocrat, member of the high priest's council, with landed estates in the area of the Judean town known otherwise as Ramathaim-zophim or Ramathain. The accounts of him in the Gospels would lead one to expect that he became a member of the early Jerusalem church.

⁷² Williams, "Palestinian Jewish Personal Names," 101–2.

⁷³ See S. E. Porter, "Joseph of Arimathea," *ABD* 3:971–72.

Joses/Joseph the brother of Jesus. Joses (Mark 6:3) (Hebrew Yose) was a common abbreviation of the name Joseph (Matt 13:55), and presumably it was the form used in the family to distinguish him from his father Joseph. Since in both lists of the brothers (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3) he comes second, he was probably next in age after James. He was a traveling missionary (1 Cor 9:5) and must have been associated with the Jerusalem church of which his brother James was head, but whether he was ever a member of that church is uncertain.

Judas Barsabbas (Acts 15:22–34). A prophet and prominent member of the Jerusalem church, one of two entrusted with taking the official letter from the Jerusalem council to the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.

Judas (Jude) the brother of Jesus. Probably the author of the letter of Jude (see section 8). The authority with which he writes to a church or churches he had not founded suggests that, though he worked as a traveling missionary (1 Cor 9:5), he was also associated with his brother James in the leadership of the Jerusalem church, while the skilled exegesis he deploys in the letter associates him with the exegetical school within the Jerusalem church (see section 2). He must have inherited at least part of the family farm in Galilee, since his grandsons Zoker and James were farming it in the late first century, when they were also leaders in the Jewish Christian movement in Palestine.⁷⁴

Judas the son of James. One of the Twelve, according to Luke's list (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), which may well be the official list as he obtained it from the Jerusalem church. This Judas also appears in John 14:22. In Matthew's and Mark's lists of the Twelve, the corresponding name is Thaddaeus (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; some manuscripts of Matthew have Lebbaeus). Thaddaeus is a Semitic hypocoristic (Taddai)⁷⁵ from the Greek name Theudas (itself a shortened form of Theodotus).⁷⁶ Probably Theudas has enough similarity in sound to the Hebrew name Judas (Yehudah) to have been used as its Greek equivalent.

Junia (Rom 16:7). That the name in Romans 16:7 is the common female Latin name Junia, not the putative male name Junias, has been shown conclusively in recent study.⁷⁷ She was probably the wife of Andronicus. That they were “in Christ” before Paul almost certainly indicates that they were early members of the Jerusalem church, while the fact that Paul calls them apostles⁷⁸ means that they were among those commissioned by the risen Christ in a resurrection appear-

⁷⁴ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 94–106.

⁷⁵ There is a Rabbi Taddai in rabbinic traditions, e.g., *b. Sanh.* 38b.

⁷⁶ Cf. Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (trans. D. M. Kay; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 50.

⁷⁷ Summarized in Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 150–52.

⁷⁸ Paul's phrase almost certainly means “prominent among the apostles,” not “well known to the apostles”: Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 154–61, against M. H. Burer and

ance. That they were “prominent” among the apostles hints at a significant missionary career of which we have only the information this statement of Paul’s provides, but it may be that they played an important role in the foundation or development of the church in Rome. Junia’s Latin name was most likely adopted when she and her husband moved to Rome. Since Jews often adopted a Greek or Latin name that sounded similar to their Semitic name (e.g., Simeon and Simon), I have suggested elsewhere that Junia is the same person as Luke’s Joanna (Luke 8:3; 24:10), a member of the Herodian aristocracy who had been part of the romanized court of Herod Antipas at Tiberias.⁷⁹

Mary the mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14). Her presence with the Twelve and the other women disciples of Jesus in the group that formed the original nucleus of the Jerusalem church is the last reliable reference to her. But if, as several recent scholars think, the “beloved disciple” of the Gospel of John was not one of the itinerant disciples, but a disciple of Jesus resident in Jerusalem, then the information that this disciple took her to his home (John 19:27) could indicate that she was permanently resident in Jerusalem from that time.

Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12). Probably a widow, she owned one of the houses in which part of the Jerusalem church regularly met. Presumably she had not relinquished ownership of it to the common fund, but put it at the disposal of the church. With a courtyard and gate, it was a large house. (Apart from the temple courts, large houses owned by wealthy members of the church, were the only available meeting places of the church.) Mary may have been from Cyprus, like her relative Barnabas, but the relationship may have been her husband’s. There is no reliable basis for the idea that the Last Supper was held in her house.

Matthew. One of the Twelve. The Gospel of Matthew calls him “the tax collector” (9:3) and assigns to him the story of the Galilean tax collector called by Jesus (Matt 9:9–10), which Mark tells of Levi (Mark 5:27–29).

Matthias (Acts 1:23–26). He was chosen by lot to replace Judas Iscariot as a member of the Twelve, and was eligible for this position because he had been a disciple of Jesus throughout Jesus’ ministry, as well as a witness to Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 1:21–22).

Mnason (Acts 21:16). A native of Cyprus (like Barnabas), whose Greek name was no doubt chosen as a sound-equivalent to the Hebrew name Manasseh. From Acts 21:16–17 it is not clear whether he lived in Jerusalem or on the way from

D. B. Wallace, “Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom. 16:7,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 76–91.

⁷⁹Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, chapter 5.

Caesarea to Jerusalem (the variant D text clarifies the text in the latter sense), but since he was “an early disciple” we can assume he had belonged to the Jerusalem church at an early stage. The phrase (*ἀρχαῖος μαθητής*) may mean only “a disciple of long standing,” but (for the point to be remarkable enough to be worth making) it more likely means “an original disciple,” i.e., one of the founding members of the Jerusalem church, who must therefore also have been a personal disciple of Jesus. The idea that, as a Greek-speaking Jew (“Hellenist”) originally from the Diaspora, he would represent a more “liberal” outlook than most in the Jerusalem church and thus be friendlier to Paul than most, is based on an untenable theory about the distinction between “Hellenists” and “Hebrews” in the Jerusalem church (see section 2).

Nicanor (Acts 6:5–6). One of the Seven, a Greek-speaking Jew, perhaps from the Diaspora. The account of the appointment of the Seven (Acts 6:1–6) implies that they belonged to that part of the Jerusalem church that was composed of Greek-speaking Jews (“Hellenists”), i.e., those whose mother-tongue was Greek. Some were certainly or probably Jews from the Diaspora who had settled in Jerusalem (Nicolaus, Parmenas, Prochorus), and it is quite probable that all were, but some may have been of Palestinian origin.

Nicodemus. A member of a prominent aristocratic Jerusalem family, a Pharisee, and a member of the high priest’s council. His family must have been the Gurion family, known from Josephus and rabbinic traditions, in which the Greek name Nicodemus (in Hebrew *Naqdimon*) was a family name. The Nicodemus of the Fourth Gospel was not plausibly the Naqdimon ben Gurion who was remembered in rabbinic traditions as one of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem at the time of the Revolt, but he may well have been his uncle or closely related in some other way. John 19:39–40 should be understood as a public acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah (Nicodemus gives Jesus the extravagantly expensive burial appropriate to a king), after which we should expect that Nicodemus joined the early Jerusalem church. As *Naqqai* (the Hebrew hypocoristic form of *Naqdimon*/Nicodemus) he also appears in the rabbinic tradition of the five disciples of Jesus (*b. Sanh.* 43a).⁸⁰

Nicolaus (Acts 6:5–6). One of the Seven, a Jewish proselyte originally from Antioch. Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.26.3) and other church fathers thought that the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6, 15) were his heretical followers, but this may have been no more than a guess. The fact that he is called a proselyte suggests that the others of the Seven were born Jews.

Parmenas (Acts 6:5–6). One of the Seven, a Greek-speaking Jew from the Diaspora.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Bauckham, “Nicodemus,” 1–37.

⁸¹ Williams, “Palestinian Jewish Personal Names,” 111.

Philip. One of the Twelve, originally from Bethsaida (John 1:44). His Greek name, though used by other Palestinian Jews, may in his case have reference to the local tetrarch Herod Philip. His mediation between Jesus and “the Greeks” (John 12:21)—i.e., Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem for the festival—probably relates to the mixed (Jewish and Syrian) population of Bethsaida and the fact that Herod Philip had given it the status of a Greek polis: a resident of Bethsaida would be likely to speak some Greek.

Philip (Acts 6:5–6; 8:4–40; 21:8–9) and his daughters (Acts 21:9). Philip was a Greek-speaking Jew, who may have been originally from the Diaspora, though his Greek name was also used by Palestinian Jews. A distinct person from the Philip who was one of the Twelve (Acts 1:13), this Philip was one of the Seven, appointed to oversee the distribution of the resources of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1–6), but, when many members of the church were scattered from the city in the persecution that followed the death of Stephen, he became a traveling evangelist within Palestine (Acts 8:4–40), responsible for first bringing the Gospel to Samaritans, as well as for converting the Ethiopian eunuch, who was technically a Gentile, since as a eunuch he could not become a proselyte. So in Acts 21:8 he is called “the evangelist” (the only person so called in Acts) as well as “one of the Seven.” Later Philip settled in Caesarea (Acts 8:40; 21:8) with his four unmarried daughters, who were well known as prophets (21:9).⁸² Luke may have known him in Caesarea and received from him some of the traditions that appear in Acts. He and at least three of his daughters moved, perhaps at the time of the Jewish War, to Asia Minor. He died in Hierapolis, where two of his daughters also lived, still unmarried, until their deaths (Polycrates, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2;⁸³ Proclus, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.31.4). They were known to Papias bishop of Hierapolis (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.9). A third daughter married and died in Ephesus (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2).

Prochorus (Acts 6:5–6). One of the Seven, a Greek-speaking Jew probably from the Diaspora.⁸⁴

Rhoda (Acts 12:13–15). Servant in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark. Her name makes it probable that she was originally a Gentile slave,⁸⁵ though she may have converted to Judaism before also becoming a Christian.

Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10). See Ananias.

⁸² For a study of Philip in Acts, see F. Scott Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts* (JSNTSup 67; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992).

⁸³ Polycrates mistakenly identified this Philip with the Philip who was one of the Twelve.

⁸⁴ Williams, “Palestinian Jewish Personal Names,” 111.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Silas, aka Silvanus (Acts 15:22–18:5; 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Pet 5:12). A prophet and prominent member of the Jerusalem church, whom 1 Thess 2:7 seems to identify as an apostle. In Paul's usage this would mean that he was commissioned in a resurrection appearance of Jesus and thus was also a founder member of the Jerusalem church. He was one of two entrusted with taking the official letter from the Jerusalem council to the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. Unlike the other Jerusalem church delegate, Judas Barsabbas, Silas went on to accompany Paul on the missionary journey that took him through Asia Minor and into Macedonia and Greece. In Acts he is last mentioned with Paul and Timothy in Corinth (Acts 18:5). Like Paul, he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37–38), and in the Pauline letters and 1 Peter he is known by his Latin cognomen Silvanus, which was no doubt regarded as a sound-equivalent of his Semitic name Silas (itself perhaps a hellenized version of the Aramaic form of Saul). He appears with Timothy as co-sender and perhaps co-author of Paul's two letters to Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1), which were written not long after these three had evangelized that city, and Paul also refers to Silas and Timothy as his colleagues in the proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth (2 Cor 1:19). We do not know why Silas apparently did not remain a companion of Paul, as Timothy did, after this period in Corinth. It is possible that he split with Paul because in Corinth Paul decided he could not enforce the whole of the decree of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:29) on his Gentile converts there (1 Cor 10:25–27 implies they may eat meat with blood in it). Later Silas appears in Rome, with other former members of the Jerusalem church: Peter and John Mark (1 Pet 5:12).

Simon Peter. See sections 3 and 4. Peter seems to have been based in Jerusalem only until the persecution in the reign of Agrippa, though he visited for the Jerusalem council of Acts 15. There is a large literature on the figure of Peter in the New Testament, early traditions, and archaeology.⁸⁶

Simon of Cyrene and his family (Matt 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). Mark's reference implies that, when seized by the Roman soldiers and required to carry Jesus' cross, Simon was coming into Jerusalem after working in the fields. He was therefore not in Jerusalem as a visitor but a Jew from the large Jewish community of Cyrene who had settled permanently in Jerusalem (he would have belonged to the Cyrenaican synagogue community mentioned in Acts 6:9). Moreover, Mark's reference to his sons Alexander and Rufus must presuppose that they would be

⁸⁶E.g., Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple–Apostle–Martyr* (trans. F. V. Filson; London: SCM, 1953); Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1974); Carsten P. Thiede, *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986); Carsten P. Thiede, ed., *Das Petrusbild in der neueren Forschung* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1987); R. Bauckham, "The Martyrdom of Peter in Early Christian Literature," in *ANRW* II.26.1 (1992): 539–95; Pheme Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

known to at least some of his readers. We may deduce that, as a result of his experience, Simon and his family became members of the early Jerusalem church. It has been suggested that Paul's reference to Rufus and his mother in Romans 16:13 is to members of this family (that Paul, who had never been in Rome, knew Rufus's mother well implies she was not a native of Rome). This would make sense especially if the Gospel of Mark were written in Rome, but Rufus was too common a Jewish name (it was used as a Latin equivalent of Reuben) for certainty to be possible. Two ossuaries found in a tomb in the Kidron valley, beside Jerusalem, are inscribed as belonging to Alexander of Cyrene, son of Simon, and Sara of Ptolemais, daughter of Simon.⁸⁷ But, again, the names are too common (among Cyrenaican as well as other Diaspora Jews)⁸⁸ for a connection with the Simon of Mark 15:21 to be more than a possibility.

*Simon (Simeon) the son of Clopas.*⁸⁹ Son of Joseph's brother Clopas, he succeeded James as head of the Jerusalem church, probably soon after James's death in 62 C.E. (see section 6), and remained bishop of the Jerusalem church, though presumably in exile (in Pella?), until his martyrdom (either between 99 and 102 C.E. or between 108 and 117 C.E.). The account of his martyrdom that Hegesippus recounted from Palestinian Jewish Christian tradition has legendary and hagiographical features that testify to the extreme reverence with which he was regarded. He is said to have died at the age of 120 years, the biblical limit on human life (Gen 6:3) which no one since Moses had attained. It cannot be accidental that this age was also attributed in rabbinic tradition to the three great rabbis: Hillel, Johanan ben Zakkai, and Akiba, the last two contemporaries of Simon. There must be a polemical relationship between these rival claims to be compared with Moses.

Simon the brother of Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). He was a traveling missionary (1 Cor 9:5) and must have been associated with the Jerusalem church of which his brother James was head, but whether he was ever a member of that church is uncertain.

Simon the Zealot. One of the Twelve. The significance of his sobriquet ("Canaean" in Matt 10:4; Mark 3:18 is a Greek form of the Aramaic word for "zealot") is disputed. It is not a technical term for a member of the revolutionary party "the Zealots," since Josephus only uses this term when this specific group emerges at the time of the Revolt in 66. Applied to Simon, the term may mean only that he was zealous for the law of Moses, but probably has the additional overtone that he

⁸⁷N. Avigad, "A Depository of Inscribed Ossuaries in the Kidron Valley," *IEJ* 12 (1962): 1–12.

⁸⁸For Simon and Alexander, see Williams, "Palestinian Jewish Personal Names," 93–94, 96–97

⁸⁹Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 79–94.

shared that “zeal” for the law that (on the model of Phinehas and Elijah) required the use of violence by individuals to punish flagrant violations of it.

Stephen (Acts 6:5–8:1). One of the Seven, a Greek-speaking Jew (“Hellenist”), whose name makes it likely he came from the Diaspora.⁹⁰ He was a very effective communicator of the Gospel in the Jerusalem synagogues belonging to the various communities of Jews of Diaspora origin, where he also encountered strong opposition. The charges of speaking against the law of Moses and the temple (Acts 6:11, 13) no doubt had some basis in references by Stephen to Jesus’ prophecies of the destruction of the temple, but Luke considers them false charges and Stephen’s speech before the high priest’s council is designed to refute them. He was stoned to death (making him the first known Christian martyr) because his vision of Jesus at the right hand of God in heaven was deemed blasphemous (Acts 7:55–58). The common scholarly attribution to Stephen of a distinctive “Hellenist” theology, critical of Torah and temple, has no adequate basis in the Acts account (see section 2), though the distinctive character of his speech does suggest that Luke composed it on the basis of information about what Stephen said.

Thaddaeus. See Judas the son of James.

Thebouthis. As a candidate for the position of successor to James, he was most probably a member of the Jerusalem church before 70. See section 6.

Thomas. One of the Twelve. Thomas means “the twin” and is probably not the apostle’s true name but a nickname. In the east Syrian Christian tradition he was known as Judas Thomas, and it is possible that Judas was his name. One of the Twelve named Judas would have needed a nickname to distinguish him from other bearers of this common name (borne by two other members of the Twelve). It does not mean that he was the twin of Jesus or of someone else who appears in the Gospel narratives; the mere fact that he was a twin would be sufficient for that distinguishing characteristic to be used as his nickname. In some texts of the east Syrian tradition he was understood to be a kind of spiritual twin of Jesus (but not, usually, a biological twin).⁹¹ The literature of this tradition—the Gospel of Thomas, the Book of Thomas, the Acts of Thomas—is strongly associated with Thomas, and it may be that the Gospel traditions and Christian teaching in Edessa and its region really derived in some sense from the apostle Thomas. But that Thomas himself visited the area must be more doubtful. In the Teaching of Addai the connection is more indirect: Thomas in Jerusalem sends Addai to Edessa (see Addai).

Timon (Acts 6:5–6). One of the Seven, a Greek-speaking Jew, most likely from the Diaspora.

⁹⁰ Williams, “Palestinian Jewish Personal Names,” 111–12.

⁹¹ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 32–36.

8. Literature

From the period up to 135 only three integral literary works from Palestinian Jewish Christianity have come down to us: the New Testament letters of James and Jude and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. (If we were to include works written outside Palestine by authors who had been members of the Jerusalem church there would be other candidates, at least, for inclusion: the Gospels of Matthew,⁹² Mark⁹³ and John, Hebrews, 1 Peter, the Johannine letters, and Revelation. But if these authors had come from Jerusalem, they had also probably had many years of experience outside Palestine, and so could not be claimed for Palestinian Jewish Christianity in the same sense as the three works just mentioned.) Whether some written Gospel materials, originating in the Jerusalem church (see section 2), have been incorporated into the Gospels we know is very difficult to judge.⁹⁴ We have fragments of three Jewish Christian Gospels: the (originally Aramaic) *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, which was closely related to our Gospel of Matthew, the Greek *Gospel of the Ebionites*, dependent on the three Synoptic Gospels, and the Greek *Gospel of the Hebrews*, which is usually thought to have originated in Egypt. Some form of the first may well date from before 135 (Papias seems to have heard about it, though he did not know it, and Hegesippus may have known it), but the extant fragments leave its precise relationship to our Matthew obscure. The author of Luke-Acts probably tapped the traditions of the Jerusalem church, but the extent to which he may reproduce written sources about the Jerusalem church in Acts is also difficult to judge. Hegesippus, in the fragments of his work that are extant (mostly as quoted by Eusebius), certainly depended on Palestinian Jewish Christian traditions from before 135, but we do not know in what form he knew them.

While it has rarely been doubted that the James to whom the letter of James is attributed is James the brother of Jesus (no other James could expect to be recognized simply as “James”; cf. Gal 2:9, 12; Acts 12:17), in modern scholarship the authenticity of this attribution has been widely questioned and denied. But the view that it is pseudepigraphal, one of the later works of the New Testament and originating in the Diaspora rather than Palestine, has been widely abandoned in recent English-speaking scholarship, and, while some think teaching from the historical James has been incorporated in the work of a later editor,⁹⁵ some now

⁹² A few scholars have argued for Palestine as the place of origin of Matthew’s Gospel.

⁹³ A few scholars have argued for Galilee as the place of origin of Mark’s Gospel.

⁹⁴ One of the most recent proposals is Maurice Casey’s identification of Aramaic sources of Mark’s Gospel which he considers must have been written before 40 C.E.: M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel* (SNTSMS 102; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁹⁵ E.g., Martin, *James*; Painter, *Just James*, 234–48; Robert W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1997); P. H. Davids, “Palestinian Traditions in the Epistle of James,” in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NovTSup 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 33–57.

see no remaining reason not to attribute authorship in the full sense to James himself.⁹⁶ One argument for authenticity is the plausibility of the epistolary situation presented by the prescript (1:1):⁹⁷ James writes from the center of the Jewish world to readers throughout the Diaspora (eastern as well as western). This puts the work in a tradition of official letters sent to Jewish communities in the Diaspora from the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. The letter communicating the decree of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:23–29) is another early Christian example of this tradition.

The very general address (to Jewish Christians throughout the Diaspora) and its content (wisdom instruction) show that James is not addressing some specific situation among the readers. The work is best described as a compendium of James's wisdom, a collection of his wise aphorisms and topical reflections that would have originated in his oral teaching and are here gathered as a permanent resource for his readers to live by. In this sense it resembles the (much larger) collection of Jesus ben Sira's wisdom (*Sirach*) or the Synoptic collections of sayings of Jesus, such as Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. I have argued elsewhere⁹⁸ that James should be seen as a Jewish wisdom teacher who developed his wisdom as a disciple of his master, Jesus the wisdom teacher.⁹⁹ He does not quote the teaching of Jesus because he has made it his own and, as Jewish sages were accustomed to do, he re-expresses it in creatively new ways and formulates new sayings inspired by those of Jesus. The wisdom of Jesus also functions for James as the focus and principle that guide his relationship to the wider Jewish wisdom tradition and his appropriation of its insights. James thus appears in his letter as a teacher both deeply faithful and skillfully creative in his relationship to the teaching of Jesus. This is why there is nothing else in early Christian literature that so much resembles the Synoptic teaching of Jesus while also conveying the distinctive voice of a great teacher.

The short letter of James's brother Jude is very different. He writes not as a wisdom teacher, but as a skilled exegete of the Hebrew Bible¹⁰⁰ and probably also as a prophet (verse 11 is a prophetic "Woe!" oracle). He writes with urgent concern to communities threatened by itinerant charismatics who reject the authority of the Torah and teach moral libertinism.¹⁰¹ The characteristics and concerns

⁹⁶ E.g., James B. Adamson, *James: The Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989); Luke T. Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995); R. Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁹⁷ Bauckham, *James*, chapter 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid., chapter 2; R. Bauckham, "James and Jesus," in *The Brother of Jesus* (ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Jacob Neusner; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 109–31.

⁹⁹ On the issue of whether James was a disciple of Jesus during Jesus' ministry, see Bauckham, "James and Jesus," 106–9.

¹⁰⁰ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, chapter 4.

¹⁰¹ R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), 11–13; Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 162–68.

of the letter are easily attributable to a Palestinian Jewish Christian leader of the first generation. As in the case of James, the usual reasons for denying authenticity no longer seem cogent in the light of attentive study of the letter in recent scholarship.¹⁰²

The *Apocalypse of Peter* has already been discussed with reference to its context in the Bar Kokhba revolt (section 6). It became a very popular work, outside Palestinian Jewish Christianity, in the church as a whole from the second to the fourth centuries, in some circles even treated as Scripture. It was valued as a revelation of the fates of people after death, but was superseded in this role by other apocalypses and almost failed to survive. The complete text survives only in Ethiopic translation in two manuscripts; otherwise we have only a few fragments and quotations in Greek and Latin. As a work of Palestinian Jewish Christianity, it shows not only how divided Jewish Christians became from their fellow-Jews during the revolt, but also how close they were in many ways to the literature and theology of other Jews in that period. This Jewish Christian apocalypse is profoundly dependent on Jewish apocalyptic traditions, and has close links, by way of themes and traditions, with some of the other Palestinian Jewish apocalypses written in the period between the two revolts: *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, the Parables of Enoch. It helps explain how such works were of great interest to Christians and in the end preserved only in Christian transmission.¹⁰³

Thus the extant literary products of the Jerusalem church are quite diverse. They offer us some insight into the diverse ways in which the theology and exegesis of the mother church influenced the rest of the early Christian movement.

¹⁰²In support of the authenticity of the letter, see Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter, 14–16*; Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 171–78; Robert L. Webb, “*Jude*,” DLNT 616–17; J. Daryl Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude* (Scranton, Pa.: University of Scranton Press, 1993).

¹⁰³There is a full discussion of the *Apocalypse of Peter* in Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, chapter 8.

Paul as a Jewish Believer— According to His Letters

Donald A. Hagner

It is a mere platitude to state that Paul was a Jewish believer in Jesus. Almost no one contests this and no defense of the statement is required. Paul himself is as clear about it as he could be. In fact, he is emphatic about his Jewishness: “If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless” (Phil 3:4–6)¹; “I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom 11:1); “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I” (2 Cor 11:22). In addition to these autobiographical statements, Paul’s thorough Jewishness is manifest throughout his letters in such things as his theology, his esteem for the Torah, his concern for the righteousness of the Torah, his use of the Scriptures and his method of interpreting them, his abiding love for Israel, his soteriology, his eschatology, and even his Christology. This is only to say that Christianity is itself essentially a Jewish faith. Nothing is to be understood of Christianity without a knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and without taking for granted their basic perspectives.²

Yet behind the simple statement that Paul was a Jewish believer in Jesus lies a nest of difficult questions. These questions center on both the relationship between Paul’s pre-Christian Judaism and his Christianity, and also the relationship between Paul’s Christianity and the Judaism of those who did not accept the gos-

¹ Quotations throughout are from the NRSV, unless otherwise noted.

² Martin Hengel rightly insists that Paul’s theology “cannot be understood as *Christian* theology without attention to its *Jewish* roots, indeed I would venture to say its latent ‘Jewish’ character. Knowledge of Saul the *Jew* is a precondition of understanding Paul the *Christian*. The better we know the former, the more clearly we shall understand the latter.” *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM, 1991), xiii.

pel that he preached.³ Another way of putting the matter is in terms of continuity and discontinuity. How much continuity is there between Saul's Judaism and Paul's Christianity? How much discontinuity? Where specifically are the points of continuity and discontinuity to be found? What implications can be drawn from these points of continuity and discontinuity, and what are their significance?

These are the questions we will focus upon in this essay. Questions such as these are exceptionally complicated, of course. We will have to face the reality of both continuity and discontinuity; and perhaps even of a discontinuity within a larger continuity and vice versa. In addition, we may well expect the degree of continuity and discontinuity to vary on different subjects.

To put ourselves in position for our study, we begin with a brief overview of the modern study of Paul. Then we shall turn to the question of continuity and discontinuity on some key subjects, and conclude with some final remarks about the old and the new in Paul's theology.

1. The Changing Understanding of Paul

We have seen a remarkable trend over the past century in the understanding of the Apostle to the Gentiles. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was common for Paul to be explained mainly in terms of Hellenism and his identity as a Diaspora Jew. The popular *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* saw in Paul a Hellenistic Jew who borrowed deeply from his Diaspora religious environment. Paul's syncretism produced an odd combination of Jewish and pagan ideas, derived mainly from the mystery religions of Asia Minor and the influence of Gnosticism.⁴

A number of Jewish scholars who have studied Paul⁵ also found this explanation attractive. C. G. Montefiore, for example, concluded that it was the influence of Diaspora Hellenism that explained what seemed aberrant in Paul's theology, when considered from a Palestinian or Rabbinic Jewish standpoint.⁶ Several

³The use of the terms "Judaism" and "Christianity" in reference to the first century is nowadays regarded as problematic. Neither term means what it will come to mean in the centuries following the time of Paul. Judaism is in a highly formative stage in the first two centuries (especially before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70). Similarly, first-century Christianity is not what it will become in the second century. But this terminological debate anticipates the discussion that follows. We will continue to use the terms for the sake of convenience.

⁴Among those who looked in this direction for the explanation of Paul, we may mention the following: R. Reitzenstein, W. Bousset, O. Pfleiderer, W. Heitmüller, A. Eichhorn, H. Windisch, H. J. Holtzmann, and R. Bultmann.

⁵For a comprehensive treatment, see Stefan Meißner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur jüdischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus* (WUNT 2.87; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996). See too D. A. Hagner, "Paul in Modern Jewish Thought," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on his 70th Birthday* (ed. D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris; Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 143–65.

⁶See C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul: Two Essays* (London: Max Goschen, 1914; repr., New York: Arno, 1973); Montefiore, "Rabbinic Judaism and the Epistles of

other Jewish scholars also found the Hellenistic explanation of Paul convincing. Thus, Kaufmann Kohler,⁷ Joseph Klausner,⁸ Martin Buber,⁹ Samuel Sandmel,¹⁰ and Hyam Maccoby,¹¹ all come to similar conclusions.

The impact of Hellenism upon the New Testament and Paul in particular was promoted not only by these Jewish scholars and the *Religionsgeschichte* scholars mentioned above, but also by other Gentile scholars, among whom we may mention Edwin Hatch, Arthur Darby Nock, W. L. Knox, and Kirsopp Lake.

A turn in the tide of opinion may be said to have begun around the middle of the century with the publication of the first edition of W. D. Davies's seminal *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*.¹² Davies was able to show that many key aspects of Paul's theology widely regarded as explainable only on the basis of Hellenistic thought actually had a background within Palestinian Judaism. At about the same time the Dead Sea Scrolls were coming to light, and they also began to reveal that certain perspectives hitherto regarded as Hellenistic were in fact equally at home in at least one form of Palestinian Judaism.

It has become increasingly clear that the supposed dichotomy between Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism, upon which the earlier explanations of Paul rested, is a false one. This was already beginning to emerge when it was given a definitive statement in the masterful work of Martin Hengel.¹³ With great erudition Hengel demonstrated that Judaism had been interpenetrated by Hellenism not only in the Diaspora, but also even in Palestine. There was no such thing as a "pure" Judaism. On the other hand, Hellenism itself was influenced by Judaism. Davies summarizes the resultant conclusion as it bears on Paul especially well in the following words: "In Paul Athens and Jerusalem are strangely mixed . . . because the Judaism within which he grew up, even in Jerusalem, was largely Hellenized, and the Hellenism he encountered in his travels largely Judaized."¹⁴

Paul," *JQR* 13 (1901): 162–217; repr. in *Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Jacob B. Agus; New York: Arno, 1973).

⁷ In his influential article "Saul of Tarsus" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* 11 (1905): 79–87.

⁸ *From Jesus to Paul* (trans. W. F. Stinespring; London: Macmillan, 1943; repr., Boston: Beacon, 1961).

⁹ *Two Types of Faith* (trans. N. P. Goldhawk; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951).

¹⁰ *The Genius of Paul: A Study in History* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1958; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Sandmel, "Paul Reconsidered," in *Two Living Traditions* (ed. S. Sandmel; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), 195–211.

¹¹ *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); Maccoby, *Paul and Hellenism* (London: SCM, 1991). Maccoby comes to the bizarre conclusion that Paul was a Gentile rather than a Jew!

¹² (London: SPCK, 1948). The book appeared in a fourth edition (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) with a new introduction (= reprint of an article written in 1964 entitled "Paul and Judaism Since Schweitzer") and a new preface taking into account the work of E. P. Sanders.

¹³ *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

¹⁴ *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, xi.

Another point that has emerged with great clarity is the fact that Palestinian Judaism itself was anything but monolithic. It soon became clear that to be accurate it may perhaps be necessary to speak of Judaisms—in the plural—in the first century. The Judaisms of Paul's day furthermore were intensely complex. The mysticism of Paul, previously attributed to the influence of the mystery religions, was now seen to have a possible background in Rabbinic Judaism. Apocalyptic, so crucial to Paul's entire perspective, was no longer seen as antithetical to his earlier Pharisaism. There was, in short, no "normative" Judaism but only what could be described as a "formative" Judaism, i.e., a variegated Judaism in the process of formation.

Thanks to this emerging, more adequate knowledge of Palestinian Judaism, the Hellenistic explanation of Paul's theology thus necessarily gave way to an increasing appreciation of the continuing Jewishness of Paul. This change becomes apparent in the approach of Jewish scholars such as Leo Baeck,¹⁵ Hans Joachim Schoeps,¹⁶ Schalom Ben-Chorin,¹⁷ Richard L. Rubenstein,¹⁸ Alan F. Segal,¹⁹ Daniel Boyarin,²⁰ and Mark D. Nanos.²¹ In contrast to the earlier Jewish writers who saw Paul's thought as essentially determined by Hellenistic ideas, these authors see an authentic Jewishness in him with which they are able to identify. Some of them will still appeal to Hellenistic influence at strategic points, but the trend is to explain Paul more and more as one who thoroughly reflects Rabbinic and Palestinian Judaism.²²

The trend to explain Paul entirely through his Jewish background, a background of Palestinian Judaism(s), has grown stronger in recent years. By all standards, Paul is now thought by many to have had no essential problem with Judaism, even after the Damascus Road experience, but rather to have continued as a faithful Jew all his life.²³ The one thing that made him peculiar at points was

¹⁵ "The Faith of Paul," *JJS* 3 (1952): 93–110; the essay appears in German in Baeck's *Paulus, die Pharisäer und das Neue Testament* (Frankfurt am Main: Ner-Tamid, 1961).

¹⁶ *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (trans. H. Knight; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

¹⁷ *Paulus: Der Völkerapostel in jüdischer Sicht* (München: Paul List, 1970).

¹⁸ *My Brother Paul* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

¹⁹ *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

²⁰ *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

²¹ *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

²² This is true of current scholarship generally as will be seen in W. D. Davies's article, "Paul: from the Jewish point of view," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies and John Sturdy; vol. 3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 678–730.

²³ See Markus Barth, "St. Paul—A Good Jew," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 1 (1979): 7–45; Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); Edwin D. Freed, *The Apostle Paul, Christian Jew: Faithfulness and Law* (Lanham,

his calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. This caused Paul to shape a gospel free of circumcision, kashrut, and Sabbath observance for the Gentiles, and if he criticized Judaism it was only insofar as its law had been made a barrier to Gentile salvation. Indeed, even with respect to the Gentiles, some now allege that in good Jewish fashion Paul maintained that much of the law was mandatory for the Gentiles.²⁴

This rediscovery of the full Jewishness of Paul was paralleled by the earlier rediscovery of the Jewishness of Jesus, led too by Jewish scholars,²⁵ but now commonplace among Gentile scholars. The Gospel of Matthew, the Jewishness of which has never been questioned, is now regarded by some as reflecting not a Christian community, so much as a sect within Judaism.²⁶ The entire trend is salutary in that it gives heed to the fully Jewish character of our New Testament and of the Christian faith of its authors. But the subject is often pursued in such a manner as to ignore or downplay the discontinuities caused by the dramatic newness of Christianity itself. Contrary to the frequently heard claim, the Christianity of the New Testament is not simply a reformed Judaism or a Judaism applied to Gentiles. The tensions and discontinuities between Judaism and Christianity

Md.: University Press of America, 1994); Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997); J. Gager, “Re-Inventing St. Paul: Was the Apostle to the Gentiles the Father of Christian Anti-Judaism?” in *A Multiform Heritage: Studies on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Robert A. Kraft* (ed. B. G. Wright; Homage Series 24; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 49–63; Jacob Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 52–67 (“The Unknown Paul”). A common weakness of these writings is that they tend to neglect the Pauline passages that are not in accord with their conclusions (e.g., the negative statements concerning the law dealt with below under 4.1.1). See too, the interesting dialogue volumes on Paul: Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul: Rabbi and Apostle* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984); and G. Sloyan and L. Dean, “A Jewish-Christian Dialogue on Paul,” in *Bursting the Bonds? A Jewish-Christian Dialogue on Jesus and Paul* (ed. L. Swidler et al.; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990), 125–216.

²⁴ E.g., Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (CRINT 3.1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Tomson, “If This Be from Heaven . . . ?: Jesus and the New Testament Authors in Their Relationship to Judaism” (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001); Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakha and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000). More on this below.

²⁵ See Gösta Lindeskog, *Die Jesusfrage im Neuzeitlichen Judentum* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973); D. A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1997).

²⁶ See the work especially of Anthony J. Saldařini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); and David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998). For a critical response, see Donald A. Hagner, “Matthew: Apostate, Reformer, Revolutionary?” *NTS* 49 (2003): 193–209.

should not be swept under the carpet even for the good motive of wanting to avoid anti-Semitism, as important as that is.

Yes, Paul is fully Jewish and his Christianity is characterized by great continuities with Judaism.²⁷ At the same time, however, a close reading of Paul, as we now hope to show, points also to striking discontinuities which must not be minimized.²⁸ The issues are complex²⁹ and a fairness to all the data necessitates complex conclusions. But to be stressed here is that if we disallow the complexity, and in reductionistic fashion explain Paul solely in terms of continuity, we will misrepresent Paul.

2. Studies in Continuity and Discontinuity

We turn now to the specific issues raised by Paul's Jewishness together with his new Christian identity as the Apostle to the Gentiles. It will be necessary to try to examine all the relevant data, even if we must do so with the greatest of brevity. There is a risk in this, but also a benefit in seeing the various parts in light of the whole. This is the purpose in bringing together texts from different Pauline letters. Paul is not being treated here as though he were systematic in his thinking. The only implication is that all the texts need to be heard, and that given the chance they can be seen as coherent.

2.1. Call or Conversion?

We must begin with a preliminary question that has caused a fair amount of discussion.³⁰ Is it proper to speak in Paul's case of a call (emphasis on continuity) or a conversion (emphasis on discontinuity)? It should not be difficult to see that since a good argument can be made on both sides, the question rests on an artificial dichotomy. In fact, there is a sense in which both are true.

From one point of view it is clear that we should speak of Paul's calling rather than conversion. It is surely true that Paul does not believe that he has left one religion for another. Indeed, he uses the word "called" when he describes what happened to him, deliberately using words that refer to a prophet's calling

²⁷ For the similarities between Paul and the Pharisaic document the Psalms of Solomon, see Dieter Lührmann, "Paul and the Pharisaic Tradition," *JSNT* 36 (1989): 75–94.

²⁸ For a general treatment of the subject, see D. A. Hagner, "Paul's Quarrel With Judaism," in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (ed. C. A. Evans and D. A. Hagner; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 128–50.

²⁹ As Heikki Räisänen has reminded us, but without allowing Paul the capability of maintaining a complex view of anything, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

³⁰ See, for example, Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 7–23 ("Call Rather than Conversion"); and James D. G. Dunn, "Paul's Conversion—A Light to Twentieth Century Disputes," in *Evangelium-Schriftauslegung-Kirche* (ed. O. Hofius; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

(Isa 49:1; Jer 1:5): “But when God, who had set me apart before I was born, and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being” (Gal 1:15–16; cf. Rom 1:1). The very idea of moving to a new religion would have been anathema to him. Christianity is for him rather the fulfillment of his Jewish faith.

At the same time, however, that fulfillment involves a dramatic enough shift that conversion is also an appropriate word.³¹ In the words just prior to the ones quoted above, Paul speaks of his life in Judaism as something in the past, something now left behind: “You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors” (Gal 1:13–14). Similarly, after he has listed his impressive Jewish pedigree in Phil 3:4–6 (quoted above), he writes: “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith” (Phil 3:7–9). There is sufficient discontinuity in this shift in allegiance from Torah to Christ to warrant speaking also of a conversion of Paul.³² Paul has not changed religions, but he now has a new center—the crucified and resurrected Messiah, who has inaugurated a new era in salvation history and brought a new dynamic to his existence. He could no longer have felt comfortable in his former Judaism.³³

2.2. *The Law and Salvation*

We come directly to what undoubtedly is the central issue in this debate about Paul. It is bound up, of course, with the questions of the nature of salvation

³¹ See B. Corley, “Interpreting Paul’s Conversion—Then and Now,” in *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry* (ed. R. N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 1–17; cf. Segal, *Paul*.

³² James D. G. Dunn thus rightly speaks of a conversion of Paul *from* Judaism and zeal for the law, “Paul’s Conversion.” Where he is wrong, in my opinion, is in saying that what Paul was converted *to* was the necessity of taking the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. This does not do justice to the personal significance of what happened to Paul himself, entirely apart from the Gentile mission to which God called him.

³³ John M. G. Barclay notes that Paul was repudiated as an apostate by his Jewish contemporaries. Barclay rightly objects to the reinstating of Paul “in hindsight as a ‘legitimate’ Jew.” “Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?” JSNT 60 (1995): 89–120. For a thorough examination of Paul’s references to his Jewishness and their significance to his purposes in the letters, see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel aus Israel: Die jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen* (WUNT 62; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992). Niebuhr focuses on four passages: Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:5–6; 2 Cor 11:22–23; and Rom 11:1.

in Judaism, and particularly, the function of the law in Judaism, subjects given much careful study in recent years.³⁴

As background we must briefly review the revolution in the study of first century Judaism that has taken place especially in the last twenty-five years, although the viewpoint was hardly unknown earlier. It was the great virtue of E. P. Sanders's now famous book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,³⁵ to correct the widespread misunderstanding of Judaism as a religion of works righteousness wherein salvation is something earned by one's conduct. As is well known, Sanders demonstrated that Judaism was a religion based upon grace, best described as a "covenantal nomism." This ideal characterization of Judaism seems correct to me, although whether the balance between covenant and law was always able in fact to be maintained is another question. Given the great preoccupation with the law in the post-exilic period, the possibility of widespread de facto legalism that virtually occluded the covenant seems not unlikely.³⁶

The understanding of Judaism as a covenantal nomism meant that the traditional reading of Paul had promoted a misunderstanding of Judaism as a merit-based religion. Paul, it was now argued, had been read through "Lutheran" eyes, aligning law with works and gospel with grace. It therefore now became incumbent to read Paul afresh, in a way that was more consistent with an understanding of Judaism as a religion of grace. Paul, it is alleged, cannot have been polemicizing against Jews who were attempting to earn their salvation, since in fact there were no such Jews. This emphasis gave rise to the so-called new perspective on Paul, vigorously promoted by James D. G. Dunn.³⁷ Fundamental to the new perspective is not only that Judaism is a religion of grace, but also that justification by faith, regarded (with Schweitzer and Wrede) now as not the center of Paul's

³⁴The quantity of literature on the subject is immense. See Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000); and especially James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001) which contains a bibliography covering the years 1980–1994. For more recent literature, see Peter Stuhlmacher with D. A. Hagner, *Revisiting the Pauline Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001).

³⁵(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

³⁶Because of Sanders's book, it is now taken for granted by many New Testament scholars that there could have been no Jews in the first century who thought that they had to earn their salvation by works of the law. It is this that has caused the current revisionist reading of Paul. Friedrich Avemarie has shown, however, that in rabbinic soteriology grace and merit stand with equal importance in an unresolved tension, and that the focus can often be upon merit. "Erwählung und Vergeltung. Zur optionalen Struktur rabbinischer Soteriologie," *NTS* 45 (1999): 108–26; Avemarie, *Torah und Leben. Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Torah in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ 55; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996). The words ascribed to Akiba in *'Abot* 3.20 point in the same direction: "The world is judged by grace, and yet all is according to the amount of work." Where such a viewpoint prevails, the existence of a de facto legalism should hardly be surprising.

³⁷"The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95–122, also found in Dunn's *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1990).

soteriology, was stressed by Paul only for the sake of the Gentile mission. Paul's theology concerns, therefore, not a universal human problem, but specifically the salvation of Gentiles.

Paul accordingly had no fundamental problem with the law except for the single fact that it constituted an obstacle to the Gentile mission. He opposes "works of the law" only insofar as they constitute badges of Jewish identity that exclude the Gentiles. The issue is not grace, but race, as N. T. Wright puts it.³⁸ Not legalism, but nationalism. Paul has no criticism of the religion of Judaism as such. Thus, the oft-quoted statement of Sanders: "In short, *this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity*."³⁹

With this background of the new perspective in view, we may now turn to look at the main issues more closely.⁴⁰ The key issue remains Paul's view of the law. It is, of course, a defining question. If for Paul Christ has brought the law to an end, then by the usual standard of judgment Paul has broken with Judaism. If, as the new perspective maintains, Paul continues to uphold the law, then he remains fully within Judaism.

2.2.1. *Paul and the law*

The subject is complex and the literature is extensive. A primary difficulty is that Paul makes both negative and positive statements concerning the law. Paul is either confused and unable to gain clarity on the matter,⁴¹ or he knows what he is doing and has reasons for making the two kinds of statements. If we give Paul the benefit of the doubt, can we make sense of his perspective?

(1) Negative statements concerning the law. We may begin with the well known passages in Galatians. In Gal 3:15–29 Paul makes the following points: (a) the law was a parenthesis, not something permanent, in God's purposes, coming 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant, and being in effect only "until faith would be revealed," i.e., "until Christ came" (3:23–24); (b) the people of that parenthetical period were "imprisoned and guarded under the law" (3:23); (c) the law functioned as a "disciplinarian" (*παιδαγωγός*) and was unable to "make alive" or produce righteousness (3:21); (d) the result is that now "we are no longer subject to (*ὑπὸ*) a disciplinarian" (3:25). With the coming of "the fullness of time (*τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου*)" (4:4), came redemption for those who were "under the law" (4:5). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law" (3:13).⁴² "But if you are led by the Spirit you are not subject to [*ὑπό*, 'under'] the law"

³⁸ *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 168.

³⁹ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552.

⁴⁰ For a more detailed argument against the new perspective, see Stuhlmacher with Hagner, *Revisiting*, 75–105; and especially Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁴¹ H. Räisänen's well known counsel of despair (see note 28.)

⁴² See F. F. Bruce, "The Curse of the Law," in *Paul and Paulinism* (ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson; London: SPCK, 1982), 27–36.

(5:18). Paul writes fervently: “For freedom Christ has set us free” and therefore we should not submit “to a yoke of slavery,” “yoke” being a well known metaphor for the law (5:1; cf. Acts 15:10). He describes the Sinai covenant as bringing slavery in comparison to the freedom of the heavenly Jerusalem (4:21–31).

Determinative for Paul on this issue is the point he makes in Gal 2:21: “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification ($\deltaικαιοσύνη$) comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.” So too, the argument in Gal 3:11–12 has a powerful effect on the significance of the law: “Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law . . . the law does not rest on faith.”

To be sure, the incident at Antioch referred to in Gal 2:11–14 concerns the matter of the imposition of the law upon Gentile converts by so-called Judaizers, Jewish (or in some instances Gentile) Christians who wanted to impose the law upon Gentile Christians. That is the immediate issue addressed in Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches. But for a Jew like Paul the law was a unity, and he does not limit himself to that specific problem in the remarks about the law that follow. Instead, he addresses the matter of the law more generally, in a way that includes but goes beyond the question of whether Gentile Christians must obey the law. The passage is supremely relevant to Jewish Christians.

It is obvious from the delegation sent from James that there were Jewish Christians who continued to hold the law in high esteem, that is, as obligatory, not only for themselves but also for the Gentiles.⁴³ And it is clear that Paul must argue on behalf of the Gentiles in order to fulfill his commission as the Apostle to the Gentiles. What is of the highest importance to note, however, is that Paul has a single soteriology, namely that there is only one way of salvation through Christ for both Jew and Gentile.⁴⁴ What he argues concerning the law in connection with his Gentile converts therefore holds true also for the Jews. That the Christian Jews were no longer under the law seems to have been understood by Peter, until he became intimidated by those sent from James. This seems to be the point of the criticism expressed in 2:14: “‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’” Peter apparently understood his freedom, but under pressure his courage failed.

There are two passages in Romans that deserve special attention. The much disputed meaning of Rom 10:4, “For Christ is the $\tauέλος$ of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes,” turns upon the meaning of $\tauέλος$. Is it to be taken in the sense of “end” or “goal”? In the immediate context

⁴³ Raymond E. Brown finds in the New Testament four different groups of “Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts,” ranging from full acceptance of the entire Mosaic law to those who “saw no abiding significance in Jewish cult and feasts.” Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 2–8; see also his “Not Jewish Christianity,” 74–79. Brown puts Paul in the third group (those not insisting on circumcision and kashrut), whereas my reading of Paul would put him in the fourth, most radical, group.

⁴⁴ Some do not agree with this assessment. See, e.g., Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987).

the most natural meaning, in my opinion, is “end.” In the preceding verse, Paul describes his own people as zealous but not enlightened (both words perfectly fit Saul the Pharisee), adding without mincing words: “being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God’s righteousness” (10:3). How did they seek to establish their own righteousness other than by the law? The NRSV translates 10:4 appropriately, “For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” The verses that follow also draw a contrast between two kinds of righteousness, that which comes “from the law (ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου)” and that which comes “from faith (ἐκ πίστεως)” (10:5–6). In the verses that follow, Paul turns the words of Moses on their head when he interprets what is “near you, on your lips and in your heart” (Deut 30:14) as referring not to the commandments of the Torah, but rather to the confession of Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:8–9).

It is of course true, as Paul would affirm, that Christ is also the goal of the law. If we understand νόμος (Torah) as the Scriptures, Christ is their goal: “For in him every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes.’” (2 Cor 1:20). Even if we keep to the meaning of νόμος as “law” in the sense of commandments, Paul could still affirm that Christ is the goal in that he embodies and calls his disciples to righteousness.⁴⁵

The character of the law as an interim matter—something we have seen in Galatians—is also apparent in Rom 5:20, where the translation “law came in” (thus RSV, NRSV) hardly does justice to the verb παρεισῆλθεν, which means “slipped in” or “sneaked in.” REB catches the idea: “Law intruded into this process.” In Rom 5 the pivotal termini are Adam and Christ, with the law coming in as an extraneous element and playing a decidedly minor and temporary role.

A second important passage in Romans concerning the law is Rom 7:1–6, where Paul likens the Christian’s freedom from the law to the freedom of a wife whose husband dies. He concludes the analogy with the emphatic affirmation, similar to that of Galatians, that “now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit” (7:6). The last clause is important, as Paul already indicated in 7:4: “you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.” Freedom from the law for Paul never means license to do as we please.

There are other passages in Romans where the law is treated negatively. For example, in 3:20 Paul concludes: “For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.” In a way similar to his argument in Galatians, Paul writes: “If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath” (Rom 4:14–15).

⁴⁵ For a balanced discussion, see Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 636–43.

The contrast between two kinds of righteousness appears again in Phil 3:9, where Paul contrasts his previous viewpoint with his present perception: “and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.” A similar contrast is drawn in 2 Cor 3:6–17. The old covenant is described as a letter that kills, “a ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets,” a “ministry of condemnation,” and it is set in contrast to the “new covenant” of the Spirit who gives life, “a ministry of justification,” and “freedom.” Paul notes that “if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory!” (2 Cor 3:11).⁴⁶

We have given the most representative examples of Paul’s negative statements concerning the law. We must now look at counterbalancing statements that speak positively of the law. How are they to be taken? Are they compatible with the negative statements? If so, how?

(2) Positive statements concerning the law. After the weight of the negative statements about the law reviewed above, it is striking, to say the least, that Paul can also say very positive things about the law. Even in Galatians, where Paul most consistently speaks of the law negatively, he sounds a positive note in 3:21: “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!” Given the polarities of faith and law in Galatians, one might well have expected Paul to answer the question affirmatively, but he does not.

In Romans Paul speaks more positively about the law than perhaps anywhere else. To the question “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?” he answers, “By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law” (Rom 3:31). He describes the law very positively in 7:12: “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.”

In 1 Cor 7:19 Paul makes one of his most remarkable statements: “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but obeying the commandments of God is everything.” Even if we omit the added “is everything” of the NRSV, for which there is no Greek counterpart, the statement is strange. What are we to make of the fact that circumcision *is* one of the commandments of God? How can the commandments be kept if circumcision is ignored?

How are we to put together Paul’s negative and positive statements concerning the law? One popular way to do so is to conclude that Paul opposes the ritual or ceremonial law but not the moral law. There are two reasons to reject such a hypothesis. First, the law was accepted as a unity by the Jews, all of it equally binding, so that the distinction itself seems artificial. Second, Paul’s statements about no longer being “under the law” are too sweeping and absolute to refer only to the

⁴⁶On 2 Cor 3, see Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996). Hafemann labors, unconvincingly in my opinion, to transform the negative language concerning the old covenant (law) in this passage into a positive view of the law (as he also finds in Gal 3–4!).

ceremonial law. The “works of the law” against which he militates involve more than simply the ceremonial law or the Jewish badges of identity. This is not to deny that for Paul, as for Jesus, it is the moral law that is of primary interest and perpetuated in the church.

Another, more attractive, way of handling the problem is to take the negative statements as referring to *vόμος* understood as commandments, and the positive statements as referring to the broader meaning of *vόμος*, namely as Scripture. In other words, *vόμος* as the commandments is done away with, but *vόμος* considered as the whole of Scripture is viewed positively, witnessing ultimately to Christ and justification by faith, as well as containing within it the parenthetical *vόμος* whose purpose has now been served. This explanation often works well, but not in every instance, and I believe there is a more satisfactory way to deal with the problem.

If we take the negative statements concerning the law as referring to the commandments, it is possible to take the positive statements as referring simply to *the righteousness that is the goal of the law*. Thus, although we are no longer “under the law” as commandments, we still are meant to arrive at something approximating the righteousness of the law, so that *in this sense* the law in effect is finally upheld. If the moral righteousness that is the heart of the law is mediated to the church through the teaching of Christ and the apostles, and followed by Christians, then it can be seen that the gospel does not overthrow the law, but rather it produces what the law was after in the first place. The dynamic, however, is totally different, referring not to being under the law—language which is anathema to Paul—and not to tablets of stone, but to the law of the new covenant written on our hearts (2 Cor 3:3), in the life of the Spirit.⁴⁷

2.2.2. Paul and salvation

It is not possible to comprehend the complexity of Paul’s view of the law without bringing in the issue of salvation, since the two are so intertwined. The negative view of the law is the result of its inability to save. “Works of the law” are consistently contrasted with faith in Paul. The point is made with clarity more than once in Galatians. Thus in 2:15–16: “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.” The same contrast is evident in 3:11–12: “Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’ But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, ‘Whoever does the works of the law will live by them.’” Paul goes

⁴⁷ On the subject of the law, see Dunn, *Paul and the Mosaic Law*; and Dunn’s own essays, especially because of his interaction with disagreeing scholars, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*. See too A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001); Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003).

on to say that Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law having become a curse on our behalf. Paul does say in 3:14 that this had occurred “in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles.” From Paul’s perspective this is a crucially important fact, both for his mission to the Gentiles and for the particular argument in Galatians. But this is no warrant for limiting the point of the argument merely to the hindrance to the Gentiles posed by the identity markers that separated them from Israel.⁴⁸

The statements in Romans are equally strong. The first main section of the book (1:18–3:20) presents an unforgettable indictment against all humanity, both Gentile and Jew. After admitting in 3:1 that the Jews have some (limited) advantage over the Gentiles, he comes to his comprehensive conclusion: “What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin.” In the last analysis, those who had the law were not benefited by it. After the catena of Scripture quotations that follows (3:10–18), Paul concludes: “Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin” (3:19–20).

A few verses later, in the section describing the solution to the human predicament (3:21–31), he asserts: “For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law” (3:28). This is followed by the stress that since there is only one God, he is the God of both Jews and Gentiles and that “he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.” If we turn the argument around we may say that since Jews and Gentiles are necessarily saved in the same way (3:23–24), Paul’s negative conclusions concerning the law apply equally to Jews and Gentiles, at least so far as salvation is concerned, and therefore both Jews and Gentiles need the free salvation brought by Christ.⁴⁹

In Rom 4:4–5, after the quotation of Gen 15:6, where Abraham’s faith was reckoned to him as righteousness, Paul criticizes the idea of earning salvation:

⁴⁸The present essay limits itself to the undisputed letters of Paul. For a helpful discussion of the later letters of the Pauline corpus, see I. Howard Marshall, “Salvation, Grace and Works in the Later Writings in the Pauline Corpus,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 339–58. Marshall concludes, “If works are explicitly put in antithesis to faith in the *Hauptbriefe*, the later epistles emphasise the more fundamental implicit opposition between grace and works which is the ultimate basis of the antithesis between faith and works. A question mark is thus placed against the view that Paul was opposed to ‘works of the law’ simply as the symbols of a Judaism which excluded the Gentiles. Rather Paul was opposed to any view that regards works as something on which people may depend for salvation rather than purely upon divine grace” (358).

⁴⁹The equality of Jew and Gentile in their sin and their need of the same salvation is set forth with particular clarity by Daniel Jong-Sang Chae, *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles: His Apostolic Self-Awareness and its Influence on the Soteriological Argument in Romans* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997).

"Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift, but as something due. But to one who without works ($\muὴ ἐργαζομένῳ$) trusts ($πιστεύοντι$) him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness ($εἰς δικαιοσύνην$)."
In the verse that follows, Paul speaks again of the reckoning of "righteousness apart from works ($χωρὶς ἐργῶν$)."

In words reminiscent of Galatians, Paul writes in Rom. 5:20–21: "But law came in ($παρεισῆλθεν$), with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The final verses we note on this subject are found in Rom 11:5–6, where Paul, speaking of Jewish believers in Jesus, including himself, writes: "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works ($οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐργῶν$), otherwise grace would no longer be grace."

From the above cursory review of Paul's thinking on the subject, at least the following points are clear. (1) The law had a temporary role to play, and that role was *not* to bring the kind of righteousness that would enable one to stand before God justified, but rather to heighten sin and the awareness of sin; (2) Jews and Gentiles alike, humans are sinful and unable to fulfill the law. Therefore, they are in the same dire situation: without hope apart from the grace of God; (3) salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is available only through faith in Christ and not works of the law, and for that reason the gospel must be preached to both Jews and Gentiles.

This is the heart of Paul's theology and he argues it with such energy that it is very difficult, in my opinion, to read him otherwise. Those statements in Paul that can be seized upon as seeming to point in a different direction must be held in tension with what we have seen, and not be taken as canceling out the main emphases in Paul. With this in mind, we turn to look at two well known difficult passages in Rom 2. The first is Rom 2:6–11: "For he will repay according to each one's deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality." A verse later (v. 13) Paul adds: "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified." To put it mildly, this is a puzzling passage since it seems to affirm the works righteousness perspective and the possibility of obtaining such righteousness, which Paul, as we have seen, is so adamant against and which he forcefully opposes in the argument that follows. Indeed, what Paul says here appears to be the standard Jewish viewpoint commonly held in Paul's day.

The question is, how can this be seen to be compatible with what Paul will say in the chapters that follow? One popular explanation is to say that Paul is

speaking only hypothetically in these passages. In other words, *if* there were any who obeyed the law they would be justified, but in fact there are not any. But Paul does not seem to be speaking hypothetically in 2:14, when he writes: “When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves.” Here we must observe the very important point that Paul can envisage *righteousness quite apart from the commandments of the law*. This is a key to understanding the complexity of Paul’s thinking concerning the law, salvation and righteousness. And for Paul, Christians will exhibit that righteousness without being under the law.⁵⁰

2.2.3. The ongoing importance of righteousness for Paul

If anyone thinks that Paul’s law-free gospel means the abandonment of righteous living, that person has not understood Paul. Justification by faith does not mean that one may live as one pleases. Paul could hardly make this clearer, especially in the repeated μὴ γένοιτο, “absolutely not” of Romans (6:2, 15). The goal of our identification with Christ’s death is that “we too might walk in newness of life” (6:4). For Paul the surprising fact is that “sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14). One might be tempted to say that Paul meant that sin will not rule over us because we *are* under law as well as under grace. But that language for Paul would be totally unacceptable. He is absolutely insistent that Christians are *no longer under the law*. That cardinal principle he will not compromise. Yet, righteousness remains a high priority for Paul.

The paradox can be summed up by saying that those who are free from the law are now in a position to, and called to, pursue a righteousness that remarkably corresponds to the goal of the law. Thus Paul says that having been set free from the slavery to sin Christians “have become slaves of righteousness” and are to present their members as “slaves to righteousness for sanctification” (Rom 6:18–19). The metaphor is carried on in 7:6: “But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.” The same thread is found in Gal 5:13: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.” For Paul then it could hardly be clearer that freedom from the law and the practice of righteousness are not contradictory.

⁵⁰ In the final analysis, this conclusion is not very different from that argued by K. R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace—to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 72–93; and (somewhat differently) by Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (SNTSMS 105; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). My disagreements appear to be mainly semantic, though of course semantics can sometimes be everything. For me there are two Pauline non-negotiables: that Christians are no longer under law and that nevertheless righteousness remains an indispensable priority. See now Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

Here then lies the clue to understanding Paul's positive statements about the law and his Jewish-sounding statements concerning good works, in the very books where he champions freedom from the law and repeatedly contrasts the works of the law with faith and grace. Thus Gal 6:7–8 points to the ongoing importance of righteousness in a law-free gospel of grace: "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit." In the same way, the passages from Rom 2, cited above, are to be explained in this way. So too, when Paul writes in Rom 3:31: "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law," he refers not the commandments as such but to the righteousness which was the goal of the law, now arrived at through obedience to Christ apart from the commandments of the law. This too is even the meaning of the reference to "obeying the commandments of God" in 1 Cor 7:19, as can be confirmed by the parallel passage, Gal 6:15, where the counterpart is "a new creation" (cf. Gal 5:6). It is also how Rom 8:3–4 is to be understood: "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." The repeated references to the Spirit, the dynamic of Christian sanctification, in this connection are worthy of note.

To repeat the paradox once more, Paul argues that since Christ has come the law is no longer in effect and Christians are therefore no longer under the law. At the same time, however, the righteousness that corresponds to the goal of the law, but not arrived at by obeying the commandments as such, is emphasized by Paul, and it is in this way that his gospel is not the denial of the law but in the last analysis an upholding of the law.⁵¹

2.2.4. Paul's own practice

What was Paul's own personal practice concerning the law? Several writers have recently argued that Paul continued not only to practice but also to promote not merely the moral law but even the ceremonial or ritual law. Thus, combing through the Pauline letters, Peter Tomson detects the presence of halakoth at numerous points and concludes that Paul's life was structured by halaka.⁵² Paul furthermore expected Gentile Christians to obey halakoth, including among others the Noachide commandments. Markus Bockmuehl, somewhat more reasonably than Tomson, has also traced the significance of the Noachide commandments

⁵¹ A similar view of the matter, with minor variations, can be found in the following: Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004); Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1993); Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994).

⁵² *Paul and the Jewish Law*.

for Gentile Christians in Paul.⁵³ We can hardly do justice to this unusual argument here, but one may wonder whether applied Christian ethics are appropriately defined as halaka, even when they are not derived from Torah (Tomson thus speaks of dominical, apostolic, and general halaka). No one denies that the New Testament has ethical standards derived from Jesus and ultimately from the Old Testament, but within the framework of Paul's theology of the law it would seem more accurate to say that we have an analogy to halaka, rather than halaka as usually encountered.

To return to the question of Paul's own practice with respect to the law, we are fortunate enough to have a comment on the subject from Paul himself. In 1 Cor 9:19–23 Paul admits to a deliberate inconsistency. We quote the passage in full:

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Several things are clear from this statement. Paul regards himself as no longer under the law. One can hardly be described as being “under law” if one only obeys it now and then. Paul thus feels free to identify with the Gentiles and not to remain an observant Jew. Incidentally, how remarkable it is that the Jew Paul can speak of himself as an outsider: “To the Jews I became as a Jew”! The implied break with Judaism here is parallel to the statement in Phil 3:4–9. It is clear, furthermore, that observing or not observing the law is an unimportant issue before God. The position taken by Paul is one of complete expedience: he will or will not observe the law only in relation to its usefulness in the proclamation of the gospel. Before God the issue of obeying the commandments is in the category of adiaphora.

There is, of course, an important qualifier in v. 21 that tends to confirm our interpretation of the sense in which Paul continues to affirm the law. When he indicates that when he was among the Gentiles he became as “one outside the law,” he then adds the words “though I am not free from God's law but under Christ's law.” He had already stated that “I myself am not under the law” (v. 20). Now he says, in an apparent contradiction, that he is “not free from God's law.” But in the

⁵³ *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*. Along the same line, see too A. F. Segal, “Universalism in Judaism and Christianity,” in *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1–29. Bockmuehl admits that the Noachide commandments are “not the *theological* key to New Testament ethics,” but argues that they “provide an essential clue to the specific *rationale and content* of early Christian ethics” (*Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, 173; his italics). I think this ascribes an exaggerated importance to the Noachide commandments.

words immediately added, he specifies the sense in which he still pursues the righteousness of the law, namely through “Christ’s law (ἐννομος Χριστοῦ).” It is important to note that despite the translation of NRSV (and RSV), Paul does not use the language of being *under* the law of Christ; nor does he do so in the other reference to the law of Christ in Gal 6:2 where he speaks of fulfilling the “law of Christ.” It is not as though nothing has changed except that the law of Christ now takes the place of the law of Moses. In fact, the dynamic is entirely different (cf. 2 Cor 3:6, 17). But the main point is that faithfulness to the law of God is arrived at through obedience to the teaching of Christ. At bottom is a faithfulness to the righteousness of the Torah—and it *is* the righteousness of the Torah for Paul—as mediated through the Messiah and the Holy Spirit. This again points to the eschatological dimension of the turning of the ages, because of which we have the complexity of both continuity and discontinuity.⁵⁴

Although Paul had departed from the structures of his previous Judaism, I have little doubt but that his default conduct, so to speak, was very Jewish, simply by habit if for no other reason. He would probably have continued to say the Shema twice daily, and ordinarily to observe kashrut and Sabbath. But this would perhaps best be described as expression of his ethnic Jewishness, and as a matter of convenience because of the fact that he moved among Jews so frequently. This conduct no longer had any soteriological significance, however, nor was he under compulsion to obey the commandments. His conduct was now solely under the sway of Christ.

2.3. Paul’s Understanding of the Old Testament and His Interpretive Method

We need spend little time on the Jewishness, indeed the rabbinic character, of Paul’s interpretive approach to the Scriptures. This has been well established.⁵⁵ Along with the continuity afforded by this fact, we have of course to reckon with a major point of discontinuity in the fact that Paul’s conviction that Jesus is the Messiah now controls his reading of the Scriptures. Paul, in short, has a christological hermeneutic. The Scriptures of Israel are ultimately about Christ and therefore Christ is the key to understanding them. This is put clearly in 2 Cor 3:14–15, where speaking of the Jews he writes: “But their minds were hardened.

⁵⁴ See Stanley E. Porter, “Was Paul a Good Jew? Fundamental Issues in a Current Debate,” in *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries* (JSNTSup 192; ed. S. E. Porter and B. W. R. Pearson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 148–74. The allusion to Markus Barth’s essay (“St. Paul—A Good Jew”) is deliberate, with the answer being quite different.

⁵⁵ See Joseph Bonsirven, *Exégèse rabbinique et exégèse paulinienne* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1939); Joachim Jeremias, “Paulus als Hillelit,” in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969), 88–94; D. Cohn-Sherbok, “Paul and Rabbinic Exegesis,” *SJT* 35 (1982): 117–32; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975). See now, however, the cautionary remarks of Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 10–14.

Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.” Paul’s approach to the Old Testament is both very Jewish and very Christian! Again the determinative factor is the eschatological event of the coming of the Messiah.

This last point means that the new covenant has taken the place of the old covenant. The 2 Cor 3 passage makes this quite clear. The old is described as the letter that kills, the ministry of condemnation and death. By contrast the new is of the Spirit and gives life, a “ministry of justification” abounding in a glory that immeasurably exceeds that of the old. The old was “set aside”; the new is “the permanent” (v. 11). Then, speaking of the sanctification of believers, Paul concludes “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18).

2.4. The Temple

Since the temple was one of the pillars of pre-70 Judaism, it may be worth pointing out how little Paul has to say about it. In the whole discussion of Paul this is a much neglected subject. In fact, the temple is mentioned by Paul only in the letters to Corinth (with one reference each in the disputed letters, 2 Thess 2:4 and Eph 2:21). In 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19, as well as in 2 Cor 6:16, Paul spiritualizes the word so that it refers to the holiness of the Christian’s body: the Christian is God’s temple. The mention of the temple in 1 Cor 9:13 is made in an incidental allusion to workers in the temple receiving food for their work as a justification for Christian workers to receive material benefits for their work.

Though still functioning in Paul’s day, the temple and the ritual purity of the temple play no role in Paul’s perspective. The reason for this is transparently clear. Since the sacrifice of Christ is the fulfillment of the temple sacrifices, and it was his sacrifice to which they pointed, his death makes the ongoing sacrificial ritual of the temple a redundancy, something perhaps already seen by Stephen (Acts 6:13–14). Paul writes: “For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7). Using the language of the temple and the holy of holies, he refers to the justification of Christians “by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement [these three words translate *ἱλαστήριον*, lit. ‘place of atonement,’ i.e., the lid covering the ark of the covenant] by his blood” (Rom 3:24–25).

For Paul it is the sacrificial death of Christ alone that provides forgiveness of sins. The realization on the Damascus Road that God had sent his Messiah to be crucified, an idea that was previously a stumbling block to Paul, enabled him to proclaim the message of “Christ crucified,” who now for Paul took the place of Torah as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23–24; 2:2). It is fully to be expected that Paul would find little of significance in the temple after

the cross. Yet, at the same time, it was only the temple and its ritual that made the death of Christ comprehensible, and it was only in its terms that the meaning of Christ's death could be described.

We may simply add here that another very important element in the Judaism of Paul's day, namely the land, finds no place in Paul's thinking, so far as it can be judged from his letters. Indeed, quite remarkably, in the one instance where we might have expected the word "land" (*ἡ γῆ*) we read instead of "the promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world (κόσμος)" (Rom 4:13, RSV). This reflects Paul's understanding of the universality of the Abrahamic covenant, and that the history of salvation transcends the promise of the land.

2.5. Paul's Hope for Israel

As a final subject in our study of continuity and discontinuity, we turn to the question of the relation of the church to Israel and to the question of Israel's future. Our focus, of course, will be that remarkable passage, Romans 9–11.

We begin with the dialectical affirmation that the church has taken the place of Israel, and yet at the same time it has not. With great personal vexation of spirit, Paul begins his discussion lamenting his kinsfolk's unbelief in the gospel of Jesus Christ (9:1–5). He summarizes the strange turn of events in the following words: "What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone" (9:30–32). In 10:3 the same observation is made: "For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness."

The painful and undeniable reality of Israel's unbelief in the gospel inevitably raises the question of God's faithfulness. As he begins to bring his discussion to resolution, Paul puts the question directly: "I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew" (11:1–2). Paul appeals to a remnant of Jewish believers in Christ, "chosen by grace" (11:5), including himself. This is the outworking of a distinction already made by Paul between ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel (see 9:6–8, 27–29; cf. 2:28–29). The fact that a remnant of Jews have believed in Christ itself satisfies the question of the faithfulness of God.

Nothing more needs to happen for the question of God's faithfulness to be put to rest. The remnant itself is the concrete evidence of that faithfulness. This is not, however, the end of the story. In 11:11 Paul asks "have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means!" He then successively speaks of their future "full inclusion" (11:12), and "their acceptance" (11:15). They, the Jews who have not accepted

Christ, are subsequently referred to as part of a holy “batch” of dough, and as holy “branches” of a “holy root” (11:16).

This leads Paul to his famous olive tree analogy. Here the tree no doubt is Israel, the earlier covenant people of God, and the root in particular, if it is specifically to be identified, is probably the patriarchs. Paul likens the Jewish unbelievers to branches that were broken off “because of their unbelief” (11:20), i.e., in the gospel. God can easily graft these natural branches back into the olive tree, and Paul now announces what lies in the future for these branches: “And even those of Israel (NRSV adds the last two words), if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.” The unbelief referred to here can only be unbelief in Christ. Paul knows only one way of salvation. This is followed directly by Paul’s announcement of a “mystery,” namely that “a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved” (11:25–26). Paul does not tell us how this will come about, but the assumption seems to be that there will be a turning of Israel (“all” is meant to be comprehensive, but not necessarily universal) to faith in Christ.⁵⁶ The sequence revealed in the mystery reverses the order that Paul would have held earlier, namely the Jewish view that after the eschatological salvation of Israel, only then would there be salvation for the righteous Gentiles. Now the sequence is salvation first to the Gentiles and only then to Israel. Paul accordingly could have conceived of his apostleship to the Gentiles as ultimately serving Israel, as a prerequisite to Israel’s salvation, and hence as a mark of his loyalty to Israel.

In the best Jewish fashion, Paul says of Israel: “as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (11:28–29). Paul returns to his fundamental loyalty to Israel, or perhaps better put, to the God of Israel. This he never lost, for all the newness and change in him that one may care to discuss. Israel and the church are, as it will finally turn out to be, part of one great story.⁵⁷ Christ is and will be the consummation of Israel’s hope.

Following this affirmation of God’s unchanging faithfulness, Paul presents one last summary of the great epic of salvation history: “Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all” (11:30–32). This astounding encapsulation of the purpose of God leads Paul, not unexpectedly, to a moving doxology that brings this

⁵⁶ See Reidar Hvalvik, “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel? A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11:25–27,” *JSNT* 38 (1990): 87–107; and Scott Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25–32: A Response to Krister Stendahl,” *Ex Auditu* 4 (1988): 38–58.

⁵⁷ See Bruce W. Longenecker, “Different Answers to Different Issues: Israel, the Gentiles and Salvation History in Romans 9–11,” *JSNT* 36 (1989): 95–123.

section of Romans to a climactic end. He can only bow in submission and adoration at the unsearchable and mysterious ways of God: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.”

3. Old and New in Paul

The entirety of Paul’s theology is a juxtaposition of old and new, just as Paul himself is a unique combination of old: rabbinically trained Jew; and new: Christian apostle and witness of the resurrected Jesus. This combination is the root of the complex continuities and discontinuities that we have examined.⁵⁸ Paul never regarded himself as no longer a Jew. Because Christianity is the fruit and fulfillment of the hope of the Jewish Scriptures there are substantial points of continuity between Paul the Jew and Paul the Christian. For him, being a Christian is not something opposed to being a Jew. At the same time, however, Christianity is not simply a further development of the Old Testament or of Judaism. Nor is it primarily a way for Judaism to become accessible to the Gentiles. The death of Christ is the means of salvation for Jews as well as Gentiles. Paul makes it very clear: the gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). The ultimate conclusion of the argument in Rom 1:18–3:20 is that Jews are as much under the power of sin as are Gentiles, and thus are in need of the same justification, which alone comes through the atoning death of Christ. At the end of Romans, Paul emphasizes that “Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Rom 15:8–9).

Furthermore, the old and the new are not present in an equal balance. We do not have a situation in which a variety of new perspectives are added to the staple of old things that constitute Judaism, causing only minor readjustments. On the contrary, the new that comes is an eschatological turning point in the ages,⁵⁹ of such great consequence that we must be prepared for dramatic shifts. Here is the reason for the striking discontinuities we encounter in Paul. This key fact, that Jesus is the promised Messiah who inaugurates the new, eschatological age, is what is finally determinative for Paul, and it is the one thing that revisionist readings of Paul consistently underestimate. Put very simply: Paul was a Jew who believed that the Messiah had come. That made all the difference in the world.

⁵⁸ For a helpful discussion, see James D. G. Dunn, “How New was Paul’s Gospel? The Problem of Continuity and Discontinuity,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* for Richard N. Longenecker (ed. L. A. Jervis and P. Richardson; JSNTSup 108; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 367–88.

⁵⁹ See I. Howard Marshall, “A New Understanding of the Present and the Future: Paul and Eschatology,” in *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry* (ed. R. N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 43–61.

God had a far more complicated program for his Messiah, however, than Saul the Pharisee could have anticipated. Most unexpectedly, it involved the Messiah's redeeming death on the cross, but also it involved a temporary hardening of Israel—except for the remnant—and it involved the creation of a new community of faith, the church, consisting of not only Gentiles, but also Jews. The era of promise and preparation, when God had focused his attention on Israel and her existence under Torah, had come to an end. Christ and the church were now the focus of God's purposes, but with Israel as a whole still to be incorporated at the approach of the eschaton proper.

With this shift of aeons and all of its related aspects in mind, it can hardly be adequate to characterize Paul's theology as a form of Christian Judaism. It is instead necessarily a new entity: a Christianity that is intimately and inseparably related to Judaism as its fulfillment and consummation (cf. 1 Cor 10:32, which refers to three entities, namely Jews, Greeks, and the church of God). The significance of the special identity of the Jews is relativized: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). And, as the text in Gal 6:16 is probably to be taken, Paul can refer to the church as "the Israel of God."

Although it grew out of Judaism, and despite undeniable Jewish aspects, Pauline Christianity cannot adequately be described as a sect of Judaism. Two questions are debated by scholars today. First, when can we speak of Christianity? And, second, when did the church break with the synagogue? As for the first, the answer depends on what we mean by the word. Of course institutionalized Christianity as a self-conscious entity came about relatively late. But if we define a Christian as one who believes in the crucified and risen Jesus as Lord, whose atoning death brings the reality of salvation, and if a Christian is one who understands the participation of the Holy Spirit as the mark of the dawning of a new era, then we have Christianity from the day of Pentecost. When the label "Christian" was first used is irrelevant. For the first few years of the Jerusalem church, the Christians were all Jews. Pre-Pauline Christianity was a Jewish phenomenon, and despite some ongoing tensions, Paul found much agreement with those in Jerusalem who had been Christians before him (Gal 2:9).

As for the second question, it would seem wise not to think in terms of a specific date for the break of the church from the synagogue.⁶⁰ We undoubtedly have to reckon with a process taking place in different locations at different rates of speed. Dating the supposed break circa 85–90 C.E., during the work of the Yavneh rabbis and the adding of the "benediction" of the *minim* to the Eighteen Benedictions, to my mind is much too late. Tensions were great virtually from the start, and only increased with the passing of time. Paul knew the reality of Jewish opposition to the message he preached (cf. 2 Cor 11:23–25). There were clear points of

⁶⁰ On this and other matters addressed in the present essay, see Martin Hengel, "Early Christianity as a Jewish-Messianic, Universalist Movement," in *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity* (ed. D. A. Hagner; Harrisville, Pa.: Trinity, 1999), 1–41.

vital importance, especially, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, but it is likely, in my opinion, that the church and synagogue were obviously separate entities before the end of the first century.⁶¹

From the beginning, Paul knew that his faith in Christ meant a separation from his previous Jewish existence. As we have repeatedly noted, however, his Christian faith was not the nullification of his former Judaism as much as it was its fulfillment. He now spoke of new communities, the churches, consisting of Gentiles and a remnant of Jewish believers among whom he counted himself. The new that brought the old to its intended goal had now come into existence. And in that new reality Paul, the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles, found the meaning and culmination of his Jewish identity.⁶²

⁶¹ On this subject, see especially James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991) and *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (ed. J. D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁶² A number of important essays germane to the present essay will be found in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Vol. 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; WUNT 2.181; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

Paul as a Jewish Believer— According to the Book of Acts

Reidar Hvalvik

1. Paul in Acts—The Problem

“Acts is, to a great extent, a book on Paul.”¹ This statement can hardly be disputed when one takes into consideration the amount of space that is dedicated to him in the book: Seventeen chapters, Acts 9 and 13–28, are devoted to the story of Paul. He is introduced as a zealous Jew who persecuted the first believers in Jesus. On the road to Damascus he had a radical experience that traditionally has been called his conversion. The experience was certainly significant and overwhelming: Paul was turned around and his mind was radically changed.² A former persecutor of the Jews who believed in Jesus, he himself became a believer and preacher of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Gal 1:23).

Despite criticism of the traditional terminology,³ it is still common to speak about Paul’s “conversion” and refer to him as a “convert.”⁴ Within Lukan scholarship there has been a debate concerning the three versions of the Damascus road experience (Acts 9, 22 and 26). In spite of several attempts to differentiate between tradition and redaction in the texts, no consensus has been reached.⁵ While

¹ Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 82.

² See Richard I. Pervo, *Luke’s Story of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 35.

³ See especially Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 7–23.

⁴ See, e.g., Beverly R. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 52–95 and Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). The topic is discussed on the basis of Paul’s letters in chapter 4 of in this book.

⁵ See Christoph Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge: Traditionen- und kompositionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Lukas Darstellung der Frühzeit des Paulus* (FRLANT 103;

some scholars think that the conversion-motif was central to the pre-Lukan tradition,⁶ others think that the tradition of the Damascus event available to Luke was a call story—corresponding to Paul's own testimony.⁷ Undoubtedly both elements, conversion and calling, are to be found in all the texts, though they are variously emphasized.

Historically speaking, there can be no doubt, however, that a conversion of some kind took place at the road to Damascus. In everyday language conversion normally means a change of religion, but this is hardly appropriate with regard to Paul. He was not converted from “Judaism” to “Christianity.” Such terminology would be anachronistic, and, further, it does not fit the picture of Paul preserved in the Acts of the Apostles. The main theme of this picture is Paul as a Jew.⁸ And it has to be stressed that Paul, also after his “conversion,” talks and lives as a Jew, and is loyal to his people and his Jewish heritage.

This well-known observation became the focus of modern scholarship through an article by Philipp Vielhauer, titled “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts,” originally published in German in 1950,⁹ translated into English in 1963, and republished in 1966.¹⁰ In this article Vielhauer discusses the presentation of Paul and his theology in Acts, and one of the issues with which he interacts is Paul’s practical attitude toward Judaism and “Jewish Christianity.” This attitude is, according to Vielhauer, characterized by the following aspects:

- (1) By Paul’s missionary method: beginning at the synagogue
- (2) By his submission to the Jerusalem authorities
- (3) By the circumcision of Timothy (16:3)
- (4) By spreading the apostolic decree (16:4)
- (5) By assuming a vow (18:18)
- (6) By trips to Jerusalem to participate in Jewish religious festivals (18:21; 20:16)

Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970); Karl Löning, *Die Saulustradition in der Apostelgeschichte* (Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 2.9; Münster: Aschendorff, 1973); and Volker Stolle, *Der Zeuge als Angeklagter: Untersuchungen zum Paulusbild des Lukas* (BWANT 102; Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973).

⁶This is the conclusion of both Burchard (*Zeuge*) and Löning, (*Saulustradition*): They find a pre-Lukan story in ch. 9 (though variously isolated) stressing conversion, while 22:2–16 and 26:12–18, stressing the call-motif, are seen as a result of Luke’s reworking of the tradition.

⁷So Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (trans. J. Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 106–16, 116. Lüdemann thinks Luke has deliberately interpreted the event as a conversion story (115).

⁸Jervell, *Theology*, 92.

⁹“Zum ‘Paulinismus’ der Apostelgeschichte,” *EvT* 10 (1950–51): 1–15.

¹⁰Philipp Vielhauer, “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1966), 33–50. References to Vielhauer’s article are from this version.

- (7) By participating, on the advice of James, in a Nazirite vow with four members of the Jerusalem congregation (21:18–28)
- (8) By stressing when on trial that he is a Pharisee (23:6; 26:5)¹¹

Based on these observations, Vielhauer concludes that Acts “portrays the Gentile missionary Paul as a Jewish Christian who is utterly loyal to the law.” In the main Vielhauer thinks Acts’ portrayal is “possible” when it is evaluated by the Pauline letters; “whether it is also historical is another question.”¹² Other scholars go further and stress that “there is a *discrepancy between the ‘Lucan’ Paul and the Paul of the epistles.*”¹³ This is a general statement, but it is thought to be evident not least with regard to Paul’s Jewishness.

We are thus faced with two challenges. Firstly, we have to take a closer look at the picture of the “Jewish” Paul in Acts. In what way and to what extent is he depicted as a pious Jew? Secondly, we have to ask whether this picture is in conflict with the picture that is painted in Paul’s letters. This comparison is necessary since we—with the framework of a history of Jewish believers in Jesus—in fact are seeking “the historical Paul” (though our focus is on Paul as a *Jewish* believer). Consequently we have to ask: Was Paul loyal to his Jewish heritage even after he came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, or is this only a Lukan construction?

Our discussion will focus on most of the aspects noted by Vielhauer, and we will start with the question about Paul’s missionary method—or put more broadly, Paul’s continued relation to the synagogue after the Damascus road experience.

2. Paul’s Continued Relation to the Synagogue

It is common to see Paul’s continued loyalty to his people reflected in his missionary method. According to Acts, he always begins in the synagogue, preaching the gospel to the Jews first. However, this aspect is—according to a widespread opinion—nothing more than an expression of “the Lukan scheme of going to the Jews first.”¹⁴ In other words, it is part of Luke’s theological concern, and consequently its historicity is thought to be suspect. In his treatment of this question, E. P. Sanders asserts that the picture in Acts is quite different from the

¹¹Ibid., 38.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. B. Noble and G. Shinn; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 113 (italics in the original). A broad discussion of Paul in Acts (and in his letters) is found in Stanley E. Porter, *The Paul of Acts: Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric, and Theology* (WUNT 115; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999). Porter does, however, say little about Paul as a Jew.

¹⁴Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 159 (said in connection with Acts 14:1; cf. a similar evaluation of 17:2–3 ibid., 185); Walter Schmithals, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (ZBK 3.2; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), 125. Also, C. K. Barrett (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* [ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994], 1:611)

picture that emerges from Paul's letters: in Paul's own letters his ministry is restricted to the Gentiles, with no special concern for the Jews in the Diaspora. "Paul was apostle to the Gentiles. So he styled himself, and so he acted."¹⁵ We thus have to ask: Is it so that Paul, according to his own letters, is apostle to the Gentiles, while in Acts he is "the teacher of Israel"?¹⁶ In order to answer this question, we have to examine both Paul's own understanding of his apostleship and his missionary strategy in his epistles, and Luke's account of Paul's commission and missionary work. Let us start with the latter.

2.1. Paul's Commission and Missionary Methods—According to Luke

Luke reports that Paul at each new place always first visited the synagogue (cf. 13:14; 14:1; 17:1–2, 10, 17; 18:4–6, 19; 19:8–9). This is said to be his custom (cf. 17:1–2: κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθός).¹⁷ In this context it is customary to speak about a fixed pattern concerning Paul's missionary work: ". . . Luke seems to follow, although with variations, a standardized 'model' or pattern: entrance into a city, preaching in the synagogue, initial positive response, opposition of the 'Jews' (and turning of the preachers to the pagans), stirring up of the crowds of the 'Jews,' and departure from that city."¹⁸ Such a statement requires, however, some comments.

First, the pattern is not consistent. In other words, the story is not always the same. At Cyprus (13:5), in Beroea (17:10–12), in Athens (17:17), and in Ephesus (18:19) Luke reports that Paul preaches in the synagogues with no opposition from the Jews.¹⁹ Besides, the opposition at times also comes from the Gentiles (16:19–24; 19:23–40).

Second, the pattern is not simply Jews first and then Gentiles. When Paul preaches in the synagogues, it is mentioned regularly that his audience consists of both Jews and Gentiles (13:16b, 26; 17:17; 18:4; cf. 20:21), or if not explicitly stated, this can be inferred from the context.²⁰ When Luke reports about the re-

says that this is Luke's version of Rom 1:16. He adds, however, that "there is no reason why he [Paul] should not have made a practical application of the principle."

¹⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 190; cf. 181.

¹⁶ See Jacob Jervell, "Paul: The teacher of Israel: The Apologetic Speeches of Paul in Acts," in *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 153–83.

¹⁷ This is probably also the meaning of κατὰ τὸ αὐτό in 14:1 (NIV: "as usual"); cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 527; Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; 12. vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1976–1992), 9:205–573, 432.

¹⁸ Augusto Barbi, "The Use and Meaning of (*Hoi*) *Ioudaioi* in Acts," in *Luke and Acts* (ed. G. O'Collins and G. Marconi; trans. M. J. O'Connell; New York: Paulist, 1993), 123–42, 135.

¹⁹ The opposition recorded in Beroea came from the Jews in Thessalonica (17:13).

²⁰ The only exception is 18:19 where only Jews are mentioned ("And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself went into the synagogue and argued with the Jews").

sponse to the missionary preaching,²¹ he always refers both to Jews and Gentiles (13:43; 14:1; 17:4, 12; 19:10; cf. 19:17).²² This means that Luke's interest in Paul's visits to the synagogues is not limited to the evangelization of the Jews, but to Jews and Gentiles alike.²³

In this context the term "Gentiles" means "Godfearers,"²⁴ i.e., Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel and observed some part of the Torah. Recent research has shown that the Godfearers were not a Lukan invention,²⁵ but rather an important group in the Jewish Diaspora and in the early Pauline churches.²⁶ They were not a homogeneous group, as they included a wide range of Gentiles who adhered to Judaism in different ways.²⁷ Despite their adherence to Judaism, the Godfearers were still regarded as non-Jews.

When Luke reports on Paul's visit to a synagogue, the outcome is always the same: some Jews and some Gentiles come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. It should also be noted that while Luke is specific about the result of the preaching, he is rather modest with regard to the number of Jews coming to faith in Jesus as the Messiah.²⁸ Admittedly he can speak about large numbers, but in these cases

²¹ In 13:5 it is said that "they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews," but nothing is said about the result.

²² The Gentiles may be referred to as Ἐλλήνοι (Greeks, 14:1; 17:12; 18:4), οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν ("Godfearers," 13:16, 26), οἱ σεβομένοι ("Godfearers," 17:17; cf. 13:50), σεβομένοι προστηλύτοι (Godfearing proselytes, 13:43) or σεβομένοι Ἐλλήνοι (Godfearing Greeks, 17:4). In singular we also find σεβομένη τὸν θεόν (16:14) and σεβομένος τὸν θεόν (18:7).

²³ See Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 198.

²⁴ See Jacob Jervell, "The Church of Jews and Godfearers," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 11–20. Only seldom does Paul address Gentiles outside the synagogues (see 14:14–17; 17:22–31). According to a Jewish position even the Godfearers were, however, regarded as Gentiles (see, e.g., Acts 10:1–2 compared with 10:28, 45; 11:1).

²⁵ Contra Alf T. Kraabel, "The Disappearance of the 'God-Fearers,'" *Numen* 28 (1981): 113–26; see Reidar Hvalvik, "De 'gudfryktige' hedninger—historisk realitet eller litterær fiksjon?" in *Ad Acta: Studier til Apostlenees gjerninger og urkristendommens historie: tildegnet professor Edvin Larsson på 70-årsdagen* (ed. R. Hvalvik and H. Kvalbein; Oslo: Verbum, 1994), 140–56.

²⁶ Further literature and discussion are found in Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century* (WUNT 2.82; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 249–67; Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTSMS 68; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 145–66; Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (vol. 5 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 51–126; and Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 61–70.

²⁷ See the useful observations in Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *HTR* 82 (1989): 13–33.

²⁸ Jervell (*Theology*, 84) overstates when he claims that a "great number of Jews are converted in all the synagogues." See also Jervell, *People of God*, 44. It is correct that Luke

he speaks of both Jews and Greeks (13:43; 14:1; 17:12). At other occasions the picture is more nuanced. In Thessalonica he reports that “some” (*τυες*) of the Jews were persuaded by Paul and Silas, as were “a great many” (*πλῆθος πολύ*) Godfearing Greeks and “not a few” (*οὐκ ὀλίγατ*) prominent women (17:4). When Paul on the Sabbath looks up the place of prayer (*προσευχή*) in Philippi, Luke names only one in the audience, not a Jew, but a Godfearer (*σεβομένη τὸν Θεόν*), named Lydia (16:14). Besides her, Luke reports a jailer coming to faith (16:27–34), a person with seemingly no connection to the synagogue. In Athens Luke mentions a few converts, two of them by name (Dionysos and Damaris; 17:34), all of them seemingly Gentiles. In Corinth Luke names two converts, one Jew, Crispus, the synagogue ruler (18:8a), and one Godfearer, Titius Justus (18:7), but adds that “many of the Corinthians” came to faith (18:8b). In Ephesus Paul preaches in the synagogue for three months (19:8), but little is said about the results in positive terms. Due to opposition, Paul leaves the synagogue but continues to teach in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19:9). In that connection Luke has a general comment that “all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord” (19:10; cf. v. 17).

Against this background it is justified to say that Luke depicts Paul *both* as an apostle to the Gentiles *and* as a teacher of Israel. Both Jews and Gentiles are the “target” of Paul’s preaching. This is also in accordance with the way Paul’s commission is reported in Acts. In all three versions of the Damascus event there is an element of commission. This is sometimes denied with regard to the first text, Acts 9:1–19a,²⁹ but such an assertion is unfounded. The commission to Paul is found in the Lord’s words to Ananias: “for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name (*βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου*) before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (9:15 NASB). It is correct that *βαστάζειν τὸ ὄνομά* (“bear the name”) is martyr terminology, meaning to confess Christ publicly.³⁰ There is thus a close connection between witnessing and suffering (cf. v. 16). There is, however, no reason to play this off against Paul’s missionary activity.³¹ As a missionary Paul had to suffer. From the very beginning he was persecuted, as is made clear already in 9:19b–29.

The words to Ananias show that Paul’s commission is universal. It includes both Jews and Gentiles and their kings. This corresponds to the second version of the Damascus event. There Ananias says that Paul is going to be a witness of Christ “to all the world,” or more literally: “to all men” (*πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους*, 22:15). In the last version of Paul’s commission, in his speech before king

reports about mass conversions of Jews, but these remarks are mainly related to the early years in Jerusalem and Judea (2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; cf. 21:20), not Paul’s ministry.

²⁹ See Burchard, *Zeuge*, 118–28.

³⁰ See Herm. Sim. 8.10.3; 9.28.5; cf. Burchard, *Zeuge*, 100, n. 168.

³¹ So rightly Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; 17th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 283; contra Burchard, *Zeuge*, 100–101; Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 112.

Agrippa, Paul reports that Christ said to him: “I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles (ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔθνων)—to whom (εἰς οὓς) I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light . . .” (26:17–18a).³² In this case the wording is somewhat ambiguous. The pronoun οὓς (“whom”) could refer either to “your people” and “the Gentiles,” or only to the latter.³³ In light of the following it seems best to think that both Jews and Gentiles are included.³⁴ Reporting about his own ministry, Paul says that he “declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance” (26:20). Again, both Jews and Gentiles are included.

The impression one gets from the commission stories is sustained also in Paul’s farewell speech to the elders in Ephesus. He tells about his ministry and emphasizes that he has “testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:21). This is how Paul’s ministry is depicted in Acts. It is therefore misleading to claim, as some scholars do, that Luke consistently depicts Paul “as the missionary to the Jews.”³⁵ On the contrary, he is depicted as a missionary both to the Jews and to the Gentiles.³⁶

If one were to look for an emphasis in Paul’s missionary activity according to Acts, it would be easier to argue that his main focus is the Gentiles. On three occasions Paul delivers a report of his ministry to the communities in Antioch and Jerusalem. Each time he focuses on the work he had done among the Gentiles. In Antioch he and Barnabas related how God “had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles” (14:27). In Jerusalem the whole congregation listened to them “as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles” (15:12). At a later stage Paul “related one by one the things that God

³² Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in USA.

³³ So Haenchen, *Acts*, 686; Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 436. But see the discussion in Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1160. In ch. 22, when Paul speaks to the crowd in Jerusalem, he reports a vision he had in the temple where the Lord said to him, “Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles” (22:21). Here only the Gentiles are mentioned.

³⁴ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation. Volume 2: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 324; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Erdmans, 1998), 744; cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 760. It should be noted that the conversion terminology used in 26:18 has parallels in Luke 1:16, 78–79; 4:18—used of Jews.

³⁵ Jervell, *Theology*, 84; cf. Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 284; so also Robert L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (SBLMS 33; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1987), 157.

³⁶ See Hans Windisch, *Paulus und das Judentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Hohlhammer, 1935), 15: “The Paul of Acts is just as much a missionary to Jews in the Diaspora as he is a missionary to the Gentiles” (my translation).

had done among the Gentiles through his ministry” (21:19). Similarly, but in a less formal setting, it is said that Paul and Barnabas “reported the conversion of the Gentiles” as they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria (15:3). In these reports the evangelization among the Jews in the Diaspora is not even mentioned.³⁷ It must be noted, however, that the primary literary function of these reports is to prepare for the decision at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). Besides, these reports hardly outweigh the overall impression one gets in Acts: that Paul preaches both to Jews and Gentiles. The texts do remind us, however, that a one-sided focus on Paul as a missionary to the Jews does not match the sources.

There is an even more important point to be made concerning these passages: Such a one-sided presentation would in fact be in conflict with Luke’s picture of Paul as a pious Jew. The basis for proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles is not only that Paul was commissioned to that task, but first and foremost because it was in accordance with the Scriptures. Before king Agrippa, Paul stresses how he had said “nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light *both to our people and to the Gentiles*” (26:22–23). This echoes 13:47 where Paul and Barnabas refer to what the Lord had commanded them: “I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (cf. Isa 42:7).

In order to be a pious Jew who relied on Moses and the prophets, *Paul had to be a missionary to the Gentiles*—and this is how Luke depicts him. It should be noted that the commission scene—where his sending to the Gentiles is emphasized—takes place in the temple. It is the pious Paul, praying in the temple in Jerusalem, who is sent to the Gentiles (22:17–21).³⁸ In fact, among all the apostles, missionaries and witnesses in Acts, Paul is the one who is depicted as a missionary to the Gentiles. But this does not prevent him from also being a missionary to the Jews. In fact, the two ministries are closely related.

How does this picture accord with Paul’s own presentation of his apostleship and ministry?

2.2. *Paul’s Missionary Theology and Strategy—According to His Letters*

There can be no doubt that Paul understood himself to be an apostle to the Gentiles.³⁹ This is explicitly stated in Rom 11:13 (“Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles . . .”) and in texts where he refers to his calling (Gal 1:16; Rom 1:5, cf. Eph 3:8; 1 Tim 2:7; 4:17). This does not, however, exclude his minis-

³⁷ James’s words in 21:21 (“They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles . . .”) do, however, presuppose a teaching activity among the Jews in the Diaspora.

³⁸ Even if the sending to the Gentiles is the focus of this text, there is also a reference to Paul’s testimony to the Jews (22:18).

³⁹ Jervell (*Theology*, 85, n. 158) is far beyond the evidence when he claims that “Paul saw himself, primarily and in hindsight, as a missionary to the Jews”.

try from also embracing the Jews.⁴⁰ That this was the case seems to be supported by the programmatic statement in 1 Cor 9:20: “To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law” (RSV).⁴¹ Some scholars have tried to reduce the importance of this statement, claiming that what Paul has in mind is his attitude during the Jerusalem conference (Gal 2).⁴² This is hardly convincing. The statement has a rather general character, and cannot be restricted to one single incident.

Another text to be mentioned is Gal 2:7–9. On the basis of verse 9 (“we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised”) it has been argued that Paul restricted his ministry to the Gentiles. It is not evident what the intention of the Jerusalem agreement actually was, nor how it was interpreted by Paul and the other participants. The majority of scholars seem to understand the agreement in ethnic terms,⁴³ while a minority argues for a geographical interpretation.⁴⁴ A geographical understanding has much to commend it, but it has to take into consideration that the “ideological boundaries” of the land of Israel were a matter of dispute within ancient Judaism.⁴⁵ According to the Tosefta, “everything from the Taurus Amanus downwards is the land of Israel” (*t. Hal.* 2:11). From an ideological point of view the “territory of the circumcised” could thus include both Syria and Cilicia. It is not unthinkable that such views came to the fore among early Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and also had an impact on Paul’s understanding of his mission field.⁴⁶ Even if some meant that the agreement should be understood ethnically, this was hardly Paul’s view. At least it could not hinder Paul from going

⁴⁰ So also Colin G. Kruse, “The Price Paid for a Ministry among Gentiles: Paul’s Persecution at the Hands of the Jews,” in *Worship, Theology, and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (ed. M. J. Wilkens and T. Paige; JSNTSup 87; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic, 1992), 260–72, 260.

⁴¹ See Günther Bornkamm, “The Missionary Stance of Paul in I Corinthians and in Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1966), 194–207, 200; and Arland Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from his Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 137–43. I am not convinced by E. P. Sanders’s arguments to the contrary (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 187–90).

⁴² J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 215.

⁴³ See, e.g., Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 100.

⁴⁴ See Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 30; cf. Vielhauer (“Paulinism,” 38) who says that Gal 2:9 “marks off mission areas, not religions.” Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 142–44, finds difficulties with both views.

⁴⁵ On this, see Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 61–70.

⁴⁶ Paul seems not to have founded any churches in Syria and Cilicia (including Tarsus), despite his presence in these areas (cf. Gal 1:21). The summary notice in Acts 15:41 seems to presuppose several churches in the area, but the only one we actually have knowledge of is Antioch.

to the synagogues. As we have seen above, this was a natural choice, even if he wanted to reach Gentiles (i.e., Godfearers).

Commentators who argue for an ethnic interpretation of Gal 2:7–9 claim that—according to the evidence of his own letters—Paul’s mission was directed towards Gentiles, not Jews and Gentiles.⁴⁷ As an example of this argument, we may quote Louis Martyn’s reference to Paul’s converts: “With very few exceptions, none can be identified from the Pauline letters as being Jewish.”⁴⁸ This is correct if emphasis is put on “the Pauline letters.” If, however, we use all available sources—the Pauline letters and Acts—we will be aware of a noticeable Jewish segment in the Pauline churches. Even if only a limited number of them with some certainty can be identified directly as Paul’s converts, they nevertheless belonged to his churches.⁴⁹ Admittedly Paul seldom focuses on the ethnic background of his named converts, and this holds true both with regard to Jews and to Gentiles.

If one is searching for a comprehensive understanding of the historical situation in the Pauline churches, a one-sided emphasis on Paul’s letters is unwarranted. The Book of Acts should also be taken into account. This must be regarded as reasonable in historical research (and should not be in need of further justification) as long as there is no insuperable divergence between the two sources. Lack of evidence in one of the sources is not necessarily a divergence. The problem is real only if the two sources obviously are incompatible. And this is not the case with regard to Paul’s missionary activity. In Paul’s letters the mission to the Gentiles is mainly in focus—because this is directly connected with his understanding of the gospel. What Paul needs to stress is that the gospel is for the Gentiles, and that he was called as an apostle to the Gentiles. This was the radical and new element in his theology. That the gospel also should be preached to the Jews was not an issue. This was taken for granted by Paul, in his thought as well as in his missionary work.

For that reason it is not surprising that Paul’s letters say very little about missionary work among Jews. It is, however, clearly presupposed in 1 Cor 9:20⁵⁰ (mentioned above)—as it is in 1 Cor 1:21–23. When Paul says “we proclaim

⁴⁷ See Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (trans. F. Stanley Jones; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 72: “in the preserved letters Paul nowhere speaks of a *mission* by himself to the Jews.” Similarly Martyn, *Galatians*, 215: “The vast preponderance of the evidence in Paul’s own letters show him preaching to Gentiles, not to Jews and Gentiles.”

⁴⁸ Martyn, *Galatians*, 214. Similarly Sanders (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 190) claims that there are “virtually no signs” of Jews in the Pauline churches.

⁴⁹ The following are probably Paul’s Jewish “converts”: Aristarchus, Crispus, Jason, Sopater/Sosipater, Sosthenes, Timothy and his mother and grandmother (Eunice and Lois). Other possible names include Jesus Justus, Stephanas (and his house), and Tychicus. See chapter 6 of this book.

⁵⁰ So rightly Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 26; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 427, n. 30. Contra Lüdemann, *Paul*, 121, n. 91.

Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,” this is hardly a purely theoretical statement. It is more likely that it reflects his own experience.⁵¹ It is, therefore, not surprising that Paul refers to people who were circumcised at the time of their “calling” (1 Cor 7:18).⁵²

Even more important than these scattered remarks is Paul’s theology as it is found in the letter to the Romans. In the very letter where he calls himself an apostle to the Gentiles (11:13), he stresses that the Jews have a prerogative to the gospel (1:16)⁵³ and shows his deep concern for the salvation of Israel. In 9:3 he goes so far that he says: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh” (cf. 10:1). A man who could give such a statement would hardly neglect an opportunity to preach the gospel for his fellow Jews.⁵⁴ For that reason it is not surprising that the author of Acts depicts Paul as always visiting the synagogue when he came to a new place. We would be surprised if he did not do so. Besides, Paul explicitly links his ministry to the Gentiles with the hope that he may save some of his fellow Jews (11:13–14). This indicates some sort of interrelation between the mission to the Jews and the mission to the Gentiles.⁵⁵ In fact, Paul’s survey of salvation history in Rom 11 shows that the salvation of the Gentiles and of Israel are inseparable.⁵⁶

In my view, Paul’s understanding of his apostleship and his missionary theology constitute a sufficient basis for a missionary strategy like the one depicted in Acts: one which always started in the synagogue. This makes the picture in Acts very plausible,⁵⁷ though it does not prove it. Is it possible to find more evidence for such a continuing contact with the synagogue? The evidence will show that it is.

The most important piece of evidence might be found in a “biographical” note in 2 Corinthians. There Paul records that he “five times [. . .] received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one” (11:24 RSV). This calls for some comments.

⁵¹ See Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (SP 7; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999), 106. Concerning 1 Cor 1:22 Collins notes: “With respect to the history of salvation, Paul typically presents himself as having had a mission to Jews and to Gentiles.”

⁵² Martyn (*Galatians*, 215, n. 51) admits that this verse suggests, “that Paul occasionally evangelized Jews,” though his modification (“occasionally”) minimizes the importance of the statement.

⁵³ On this text, see my article, “‘To the Jew First and also to the Greek’: The Meaning of Romans 1:16b,” *Mishkan* 10 (1989): 1–8.

⁵⁴ Paul’s conviction that “all Israel will be saved” does not speak against his mission among Jews; cf. Reidar Hvalvik, “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11.25–27,” *JSNT* 38 (1990): 87–107.

⁵⁵ See Bornkamm, “Missionary Stance,” 199. At a practical level this interrelationship can be attested by Paul’s missionary strategy according to Acts.

⁵⁶ This is forcefully argued by Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959), 36–68.

⁵⁷ See Bornkamm, “Missionary Stance,” 200.

Flogging was an ordinary punishment used by Jewish authorities.⁵⁸ *Mishna Makkoth* 3 lists various offenses that were punished by flogging, e.g., a number of offenses connected with food and ritual purity. In all probability it was such an offense that caused the flogging of Paul, namely the eating of unclean food (cf. 1 Cor 8:8; Rom 14:14).⁵⁹ The setting for this would be Paul's contact with Gentile Christians. This is supported by the context of 2 Cor 11:24, in which Paul speaks about his apostolic ministry. Thus there can be little doubt that these incidents are related to his missionary work—both among Jews and Gentiles. The punishment indicates a continuing relation to the synagogue, while the offense indicates a close relation with Gentiles.

The importance of 2 Cor 11:24 should not be overlooked. The fact that Jewish authorities punished Paul suggests that, for their part, they still regarded him as one within the fold of Judaism.⁶⁰ For Paul it meant that he still regarded himself as a Jew. This was, however, hardly reason enough to endure this brutal punishment. As with the other hardships, he endured it for the sake of the gospel. He saw the importance of maintaining access to the synagogues—both for reaching the Jews and the Godfearers. This point is adequately formulated by Anthony E. Harvey:

Having committed an offence and having been found guilty by Jewish courts, he had to discharge the sentence imposed on him before he could be readmitted to the Jewish community and continue preaching where his missionary work had most effect—among the Gentile sympathizers. Moreover he never abandoned the attempt to convert his fellow Jews; and we can now give full practical and social weight to his own words when he writes, 'I became to the Jews as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those under the law as one under the law (not being myself under the law) so that I might gain those under the law'. Had he remained . . . content with a mission to the Jews, his being 'under the law' might have been a painless constraint. But to combine this with being 'as not under the law to those not under the law'—that is, with adopting Gentile customs in open breach of the legal requirements of Jewish society—was to incur the virtual necessity of regular punishment in order to maintain his Jewish connections.⁶¹

In summary, Paul's letters clearly support the picture found in Acts: Paul, even as an apostle to the Gentiles, had a continuing relationship with the synagogue. The main reason to continue this relationship was that it offered the possibility to evangelize both Jews and Gentiles. Besides, it was a testimony that Paul

⁵⁸On this, see A. E. Harvey, "Forty Strokes Save One: Social Aspects of Judaizing and Apostasy," in *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study* (ed. A. E. Harvey; London: SPCK, 1985), 79–96; and Sven Gallas, "'Fünfmal vierzig weninger einen . . .' Die an Paulus vollzogenen Synagogalstrafen nach 2Kor 11,24," *ZNW* 81 (1990): 178–91.

⁵⁹Gallas, "Fünfmal," 184; Harvey, "Forty," 84.

⁶⁰See Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 192: "punishment implies inclusion"; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 20; Kruse, "Price Paid," 265.

⁶¹Harvey, "Forty," 93.

regarded himself as within the framework of the Jewish faith. This is a fact that Luke underlines more clearly than Paul himself, but there is no fundamental conflict between the two.

2.3. Breaking with the Synagogue

Even if it is clear that Paul continued to have a relationship with the synagogues throughout (at least most of) his ministry, it is also clear that he established new communities of Jewish (and Gentile) believers in Jesus. In Acts this is most explicitly said in 19:9: “But when some [of the Jews in the synagogue] were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, *he withdrew from them and took away the disciples*, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus” (NASB).

Prior to this, Acts describes Paul’s missionary activity in the synagogue in Ephesus. Earlier he had been received positively (cf. 18:19–20) and he continued to preach in the synagogue for three months (19:8). Even if nothing is explicitly said about people coming to faith, it is implied in the reference to disciples in 19:9. After a long period of positive response, Luke depicts a break in Paul’s relationship with the Jews in the synagogue.

The conflict started with opposition from the non-believing Jews. It is said that they “spoke evil of the Way” (19:9). Similar events have been reported earlier. Luke tells both of verbal attacks (13:45; 18:6a), attempts to set the Gentile population up against the Christian missionaries and their followers (13:50; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13), and accusations before pagan authorities (17:6–9; 18:12–16). What is going on is a *public distancing* of the Jews of the synagogue from the Jewish believers in Jesus.⁶² Both before the crowds and the authorities, non-believing Jews attempted to make visible the dividing lines between themselves and the Jews who believed in Jesus. The pagan authorities regarded the conflict as an intra-mural conflict among the Jews (cf. 18:15), but the distancing endeavors of the synagogal Jews reveal that they had another understanding of the conflict. From a sociological point of view this was a way of protecting the synagogue community, and a first step towards a new Jewish self-definition that excluded Jews who believed in Jesus.

Responding to these actions, Paul withdrew from the synagogue “and took away the disciples” (19:9). The verb used is ἀφορίζω, meaning, “separate,” “take away,” “set apart.” This does not mean that a community of Jesus-believers already was established as a defined entity within the synagogue community, and that they now separated themselves from the other Jews. The situation Luke describes is the early phase when Paul was able to preach in the synagogue and when Jesus-believing Jews and Godfearers were still accepted within the Jewish community. We have no evidence of formal or informal “Christian” communities

⁶² See Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (trans. O. C. Dean Jr.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 349.

within the synagogues at that time. What Luke depicts is thus the leave-taking of the Jesus-believers from the synagogue—an event that marks the beginning of a specific community of Jesus-believers.⁶³

A similar event also took place in Corinth. Luke tells of opposition from the Jews and consequently of Paul's decision to "go to the Gentiles" (18:6). He left the synagogue⁶⁴ and went to the house of Titius Justus, a Godfearer (*σεβόμενος τὸν Θεόν*). The new community—which was located next to the synagogue (18:7)—was not, however, a mere Gentile community. One of the prominent members was Crispus, a (former) *archisynagōgos*, who came to faith together with his whole household (18:8). This illustrates that the preaching of the gospel caused division within the synagogue and led to the establishment of a new, mixed community.⁶⁵ This development is confirmed by Paul's letters to the "church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:1). This new community, "the church of God," appeared as a "third empirical entity alongside Jews and Greeks" (cf. 1 Cor 10:32).⁶⁶

Nothing in the record in Acts indicates that Paul's break with the synagogue constituted a break with the Jews in general or with his Jewish heritage. The break evidently was a break with unbelief and resistance (18:6; 19:9). The fact that the Jewish believers in Jesus left the synagogue did, however, have decisive consequences for them: it meant separation from a social network that supported their Jewish manner of life. This in turn had consequences for their possibility of living according to Jewish customs, and probably furthered the assimilation of the Jews into the Gentile Christian majority.

A forecast of this problem can be seen already in the Antioch incident reported in Gal 2:11–14. Peter and other Jewish believers in Jesus had renounced a strict interpretation of the Mosaic food laws⁶⁷ in order to have table fellowship with Gentile believers.⁶⁸ Due to pressure from some Jerusalem visitors, arguing for a stricter halakah, they made a complete turnaround, resulting in a break of

⁶³ It is unlikely that the separation from the synagogue happened overnight. According to Acts, Apollos later preached in the synagogue in Ephesus, and at that time Priscilla and Aquila evidently still attended the synagogue (18:24–26).

⁶⁴ This is implied from the context. The text only says that he left "from there" (*ἐκεῖθεν*) (cf. RSV, NASB). The Western text adds "from Aquila," apparently because the scribe thought that Paul was changing his place of lodging rather than place of teaching (see Johnson, *Acts*, 323). This is hardly the sense of the text, cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 2:867.

⁶⁵ See Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 168.

⁶⁶ Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 252.

⁶⁷ It is most unlikely, however, that they totally abandoned food regulations. For a discussion of the possible attitudes of Jews towards table fellowship, see E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM, 1990), 272–83; Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 56–61.

⁶⁸ It is likely that this conduct, at least in part, was due to the experience of God's guidance reported in Acts 10. On the Antioch incident, see further Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 267–72 and James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC 19; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 115–31.

table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. This Paul saw as a dangerous signal to the Gentile believers: it seemed that they had to live like Jews ('Ιουδαῖοις) in order to be accepted in the community of God's people. In Paul's view this blurred the gospel that had been confirmed at the Jerusalem conference—that Gentiles (as well as Jews) were "saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:11).⁶⁹

Paul's concern for the gospel and for the unity of the church thus seems to have been at the expense of the possibility of Jewish believers to live fully according to their ancient customs. The food laws became subordinated to the "purity" of the gospel. In the mixed Pauline communities complete law observance among the Jewish believers consequently became practically impossible. In all probability this was the basis for the charges later directed against Paul, that he taught "the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses" (Acts 21:21).⁷⁰

The establishing of new communities is supported by many scattered notices in Acts. When Paul visits places where there is a group of disciples, there are no more references to visits in the synagogue, but to visiting the disciples or the church there (14:22–23, 28; 18:23; 21:4). It is also to these churches Paul wrote his letters.

3. The Circumcision of Timothy

One of the events that most clearly seems to depict Paul as loyal to his Jewish background is the circumcision of Timothy. In Acts 16:1–3 we read:

Paul went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Through the centuries this story has created great difficulties for interpreters of the New Testament: How could Paul, the author of Galatians, do such a thing? In

⁶⁹There is no reason to think that James would have disagreed with regard to this soteriology. But he certainly disagreed with regard to the halakah that had to be followed by Jewish believers. See Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 79–82; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 151–52.

⁷⁰See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:269. From a historical point of view the accusation may be regarded as *partly* appropriate. There is, however, no evidence for the charge that Paul told Jewish believers not to circumcise their children (see below), and more generally to "forsake Moses." Paul was not antinomian. His moral exhortations clearly reflect the Torah. Thus he forbids the worship of idols (1 Cor 10:7, 14), but he is less strict with regard to eating meat that could have been offered to them (1 Cor 10:25–27). Generally speaking, Paul seems very flexible to food laws—as long as they do not distort the gospel and the question of salvation (cf. 1 Cor 8:13; 10:28–33). See Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 272–73.

his letter to the Galatians he writes: “I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all” (5:2 NIV). He is also happy to mention that not even the Greek Titus was compelled to be circumcised when they met with the Jerusalem authorities (2:3). According to Jürgen Becker, the idea that Paul should have Timothy circumcised “contradicts so blatantly the Pauline conception (Gal 2:3; 1 Cor 7:18–19) that this note deserves no credence.”⁷¹ Also, Vielhauer says that “the statement about the circumcision of Timothy stands in direct contradiction to the theology of Paul,” stressing that for Paul “circumcision is never a matter of indifference.”⁷²

The first question to be dealt with in connection with the circumcision of Timothy is thus: is such an act thinkable for the apostle Paul? Despite the objections referred to above, there can be little doubt that the answer is affirmative. Those who argue otherwise seem to interpret Paul solely on the basis of the polemical statements of Galatians without taking their occasion into consideration. For, as Lüdemann rightly stresses, “the polemical statements of Galatians are not timeless dogmatic statements.”⁷³ On the contrary, they are formulated in a specific historical situation: Some Christian teachers had come to the Galatian churches and forced the Gentile believers to be circumcised (cf. Gal 6:12).⁷⁴ They argued that salvation could not be gained without circumcision and Torah observance (cf. Acts 15:1). For similar reasons some at the Jerusalem conference were evidently of the opinion that Titus, a Greek, had to be circumcised (Gal 2:3–5). In such a situation Paul was unshakeable: he could not accept circumcision and law observance *as conditions for salvation*. This would set aside the grace of God, “for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing” (Gal 2:21).

Nevertheless, circumcision in and of itself was a matter of indifference to Paul. As he explicitly says, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (Gal 5:6; cf. 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19). This means that Paul would not have

⁷¹ Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 127; cf. Haenchen, *Acts*, 482; Wolf-Henning Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter: Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission* (WMANT 50; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 21, n.72.

⁷² Vielhauer, “Paulinism,” 40, 41. Bornkamm, “Missionary Stance,” 203, also doubts the historicity of this episode.

⁷³ Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 176. Lüdemann accepts the historicity of Timothy’s circumcision (against his earlier position in *Paul*, 153).

⁷⁴ The identity of these teachers is debated. Most scholars think that they were Jewish Christians. See, e.g., Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT; 3d ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 25; Betz, *Galatians*, 5–7; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (SP 9; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 2–5; Dunn, *Galatians*, 9–11. Munck (*Salvation of Mankind*, 130–34), on the other hand, argues that the opponents in Galatians were Gentile Judaizers. For a similar position, see A. E. Harvey, “The Opposition to Paul,” in *The New Testament Scriptures* (Part 1 of *Papers Presented to the Third International Congress on New Testament Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1965*; *Studia evangelica IV* [ed. F. L. Cross; TU 102; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968]), 319–32.

had objections against Jewish believers practicing circumcision⁷⁵ as part of their Jewish identity. When circumcision began to be preached among the Gentiles, however, Paul had basic objections because it obscured the gospel and threatened Christian freedom.

This was not, however, the situation when Timothy was circumcised. Two things made it different. Firstly, the reason given for the circumcision shows that no question of salvation was involved. Secondly, Timothy was regarded as a Jew, not a Gentile. This last point begs further discussion.

According to Acts 16:1 Timothy was born to a mixed marriage: his mother was Jewish, his father Greek, i.e., a non-Jew. According to modern thinking, Timothy was thus a Jew. Was this the case also in Paul's time? Shaye Cohen has gone through the relevant sources and concludes that the principle that Jewish descent was traced matrilineally cannot be dated with certainty before the Mishna (see *m. Qidd.* 3:12; *m. Yebam.* 7:5). More precisely, it can be dated to "the first quarter of the second century C.E. at the latest."⁷⁶

If the rabbis came to this position two generations after Paul, it is not far-fetched, however, to think that some argued the same position in Paul's time.⁷⁷ It is rather obvious that the argumentation that led to the "new" view also had its defenders at an earlier stage. One of the burning issues discussed among the rabbis was the status of the offspring of a Jewish woman being raped by a pagan soldier.⁷⁸ Was the child clean or unclean, Jew or Gentile? In this connection it is interesting to note what Paul, himself a first-century Jew, thought about mixed marriages. In his view "the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy" (1 Cor 7:14 NASB). Based on a similar argumentation, it is most likely that other first-century Jews would think that Timothy was a Jew—due to his Jewish mother.

This is clearly the position presupposed in Acts.⁷⁹ The simple fact that Luke introduces the paragraph about Timothy by saying that he was "the son of a Jewish woman" (16:1) shows this. The only reason for saying this is that Luke wants to emphasize Timothy's "Jewish connection." There is no doubt that in Luke's view Timothy was a Jew.⁸⁰ This is supported also by Luke's narrative as a whole.

⁷⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Epworth Commentaries; Valley Forge, Pa.: TPI, 1996), 216: "That Paul should regard the circumcised status as still quite acceptable for Jews is confirmed by Gal. 5.6, 6.15 and I Cor. 7.18, 9.20; it was the insistence that *Gentile* believers *had* to be circumcised to which he objected."

⁷⁶ Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent," *JBL* 105 (1986): 251–68, 266. This position has earlier been argued by David Daube, *Ancient Jewish Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 22–32.

⁷⁷ Christopher Bryan, "A Further Look at Acts 16:1–3," *JBL* 107 (1988): 292–94.

⁷⁸ Daube, *Ancient Jewish Laws*, 28.

⁷⁹ See Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 146.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Acts*, 289; Barrett, *Acts*, 2:762.

In the preceding chapter he has shown how Paul struggled for the Gentiles' freedom from circumcision. Thus it would make no sense to depict Paul circumcising a Gentile.⁸¹ On the other hand, if Timothy was a Jew, the episode in Acts 16 makes sense. The decision of the Council (Acts 15) concerning the freedom of the Gentiles did not affect the traditions of the Jewish people. There is no indication that Jesus-believing Jews could not follow the customs of their ancestors, expressing identity with their people. As Luke T. Johnson says: "By opening a door of freedom to Gentile Christians, the Church did not close the door to Jewish Christians; everything appropriate to that tradition could still be practiced, so long it was understood to have cultural rather than soteriological significance."⁸²

This is how Luke saw the case. And there is no compelling reason to think that Paul had a different perception of these things. The circumcision of the Jew Timothy thus makes sense. The reason given for Paul's action is that it was done "because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek" (16:3).⁸³ Two things seem to be implied here. First, the Jews in the region knew Timothy. This probably means that he (and his mother) had connections to the Jewish community. Second, the Jews expected Timothy to be circumcised because he was a Jew, but they knew that his father had prevented his circumcision, himself being a Gentile. Once again Johnson may be quoted: "... the action would signify a belated but genuine commitment to the Jewish heritage by one previously prevented from it, and would in fact serve Paul's purpose in gaining hearing for himself and his entourage in the synagogues."⁸⁴

As already mentioned, some scholars find it unthinkable that Paul could have circumcised Timothy.⁸⁵ Referring to 1 Cor 7:17–20 Haenchen claims that this text "shows that Paul wanted nothing to do with the supplementary circumcision of a Christian."⁸⁶ The crucial point in the text mentioned is the following statement: "Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision" (1 Cor 7:18b). This cannot, however, be used as an argument against the historicity of Timothy's circumcision. The words rendered "uncircumcised"—in Greek ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ—literally means "with a foreskin" and is

⁸¹ Bryan, "Further Look," 293; Witherington, *Acts*, 476.

⁸² Johnson, *Acts*, 289. Johnson calls this one of the "narrative functions" of the texts about Timothy. In our view it also fits the historical situation.

⁸³ The imperfect of the verb (ὑπῆρχεν) may indicate that Timothy's father was dead; cf. Longenecker, "Acts," 455.

⁸⁴ Johnson, *Acts*, 289.

⁸⁵ So also Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg et al.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 125; Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 240; Alfons Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (ÖTK 5; 2 vols.; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1981–1985), 2:402. Both Roloff and Weiser claim that circumcision would imply disregard for baptism. Such an assertion does not, however, make sense if one takes the context into consideration; cf. Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2 vols.; EKKNT 5; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 2:97, n. 6.

⁸⁶ Haenchen, *Acts*, 481.

used as a name for the Gentiles (*m. Ned.* 4:11).⁸⁷ But Timothy was a Jew—and was treated as such.

In view of Paul's flexibility for the sake of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 9:20–23), it is far from unlikely that he circumcised Timothy.⁸⁸ This is the opinion of a large number of recent commentators, exactly for the reason expressed by Luke in Acts 16.⁸⁹ The reason given there is compatible with the historical Paul.

4. Paul Assuming Vows

4.1. A Nazirite Vow

There are two incidents in Acts in which Paul is involved in a religious vow. The first takes place when he leaves Corinth. Luke records: “At Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow” (18:18b). There are several difficulties connected with the interpretation of this short text, but most commentators agree that the vow in question is a Nazirite vow since this is the only Jewish vow that includes shaving of the hair.⁹⁰ A Jew could dedicate himself or herself to God in a special way by abstaining from strong drink and contact with corpses. As a token of the vow, the person’s hair should not be cut. When the period for the vow had come to an end, the Nazirite should shave his head “at the doorway of the tent of meeting” (the court of the temple), and put the hair on “the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings.” At the same time the Nazirite was obliged to bring several offerings (Num 6:1–21). According to the Mishna, the vow could

⁸⁷ See Collins, *First Corinthians*, 284.

⁸⁸ See Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 176; Kalervo Salo, *Luke’s Treatment of the Law: A Redaction-Critical Investigation* (Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae; Dissertationes Humanarum Litterarum 57; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1991), 258; S. G. Wilson, *Luke and the Law* (SNTSMS 50; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 64–65.

⁸⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 260; Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HTKNT 5; 2 vols.; Freiburg: Herder, 1980–1982), 2:200–201 (as a possibility); Schmithals, *Apostelgeschichte*, 146; Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:98–99; Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 298–99; Edvin Larsson, *Apostlagärningarna* (Kommentar till Nya Testamentet 5; 3 vols.; Stockholm: EFS-förlaget, 1983–1996), 2:354; Dunn, *Acts*, 216; Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 146; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 576; Witherington, *Acts*, 474–77.

⁹⁰ See the useful discussion in Bart J. Koet, “Why Did Paul Shave His Hair (Acts 18,18)? Nazirate and Temple in the book of Acts,” in *The Centrality of Jerusalem: Historical Perspectives* (ed. M. Poorthuis and Ch. Safrai; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 128–42, esp. 136–37; cf. Haenchen, *Acts*, 546; Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:155. Roger Tomes, “Why Did Paul Get His Hair Cut? (Acts 18.18; 21.23–24),” in *Luke’s Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; JSNTSup 116; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 188–97, is an exception. He does, however, overlook important evidence in favor of the traditional interpretation.

be taken for life or for a limited period of time, though not less than thirty days (*m. Naz.* 6:3).⁹¹

On this background Acts 18:18 becomes problematic since Luke records that Paul cuts his hair in Cenchrea. Some scholars take this as an indication of Luke's inadequate knowledge of the Nazirite vow.⁹² In Acts 21:24 Luke does, however, tell that those "under a vow" were going to the temple to have their heads shaved. In other words, he seems to be aware of the regulation that the hair should be cut inside the temple.⁹³ What, then, is the meaning of Acts 18:18? Johnson points to the distinction between "cut" (*κείρω*) in 18:18 and "shave" (*ξυράοματι*) in 21:24, and conjectures that Paul is cutting his hair prior to the beginning of the Nazirite vow period.⁹⁴ In that case the imperfect *εἰχεν γὰρ εὐχήν* should be translated "he was making a vow" rather than "he had a vow."⁹⁵

There is another possible interpretation of the text. In the discussion of the Nazirite vow in the Mishnah we find a distinction between those who cut their hair in the city and those who cut their hair in the temple in Jerusalem (*m. Naz.* 6:8). This *may* indicate that there could be a temporal and spatial distance between the cutting of the hair and the release of the vow in the temple.⁹⁶ If this was a possibility, the cutting of the hair in Cenchrea had to be followed by a sacrifice in the temple not long afterwards. In this connection it is interesting to note that Luke in the following verses records that Paul went to Ephesus and further to Caesarea. Then he says that Paul "went up and greeted the church" before he went down to Antioch (18:19–22). There can be little doubt that in Luke's mind this means that Paul went to Jerusalem.⁹⁷ Even if we have no other information of such a travel, it cannot be totally excluded.⁹⁸ If Paul in fact traveled to Jerusalem, his stay could have been relatively short. According to the school of Shammai a Nazirite coming from abroad had to continue as a Nazirite only for thirty days

⁹¹ Further on Nazirite halakah, see Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 36–46.

⁹² See, e.g., Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 276; Krodel, *Acts*, 350.

⁹³ Johnson, *Acts*, 330.

⁹⁴ Johnson, *Acts*, 330. So also Dunn, *Acts*, 246.

⁹⁵ Johnson, *Acts*, 330.

⁹⁶ Friedrich W. Horn, "Paulus, das Nasiräat und die Nasiräer," *NovT* 39 (1997): 117–37, esp. 121–23; Koet, "Why Did Paul," 138; Matthias Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes: Das lukanische Verständnis des Gesetzes nach Herkunft, Funktion und seinem Ort in der Geschichte des Urchristentums* (WUNT 2.32; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988), 271.

⁹⁷ Haenchen, *Acts*, 547–48; Longenecker, "Acts," 489; Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:156; Schmithals, *Apostelgeschichte*, 170; Johnson, *Acts*, 330; Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:230, n. 1; so also NRSV. Surprisingly Blomberg claims that "Luke says nothing of him [Paul] going to Jerusalem on his return to Palestine; he heads to Syrian Antioch instead (18:22)." See Craig L. Blomberg, "The Christian and the Law of Moses," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (ed. I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 397–416, 411. Also Klinghardt (*Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 216) doubts that 18:22 refers to a visit in Jerusalem.

⁹⁸ Horn, "Paulus," 125; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:257; contra Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 277.

(*m. Naz.* 3:6). It is not unthinkable that Paul had such a short, private visit before he went on to Antioch.⁹⁹ In that case Acts 18:18 would make sense.

A question remains: is it likely that the historical Paul would have undertaken a Nazirite vow? The circumstances around the vow are obscure, but it should not be ruled out that Paul in fact could have taken such a vow.¹⁰⁰ The Nazirite vow is a purely voluntary undertaking. Thus Bruce rightly comments that it involved “nothing that could compromise the truth or freedom of Paul’s gospel.”¹⁰¹ This is further underscored by the fact that a Gentile could not enter the temple and thus never take a Nazirite vow.¹⁰² In fact this obscure incident, reported by Luke rather *en passant*, could be one of the most obvious signs of the Jewish piety of the historical Paul.

4.2. The Purification in Jerusalem

The second episode where a vow is mentioned takes place after Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem (Acts 21:21–26). He is there confronted with rumors about his own ministry, that he taught “all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses,” and that he told them “not to circumcise their children or observe the customs” (21:21). In order to scotch this rumor, Paul is told to purify himself along with four men in the community who are “under a vow” (21:23) and to “pay for the shaving of their heads” (21:24). In that way Paul could demonstrate that there was nothing to the things that had been told about him, and that he himself “observe[d] and guard[ed] the law” (21:24). Paul did so. The next day he took the four men, and “having purified himself, he entered the temple with them, making public the completion of the days of purification when the sacrifice would be made for each of them” (21:26).

There can be no doubt that the four men in question had taken a Nazirite vow, but this does not seem to relate to Paul (see below).¹⁰³ He is, however, asked to pay their expenses. This was not uncommon. Josephus tells that Herod Agrippa I assumed the expenses for the hair-offering of a large number of Nazirites, and in that way showed his own piety (*Ant.* 19.294).¹⁰⁴ Such an act alone would therefore show that Paul lived according to Jewish customs (cf. Acts 21:24).

Paul is also asked to purify himself together with the four Nazirites (ἀγνίσθητι σὺν αὐτοῖς, 21:24; cf. v. 26). Some commentators take this as an indication that Paul himself was under a vow. This is, however, unlikely. Firstly, the verb “purify” (ἀγνίζεσθαι) is used in the Septuagint in connection with a variety of purifications, not only with the Nazirite vow. It is, for example, used in connection

⁹⁹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 635; Witherington, *Acts*, 559.

¹⁰⁰ Marshall, *Acts*, 300; contra Conzelmann, *Acts*, 155.

¹⁰¹ F. F. Bruce, “Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?” *BJRL* 58 (1975–76): 282–305, 298.

¹⁰² Horn, “Paulus,” 136.

¹⁰³ See discussion in Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 271–72.

¹⁰⁴ See further discussion by Horn, “Paulus,” 133 and Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 270.

with the ritual of purification that was required of Jews who came from foreign, unclean land (cf. Num 19:12; Philo, *Spec.* 3.205).¹⁰⁵ Secondly, a temporary Nazirite vow lasted for a minimum of thirty days (*m. Naz.* 6:3), while Acts 21:27 speaks about a purification period of seven days. This makes sense if Paul was undergoing a purification rite due to his coming from abroad—such a rite could be completed in seven days (cf. Num 19:12). Paul would then be in position to accompany the four to the temple at the end of their vows, as well as conclude his own rite. This seems to be the most likely interpretation of Acts 21:20–27.¹⁰⁶

Is it likely that the historical Paul would have taken part in such purification? It has been objected that it would be more credible that the dying Calvin would have bequeathed a golden dress to the mother of God than that Paul should have entered upon this action.¹⁰⁷ If this is correct, the episode is a Lukan invention to demonstrate that Paul was a law-abiding Jew. There is, however, reason to think that we here have historically reliable tradition.¹⁰⁸ Again the flexibility of Paul is to be mentioned: he was prepared to live as a Jew among Jews (1 Cor 9:20).¹⁰⁹

Besides, it should be emphasized that the historical context for the incident recorded in Acts 21 is Paul's coming to Jerusalem with the collection. Admittedly, the collection is no central issue in Luke's narrative. It is, however, evidently referred to in Paul's words in 24:17: "Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation."¹¹⁰ By talking about "alms," Luke interprets the collection as an expression of piety.¹¹¹ This may not have been Paul's understanding of the gift, but Luke's interpretation is probably appropriate. Alms are also mentioned in connection with the Godfearer Cornelius (10:2), and are best understood as a way the Gentile Cornelius expressed fellowship with the Jewish people.¹¹² Similarly, Paul obviously wished the collection to express fellowship between Gentile and Jewish believers (cf. Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4).

The collection was of enormous importance to Paul, and it is quite likely that he would have stretched himself in order to achieve what he aimed at—securing the unity of the church.¹¹³ There is no reason to think that Paul would have had any problems demonstrating personal piety, as was the case in connection with the purification. If such piety in addition could serve the gospel by securing the

¹⁰⁵ See further Shmuel Safrai, *Die Wallfahrt im Zeitalter des Zweiten Tempels* (Forschungen zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog 3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 142–206.

¹⁰⁶ Haenchen, *Acts*, 612 (though Haenchen does not think that Luke understood his source); Bruce, *Acts*, 447; Witherington, *Acts*, 649.

¹⁰⁷ So A. Haurath according to Marshall, *Acts*, 346.

¹⁰⁸ Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 234–36; Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 315.

¹⁰⁹ Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 65.

¹¹⁰ Tannehill (*Narrative Unity*, 2:300) doubts that the text refers to the collection mentioned in Paul's letters.

¹¹¹ Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 571.

¹¹² See Klaus Berger, "Almosen für Israel: Zum historischen Kontext der paulinischen Kollekte," *NTS* 23 (1977): 180–204, 198.

¹¹³ Bornkamm, "Missionary Stance," 204–5; Krodel, *Acts*, 406.

unity between Jewish and Gentile believers, it is hard to imagine that Paul would have had any critical objections.¹¹⁴

5. Paul Participating in Jewish Festivals

Jewish festivals play no major role in Acts. Pentecost is mentioned in 2:1, but only because this was the day for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere we find references to the days of Unleavened Bread (20:6), Pentecost (20:16), the Day of Atonement ("the fast," 27:9), and an unspecified feast in the Western text of 18:21, all connected with Paul's journeys.

What do these references tell us? There are at least three possibilities. 1) They are taken over from tradition with no special concern for Luke. 2) They are editorial and show Luke's interest in depicting Paul as a pious Jew. 3) They are historical and coincide with Luke's interest in depicting Paul as a pious Jew. There is also a possibility that not all references share the same level of importance. The reference in 27:9 ("sailing was now dangerous, because even the Fast had already gone by") seems to be mentioned solely for chronological reasons. The purpose is clearly to date the event. One wonders, however, why Luke chose to use Jewish feasts for dating this and other events.¹¹⁵ It may be that Luke wishes to indicate that they were of some importance for Paul—at least in Luke's view of him.¹¹⁶

This is supported by Acts 20:16 where a specific desire is presupposed: "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; he was eager to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." Paul's intention is clearly to come to Jerusalem in order to observe the day of Pentecost there.

A similar desire is expressed in Paul's words in the Western text of 18:21: "It is quite necessary that I spend the coming feast in Jerusalem." It is doubtful that

¹¹⁴ Pesch (*Apostelgeschichte*, 2:223) thinks that money from the collection could have been used to pay for the Nazirites. This would in fact be a way of expressing unity; cf. also Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 272.

¹¹⁵ Commenting on 20:6 Lüdemann (*Early Christianity*, 221) says: "Luke loves to incorporate Jewish feasts in his work for the purpose of dating (cf. v. 16)." But why? Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra claims that the reference to the fast in Acts 27:9 provides "clear evidence" that Luke and his audience observed Yom Kippur. See his "'Christians' Observing 'Jewish' Festivals of Autumn," in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry; WUNT 158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 53–73, esp. 61–63 and "Whose Fast Is It? The Ember Day of September and Yom Kippur," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 259–82, esp. 268, 269, 279. This is an over-interpretation, going far beyond what the text actually says and possibly implies.

¹¹⁶ Note also Paul's reference to Pentecost in 1 Cor 16:8. Its function is clearly to set a date for his plans, but it also shows that it was natural for Paul to relate to the Jewish festivals.

these words are original,¹¹⁷ though they are not unthinkable as part of Luke's account of Paul. Acts 20:6 ("we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread") could be taken purely as an indicator of time, but "it could also mean that Paul, the Jewish Christian, has celebrated the feast of Passover with the Christians of Philippi."¹¹⁸ In line with this interpretation most commentators think that the references to Jewish feasts are meant to indicate that Paul observed these days.¹¹⁹ Some commentators also see the references as part of Luke's depiction of Paul as a pious Jew.¹²⁰ Notwithstanding Luke's possible concern, is this picture compatible with what Paul says in his letters? In Galatians Paul rebukes the addressees for observing "days and months and seasons and years" (4:10), clearly referring to the Jewish calendar.¹²¹ This seems to be in contradiction to what is said about Paul in Acts, but once again the contradiction is only apparent. In Galatia the addressees were Gentiles who called into question "the sufficiency of Christ-faith by acting as if legal observances are necessary to make them Abraham's seed and 'sons of God.'"¹²² When such fundamental questions were blurred, Paul was inflexible. Otherwise, he was quite pragmatic. In and of itself there is nothing wrong with the observance of certain days, as Paul makes clear in Rom 14:5–6: "Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord . . ."

This pragmatic position is also seen in Paul's attitude to the Sabbath. Did he himself keep the Sabbath? Acts depicts him as regularly going to the synagogue on the Sabbath (13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). It is said to be his custom (*κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθός*, 17:2). The same expression is used of Jesus' visit to the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16). It thus seems to refer to the general custom of the Jews attending the synagogue.¹²³ It is, however, hardly the only reason for Paul's practice. It is probably appropriate to say that it reflected Paul's custom both as Jew *and* missionary.¹²⁴ As Paul is depicted in Acts, the purpose for going to the synagogue was first and foremost to witness about Jesus as the Messiah (18:4; cf. 13:42, 44; 16:13). No doubt it was the proclamation of the gospel that directed Paul's religious practice.

In the context of Jesus-believers, however, he seems to have celebrated the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. When Luke reports that they were gathered

¹¹⁷ Contra J. M. Ross, "The Extra Words in Acts 18:21," *NovT* 34 (1992): 247–49.

¹¹⁸ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 666.

¹¹⁹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 588; Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989), 192; Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:247.

¹²⁰ Johnson, *Acts*, 355; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 499, 506. See, however, the comments below under "Conclusion."

¹²¹ See Dunn, *Galatians*, 227–28; contra Stökl Ben Ezra, "'Christians' observing," 59.

¹²² Matera, *Galatians*, 157.

¹²³ Barrett, *Acts*, 2:809.

¹²⁴ See Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 433.

to break bread “on the first day of the week” (20:7)¹²⁵ he seems to refer to what was customary among the early believers.¹²⁶ This is supported by Paul’s own reference to the first day of the week as the day when the members of the Christian community should put aside money for the collection (1 Cor 16:2).¹²⁷ In all probability this reflects the early Christian practice of coming together in worship on Sunday (cf. also Rev 1:10; *Did.* 14.1). Admittedly there is no absolutely indisputable evidence for this practice in New Testament times. It is, however, difficult to explain the unambiguous evidence of the practice in the second century (*Ign. Magn.* 9.1; *Justin, 1 Apol.* 67) if it had not originated earlier.¹²⁸

In summary, on the background of Paul’s pragmatic attitude to days and feasts (as reflected in Rom 14), it is not unlikely that Paul himself observed Jewish feasts, as Acts seems to presuppose. It only reflects a most obvious point: Paul did not cease to be a Jew after coming to faith in Jesus as Messiah. His own teaching on the issue shows, however, that he had a relaxed attitude to the observance of days and feasts.

6. Paul as a Pharisee and “Orthodox” Jew

In the last part of Acts (chapters 21–28) the main theme is Paul on trial. In various ways he stands before Jewish and Roman authorities. At the outset the Romans think that Paul may be the leader of a revolt (cf. 21:38), and before the governor he is accused of being an agitator and a possible source of uproar (24:5). Soon, however, the Roman authorities recognize that the issue is not related to Roman law,¹²⁹ but to questions concerning the law of the Jews (23:29; 25:19). More generally one could say that the point at issue is Paul’s relation to his own people and his ancestral religion.

That this is the case becomes evident as soon as Paul arrives in Jerusalem. James, the leader of the church, conveys rumors about Paul that were circulating among the law-observant believers in Jerusalem: “They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs” (21:21).

Even more serious accusations were soon to be uttered. A few days later some Jews from Asia seized him at the temple area and shouted out the charge against

¹²⁵ Klinghardt (*Gesetz und Volk Gottes*, 261–64) argues convincingly for the view that the gathering took place at Sunday evening.

¹²⁶ See Max M. B. Turner, “The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 99–157, 133.

¹²⁷ For the interpretation of this verse, see S. R. Llewelyn, “The Use of Sunday for Meetings of Believers in the New Testament,” *NovT* 43 (2001): 205–23, esp. 209–10.

¹²⁸ See further Richard Bauckham’s two articles, “The Lord’s Day” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 221–50 and “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-apostolic Church,” *ibid.*, 251–98.

¹²⁹ From a Roman perspective Paul is declared innocent (cf. 23:29b; 26:31–32).

him: “This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place” (21:28). The accusations were repeated when the lawyer Tertullus, on behalf of the Jewish authorities, presented the charges against Paul in front of the governor Felix: “We have, in fact, found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple” (24:5–6).

Paul is accused of teaching against his people, against the law and against the temple.¹³⁰ These are serious charges, and the narrator of Acts is eager to show that they are totally without foundation. He reports four defense speeches in chapters 22–26 (before the people in Jerusalem, before the Sanhedrin, before the governor Felix, and before king Agrippa).¹³¹ In these speeches Paul presents himself as a Jew, loyal to the law and to his people.

Regardless of how one evaluates the historical basis of the speeches of Paul,¹³² there can be no doubt that they reflect a Lukan concern.¹³³ So much space is given to Paul’s defense that it is more than likely that they in some way are related to the overall purpose of Acts. Even if this issue lies outside the scope of this chapter, a few comments are necessary.

First, the discussion of the purpose of Acts has produced so many diverse theories that Ward Gasque thinks it is “impossible to isolate one exclusive purpose or theological idea which is the key to the interpretation of the Third Gospel and Acts.” He goes on: “All books have a number of purposes, and few if any writings can be understood in terms of one basic concept; Acts is no exception.”¹³⁴ We thus have to allow for the possibility, even probability, that Luke wrote with more than one purpose in mind.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ See similar accusations against Stephen (6:11, 13).

¹³¹ Paul’s innocence is also stated in his speech to the Jews in Rome: “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans . . .” (28:17).

¹³² Today most scholars view the speeches as Luke’s composition, following Martin Dibelius, “The Speeches of Acts and Ancient Historiography,” in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. M. Ling; London: SCM, 1956), 138–91. Some scholars have, however, stressed that there are signs of historical basis for the speeches; see F. F. Bruce, “The Speeches in Acts—Thirty Years Later,” in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology* (ed. R. Banks; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 53–68; and W. Ward Gasque, “The Speeches of Acts: Dibelius Reconsidered,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1974), 232–50.

¹³³ This does not mean that they should be regarded as merely *creatio ex nihilo* on Luke’s part; cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 103–8, 106.

¹³⁴ W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (BGBE 17; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1975), 308.

¹³⁵ Mark Allan Powell, *What Are They Saying about Acts?* (New York: Paulist, 1991), 13. Powell (13–19) gives a convenient survey of some of the most popular theories about the purpose of Acts.

Second, one of the most popular theories is that Luke intended Acts to be some kind of apology.¹³⁶ This is, among other things, connected with the fact that the verb “defend” (ἀπολογέομαι) and the noun “defense” (ἀπολογία) occur often—eight times—in Acts; seven of the occurrences are found in relation to Paul’s defense speeches.¹³⁷ This feature, combined with the overall focus on Paul and the Jews in the latter part of Acts, makes it probable that Luke in some way intended to defend Paul and his ministry.¹³⁸ Jervell claims that this apology is due to direct charges against Paul in Luke’s time.¹³⁹ Other scholars put less emphasis on the person of Paul, and see him only as a representative of the church,¹⁴⁰ the gospel,¹⁴¹ or as a symbol for the continuity between Israel and the church, securing the faith and identity of the Gentile believers.¹⁴²

In my view the last interpretation is the most adequate, but whatever interpretation is preferred, it seems clear that the figure of Paul plays a part in the purpose of Acts. At the outset we thus have to allow for a Lukian concern and tendency in presenting the material concerning Paul’s defense speeches. We shall briefly examine the main features in these speeches.

Though various points are emphasized in the four texts, as a whole they contain the following main points:

(1) Paul was raised as a Jew and brought up in Jerusalem “at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God”

¹³⁶ For a survey of these theories, see Alexandru Neagoe, *The Trial of the Gospel: An Apologetic Reading of Luke’s Trial Narratives* (SNTSMS 116; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 176–87.

¹³⁷ Acts 22:1; 24:10; 25:8, 16; 26:1, 2, 24.

¹³⁸ So Jervell, *People of God*, 153–83; *Theology*, 82, 92; Brawley, *Luke-Acts*, 83, 156–57.

¹³⁹ Jervell (*People of God*, 175 and 177) claims that the “Jewish charges which Luke reports in his trial chapters reflect problems in his own milieu,” and that Luke is writing for “Christian readers who are under fire from their Jewish neighbors because of Paul.” See also William R. Long, “The Paulusbild in the Trial of Paul in Acts,” in *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1983 (SBLSP 22; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 87–105, esp. 104–5. For criticism of Jervell, see Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (FRLANT 126; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 69–70.

¹⁴⁰ In Balch’s view the person of Paul is totally subordinated to Luke’s intention to show that early Christianity preserved the “ancient, legitimate, philanthropic customs of Moses” and was allowed to do so by the Romans. See David L. Balch, “. . . you teach all the Jews . . . to forsake Moses, telling them not to . . . observe the customs’ (Acts 21:21; cf. 6:14),” in *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1993 (SBLSP 32; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993), 369–83.

¹⁴¹ Neagoe, *Trial*, 213, 217. Neagoe (178, 196–97) thinks Jervell introduces an artificial divorce between the messenger (Paul) and the movement he represents; cf. Maddox, *Purpose*, 70.

¹⁴² So Jürgen Roloff, “Die Paulus-Darstellung des Lukas: Ihre geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen und ihr theologisches Ziel,” *EvT* 39 (1979): 510–31, esp. 527–29; cf. J. Christiaan Beker, “Luke’s Paul as the Legacy of Paul,” in *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1993 (SBLSP 32; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993), 511–19. Beker thinks Luke is concerned about the legitimacy of the church, and therefore stresses the continuity between the church and Israel. Luke’s portrait of Paul serves this concern.

(22:3). He presents himself as “a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees” (23:6), and stresses that he has lived as a Pharisee from the very beginning (26:5).

(2) Paul was a zealous Jew, persecuting those who belonged to “the Way.” On the road outside Damascus Jesus from Nazareth revealed himself to him and commissioned him to preach the gospel (22:3–16, 19–21; 26:9–23).

(3) Paul’s gospel is in accordance with what “the prophets and Moses said would take place” (26:22). The God Paul serves is no other than “the God of our ancestors” (22:14). In the presence of Felix and representatives from the Sanhedrin Paul thus stresses this continuity with his ancestral faith: “... according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets” (24:14).

(4) The central point in Paul’s faith is the belief in the resurrection from the dead—a belief he shares with the majority of his people (23:6b; 24:15, 21; 26:6–8): “I have a hope in God—a hope that they themselves also accept—that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous” (24:15).

Part of this seems rather unproblematic when compared with the letters of Paul. The second point is compatible with Paul’s autobiographical notes found there (cf. Gal 1:13–17; 1 Cor 15:9). So is also the first point—at least in the main (cf. Phil 3:5–6; 2 Cor 11:22). The remarkable thing is that Paul according to Acts is still a Pharisee (έγώ Φαρισαῖος εἰμι). This is not past but present reality (23:6).

This feature must be seen in relation to the general picture of the Pharisees in Luke-Acts—a much-debated topic.¹⁴³ We will thus limit ourselves to a few basic observations. Like the other evangelists, Luke presents the Pharisees as opponents of Jesus (Luke 6:7; 7:30; 11:53; 15:2; 16:14) and objects of severe criticism (11:39–44; 12:1; 18:10–14). But unlike the other evangelists Luke also reports incidents where they appear in a more positive light.¹⁴⁴ According to Luke there were Pharisees who seem to be friendly towards Jesus (cf. Luke 7:36; 11:37; 13:31; 14:1), and the Pharisee Gamaliel appears reasonable towards the apostles (Acts 5:34–39; cf. also 23:9). Some Pharisees were even members of the early church (Acts 15:5)—though they are presented as critical to the law-free gospel of Paul. Altogether one can say that Luke does not depict the Pharisees one-dimensionally; in his presentation they are more complex figures.

Proponents of a literary and reader-oriented interpretation nevertheless claim that the Pharisees in Luke-Acts mainly appear in a negative light.¹⁴⁵ This

¹⁴³The debate is related to different methodological approaches. Scholars using a redaction-critical approach tend to find a more positive picture of the Pharisees in Luke-Acts than those using a reader-oriented (and thus text-internal) method.

¹⁴⁴Brawley (*Luke-Acts*, 84–106) stresses the positive features in the picture of the Pharisees, especially in Acts. For a similar position, though with a quite different explanation of the positive picture, see Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (London: SCM, 1987), 84–131. See also Salo, *Luke's Treatment*, 293.

¹⁴⁵See Johnson, *Acts*, 99, 401–2; John A. Darr, “Ironic or Ironic? Another Look at Gamaliel before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:33–42),” in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts* (ed. R. P. Thompson and T. E. Phillips; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 121–39, and

may be true, but the somewhat more nuanced picture of the Pharisees in Luke-Acts should not be neglected. Immediately it seems more historically trustworthy than the picture found in Matthew, Mark and John.¹⁴⁶ If this is correct, Luke may be right to claim that at least some Pharisees in fact were closer to the early Christian community than members of other groups.¹⁴⁷ In other words, he may be justified in reducing the distance between the Pharisees and the Jesus-believers.

It is, however, important to note that this reduced distance in reality is limited to one single point—belief in the resurrection. As is attested in various sources, this was a point where views differed among first-century Jews. More precisely: The Sadducees had a deviant view; they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.16; J.W. 2.165; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27; Acts 23:8). The majority of the Jews, including the Pharisees and their successors, believed in a doctrine of retribution and resurrection, first attested in Dan 12:2 (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.14; J.W. 2.163; *m. Sanh.* 10:1).

It is on this background that we have to interpret Acts 23:6–9. When Paul affirms that he is a Pharisee, it is in a setting where Sadducees and Pharisees are present, and where he speaks of the resurrection: “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead” (23:6). In other words: The literary function of the statement “I am a Pharisee” is to show that Paul endorsed the “normal” Jewish belief, shared with the Pharisees.¹⁴⁸ That this is the case is supported by Paul’s words in 24:15: “I have a hope in God—a hope that they themselves also accept—that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Read in its context it becomes clear that Paul’s saying (“I am a Pharisee”) hardly can be interpreted as a general statement about Paul as a Pharisee. The implied reader of Luke-Acts would have had sufficient negative information about the Pharisees to know that Paul could not possibly be categorized as a Pharisee. He was a Pharisee only with regard to the belief in the resurrection. This interpretation is supported by the second instance where Paul calls himself a Pharisee. In

the literature referred to there, particularly John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

¹⁴⁶The quest for the historical Pharisees is also a most complicated matter. For a recent discussion related both to the interpretation of Luke-Acts and historical reconstruction, see Steve Mason, “Chief Priests, Sadducees, Pharisees and Sanhedrin in Acts,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 115–77.

¹⁴⁷Stephen Westerholm (“Pharisees,” *DJG* 609–14, 613) draws attention to the scribe mentioned in Mark 12:28. Even if he is not described as a Pharisee, it is likely that he belonged to that group (and certainly not the Sadducees who are mentioned in 12:18). The scribe praises the teaching of Jesus, and Jesus responds saying, “You are not far from the kingdom of God” (12:34).

¹⁴⁸See Brawley, *Luke-Acts*, 99: “Luke utilizes Paul’s Pharisaism to locate him in the center of Judaism.”

26:5 he says that the Jews who accused him could testify, “that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion” (NASB). Here Paul is looking back on his earlier life, and the verb is in past tense (aorist). Still the connection between the Pharisaic position and the resurrection is evident: immediately Paul starts to talk about the hope in the resurrection (26:6–8).

Vielhauer and other scholars¹⁴⁹ find it difficult to believe that the historical Paul would have labeled himself a Pharisee. This seems well-founded in light of what Paul is saying, e.g., in Phil 3:5–7, indicating distance to his former way of life. If, however, one takes into consideration that Paul’s statement in Acts 23:6 is not a general statement, it cannot be seen as a serious problem with Luke’s picture of Paul. For it is hardly inconceivable that the historical Paul could have said, “With regard to the resurrection, I am a Pharisee.”

A short comment is also necessary concerning the general emphasis given to the belief in the resurrection in Paul’s defense speeches (see point (d) above). This emphasis is in accordance with Luke’s general focus on the resurrection, and can also be compared with the importance of the resurrection according to Paul’s letters (see especially 1 Cor 15).¹⁵⁰ Undoubtedly the resurrection was a central belief in the early church, but in a more precise meaning: the resurrection of Jesus. What seems strange in the defense speeches in Acts is the general character of the belief. This may be explained as Luke’s way of stressing the connection between the faith of Jews in general and the faith of Paul and other Jesus-believers. Besides, the speeches must not be read in isolation. In this case too, the implied reader of Luke-Acts would know that the term “resurrection” is closely related to the apostolic witness of the resurrection of Jesus (cf. 2:24, 31; 3:15; 4:10, 33; 10:40; 13:30; 17:12). This is especially evident in Acts 4:2 where it is said that the apostles “were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead.”¹⁵¹

Even if the resurrection of Jesus never is mentioned specifically in the defense speeches in chapters 22–25, it is nevertheless presupposed that the audience is aware of the connection between the resurrection belief in general and the resurrection of Jesus. When the procurator Festus summarizes Paul’s case for king Agrippa, he says that the Jewish leaders “had certain points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, but whom Paul asserted to be alive” (25:19). This point is not, however, mentioned in the conversation between Paul and Festus reported by Luke. Luke evidently presupposes that more was said than he himself has recorded. Only in the speech before king Agrippa does Paul refer specifically to Jesus Messiah “being the first to rise from the dead” (26:23). This connection—between Jesus and the general resurrection of the dead—is obviously presupposed throughout all the defense speeches of Paul.

¹⁴⁹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 638.

¹⁵⁰ On this, see Porter, *Paul of Acts*, 198.

¹⁵¹ The text is not quite clear. See Barrett, *Acts*, 1:219–20. It is, however, important to note the connection between Jesus and the proclamation of the resurrection.

The way Luke presents Paul speaking while on trial certainly serves to depict him as an “orthodox” Jew. Once and again Paul affirms that he is worshipping the God of the fathers (22:14; 24:14; 26:6) and that his preaching and ministry is based on Moses and the prophets (24:14; 26:22; cf. 23:5). This way of presenting Paul is, however, not in contradiction with how Paul presents his own theology in the letters. His theology is based on the Scriptures; they constitute “the substructure” of his theology.¹⁵² It should be underlined, however, that both for the Lukan Paul and the Paul of the letters, the central aspect of the Law is the prophetic one (cf. Acts 26:22; 28:23).¹⁵³

7. Conclusion

7.1. *The Lukan Picture of Paul*

The Paul of Acts is “without exception a law-abiding Jew.”¹⁵⁴ This is apparent above all in the apologetic speeches in Acts 22–26, as demonstrated above. It is also clear in 21:24 where it is said explicitly that Paul should undergo a cleansing in order to show that he himself observes and guards the law. In these cases Paul’s piety is essential for the flow of the narrative, and the editorial hand is rather obvious. Here the author stresses Paul’s Jewishness.

In other cases where scholars usually find evidence for an editorial emphasis, the explanation is not that obvious. It is indisputable that the picture of Paul always going to the synagogue is part of Luke’s emphasis. The point, however, is hardly to show that Paul was a pious Jew observing the Sabbath or that he was loyal to his own people. The point is to depict a standard practice as part of Paul’s missionary strategy. And one reduces the importance of this strategy if one says only that it illustrates Paul’s wish to go to the Jews first. Admittedly Luke twice uses the visit to the synagogue—and the following departure from the synagogue—as a way of illustrating the transition to the Gentiles (13:44–48; 18:4–7). The Gentiles he went to were, however, the same as the ones he had already met in the synagogue (cf. 13:43; 18:7). Luke in no way hides that Paul in the synagogues reached both Jews and Gentiles. This fact, combined with the texts dealing with Paul’s commission, show that Paul in Acts is portrayed not primarily as a teacher to the Jews, but as a missionary to Jews and Gentiles alike.

Another possible evidence of a Lukan tendency to depict Paul as a pious Jew is the circumcision of Timothy.¹⁵⁵ In my view this is not primarily an expression of Luke’s editorial concern. If it were, one should expect that he had written that Paul circumcised Timothy “according to the law”—using a terminology typical

¹⁵² James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 16.

¹⁵³ So rightly M. A. Seifrid, “Jesus and the Law in Acts,” *JSNT* 30 (1987): 39–57, 52.

¹⁵⁴ Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 68.

¹⁵⁵ It is interpreted in that way by Haenchen, *Acts*, 543; cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 290.

of Luke's portrayal of pious Jews (cf. Luke 2:22, 39).¹⁵⁶ Instead he gives a pragmatic argument, showing that this was motivated by missionary strategy.

The other instances of apparent law observance in Acts are not stressed by the author; they are rather mentioned *en passant*. This holds true with regard to all references to Jewish festivals; their importance to Paul is never emphasized (with the possible exception of 20:16). In all likelihood this is part of Luke's tradition. The same seems to be the case with the reference to Paul's vow in 18:8. This incident is often cited as one of the examples with which Luke illustrates Paul's fidelity to the law.¹⁵⁷ To such a view Barrett aptly comments: ". . . if Luke thought of it in this way he threw away his opportunity, for he makes nothing whatever of the incident, using it rather to account (somewhat obscurely) for the movements of the missionaries."¹⁵⁸

It is clear that Luke wanted to paint Paul as a pious Jew, especially in the defense speeches. This does not mean, however, that this feature is omnipresent in Acts. Several presumed evidences for Luke's theological concern should rather be seen as evidence for accidental historical information about Paul.

7.2. The "Real" Paul

Discussing the episode concerning the circumcision of Timothy, Haenchen rejects Luke's account with reference to "the real Paul," i.e., the picture of Paul that can be deduced from his (undisputed) letters.¹⁵⁹ As we have seen above, this approach to the quest for the historical Paul is too simplistic. The "Pauline Paul" cannot be claimed to be more "real" than the "Lukan Paul." This is evident especially with regard to the letter to the Galatians, a letter that often is used to check the presentation of Paul in Acts. The highly polemical character of Galatians should prevent us from using that letter as a representative expression of Paul's views. Needless to say, Paul's letters are fundamental for the understanding of Paul, but they do not give us an unbiased presentation of the historical Paul. Paul had specific purposes when writing his letters, but none of them included a wish to give a complete picture of himself and his theology. What we find of autobiographical notices in the letters always serve a specific rhetorical purpose.¹⁶⁰ The theological issues discussed in the letters only give us part of his theology; the letters are "somewhat like the sections of an iceberg above the water."¹⁶¹ A substan-

¹⁵⁶ See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ANTC; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2003), 233.

¹⁵⁷ Haenchen, *Acts*, 543; Salo, *Luke's Treatment*, 262; Johnson, *Acts*, 334; Koet, "Why Did Paul," 139–41. Koet reads 18:18 in light of 18:12–15 where the Jews in Corinth accuse Paul of teaching "contrary to the law." According to Koet 18:18 should demonstrate Paul's adherence to the law over against this charge. In my view he is in danger of reading too much into the text.

¹⁵⁸ Barrett, *Acts*, 2:877; cf. Horn, "Paulus," 124.

¹⁵⁹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 482.

¹⁶⁰ See, e.g., the helpful comments by Matera, *Galatians*, 54–55.

¹⁶¹ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 15.

tial part of that iceberg is what Paul had in common with other Jesus-believers in the first century, especially those who, like him, were Jews.

If these insights are taken seriously, there is no need to be overly skeptical towards the Lukan picture of Paul. As Jervell puts it: “It is not decisive that the Lukan portrait of Paul is not consistent with the Paul of the Pauline letters, because Paul was obviously a multifarious, complex and tense person.”¹⁶² The historical Paul is thus not identical with the picture one gets on the basis of the letters alone, neither on the basis of Acts alone. The letters and Acts should be regarded as complementary sources: “The Lukan Paul, the picture of Paul in Acts, is a completion, a filling up of the Pauline one, so that in order to get at the historical Paul, we cannot do without Acts and Luke.”¹⁶³ Elements that lie “in the shadow in Paul’s letters Luke has placed in the sun in Acts.”¹⁶⁴ One of these elements is Paul as a Jew.

The apostle who in his letters affirms that he tried to please everyone in everything he did, not seeking his own advantage, but the others’ (1 Cor 10:33), would hardly be the inflexible person that Galatians might give us reason to assume. And a person who made a point of not giving “offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor 10:32), would in all probability behave as Acts reports that Paul did on several occasions. The undisputable fact that he was raised as a law-observant Jew makes it reasonable to assume that he often observed Jewish customs in his daily life—as long as they did not blur the gospel. For the historical Paul, traditional law-observance was certainly subordinated to the preaching of the gospel and his concern for the salvation of mankind.

¹⁶² Jacob Jervell, “The Unknown Paul,” in *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 52–67, 55.

¹⁶³ Jacob Jervell, “Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: Tradition, History, Theology,” in *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 68–76, 70.

¹⁶⁴ Jervell, “Paul in the Acts,” 71.

Named Jewish Believers Connected with the Pauline Mission

Reidar Hvalvik

In Acts 21 James, the leader of the Jerusalem community, tells Paul about the “many thousands” (21:20) among the Jews who have come to faith. Even if this is a hyperbolic expression, it is likely that there in fact were a considerable number of Jewish believers in Jesus in the first century. The great majority of these people are anonymous, but not all of them. In Acts we meet named Jewish believers not only in the Jerusalem church but also in the Diaspora, connected with Paul and his missionary work. A number is also mentioned in the Pauline letters; some both in Acts and the letters. Below they are listed together, illustrating the Jewish segment in the Pauline mission and churches.

The list below is based on all the Pauline letters (except the Pastoral Epistles which are treated separately towards the end of this chapter), and the parts of Acts that report about Paul and his ministry. In reality, the evidence is found in Acts and the following five letters: Romans, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. One may question the use of Romans as evidence for the *Pauline* mission and churches, but chapter 16 is too important to be excluded. For one thing it gives evidence not only about Rome, but also about Corinth (cf. 16:21–23). Besides Rom 16 shows that a number of those greeted in Rome in fact had been connected with Paul’s mission at an earlier stage.

How do we know that a person was a Jew/Jewish believer? In most cases the identification is possibly due to direct or indirect information in the text, but not always. If we are left with a name alone, we have in fact no secure basis for identification.¹ Jews in antiquity used Semitic, Greek, Latin, and other names, and they did not even abstain from using typically pagan names. We thus have to look for

¹Cf. Gerard Mussies, “Jewish Personal Names in some Non-Literary Sources,” in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy* (ed. J. W. van Henten and P. W. van der Horst; AGJU 21; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 242–76, 243.

other indications. Included in the list are only persons whose Jewish background is sufficiently clear (section 1), though not undisputable in every case.² The list will be followed by a discussion of other possibly Jewish believers among the many individuals referred to in the Pauline letters and the later parts of Acts (section 2).

1. Prosopography of Jewish Believers Connected with Paul and His Mission

*Ananias.*³ In Acts 9:10 Luke introduces “a disciple in Damascus named Ananias,”⁴ in fact one of the first Jewish believers we know of outside Judea. He is an instrument in connection with Paul’s coming to faith in Jesus, and the one who baptizes him (9:7–18). Later in Acts he is spoken of as “a devout (εὐλαβής) man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there” (22:12). Ananias is described in terms “calculated to appeal to other devout Jews,” Bruce remarks.⁵

Andronicus. He is greeted by Paul—together with Junia⁶—in Rom 16:7. This Greek name is well attested in Rome, frequently of slaves and freedmen. Outside Rome it is also attested as the name of Jews.⁷ Paul refers to Andronicus and Junia as τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου. This clearly means that they are Jews (cf. Rom 9:3).⁸ Paul gives further important information about this couple, who probably were husband and wife⁹ (cf. Prisca and Aquila): 1) they were also his “fellow prisoners” (συναιχμαλώτους μου). Most likely this means that they had been in prison together with him,¹⁰ though it may only mean that they, like him, had been

² Note the discussion concerning Rufus and Sosthenes below.

³ The name is attested as the name of Jews in Egypt; cf. CPJ 1, 24, 35.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in USA.

⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 457.

⁶ Junia is understood as a woman’s name. See below on Junia.

⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.75; CPJ 18 and 470. Cf. Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (trans. M. Steinhauser; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 178 and 75, n. 26; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1993), 737.

⁸ Paul only uses this word in Romans. The focus on his countrymen in chapters 9–11 makes it clear that συγγενής means “countryman,” “fellow Jew” in 9:3 as well as in 16:7, 11, 21. Cf. Peter Lampe, “The Roman Christians of Romans 16,” in *The Romans Debate* (rev. and exp. ed.; ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 216–30, 224–25.

⁹ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 737–38; Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 408.

¹⁰ Cf. Paul’s references to imprisonment in 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23; probably also 1 Cor 15:32 (cf. also Acts 16:23; *1 Clem.* 5:6).

prisoners for Christ's sake.¹¹ If the former interpretation is correct, which I think is most probable, it means that Paul had worked together with Andronicus and Junia sometime in the past. 2) The couple is said to be ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις. This almost certainly means "prominent among the apostles"¹²—despite the traditional opinion (though not in the ancient church) that a woman could not be counted among the apostles. The meaning of the word "apostle" is, however, debated. In early Christian writings it is used in four different senses. (1) In the synoptic gospels and in Revelation the word is used of the twelve disciples of Christ (cf. Matt 10:2; Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Rev 21:14). (2) Paul refers to other apostles, distinguished from "the Twelve," to whom Christ had appeared (1 Cor 15:5–7). He himself is among them, and he stresses that he has seen the resurrected Lord and has been commissioned by him (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8–9; Gal 1:1, 16–17). (3) The term "apostle" is also used by Paul about messengers from different churches (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25), but in those cases their status is made quite clear.¹³ (4) Outside the New Testament the word "apostle" is used of itinerant evangelists and missionaries (*Did.* 11.3–6; *Herm. Vis.* 13.1; *Sim.* 92.4; 93.5; 102.2).

With regard to Andronicus and Junia the first sense is out of question, and there is nothing in the context that speaks for the third sense. Many commentators claim that Andronicus and Junia are spoken of in the last sense,¹⁴ but the reasons for this view are far from obvious.¹⁵ Since Paul notes that they were Christians before himself (πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ), it seems most likely that they belonged to the broader group of apostles who had seen the Lord according to 1 Cor 15:7.¹⁶ The fact that they had seen the Lord does not necessarily

¹¹ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 5. ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 423; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–1979), 2:789; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 739.

¹² Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:789; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (WBC 38; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1988), 2:894; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT 6; 3 vols.; Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1978–1982), 3:135; Lohse, *Römer*, 408. See the broad discussion in Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 172–80; refuting M. H. Burer/D. B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Reexamination of Rom 16.7," *NTS* 47 (2001): 76–91. See now also the thorough treatment in Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

¹³ They are ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν ("messengers of the churches"; 2 Cor 8:23); cf. Phil 2:25 ("your messenger"); cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Apostles before and during Paul's Time," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1970), 294.

¹⁴ So, e.g., Schnackenburg, "Apostles," 294; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:789; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 796.

¹⁵ The general use of the term "apostle" in 2 Cor 8:23 and Phil 2:25 does not justify a broader use of the term in a quite different context.

¹⁶ Dunn, *Romans*, 2:895; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1996), 453; contra Schnackenburg, "Apostles," 294.

mean, however, that they all had the same commission and authority. But they most probably belonged to “the closed group of apostles appointed directly by the risen Christ in a limited period following the resurrection” and are placed “within the select group of ‘premier’ apostles (Eph 2:20), along with Barnabas (Gal 2:9; 1 Cor 9:5–6) and probably Silvanus (1 Thess 2:6–7).”¹⁷ Andronicus and Junia obviously belonged to the early Christian community in Jerusalem, probably among the Hellenists (as their names suggest).¹⁸ This Jewish Christian couple had been traveling together as apostles/missionaries (cf. 1 Cor 9:5)¹⁹—first in the East as Paul’s co-workers, later to Rome. In fact they could be among those who first brought the gospel to Rome.²⁰

*Apollos.*²¹ A Jew from Alexandria introduced in Acts 18:24. It is said that he “had been instructed in the way of the Lord ($\tauὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ κυρίου$); and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John” (v. 25 NASB). The Western text (D) says that he “had been instructed in his homeland in the word of the Lord.” “The word of the Lord” ($\τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου$) is probably a harmonization of the verse with 8:25; 12:24; 13:44,²² and does not change the meaning of the verse: both “way” and “word” obviously refer to the Christian message. The implication of the Western text is thus that Apollos came to faith in Alexandria in Egypt.²³ We have no knowledge of the coming of Christianity to Alexandria, but this text may certainly be correct in presupposing a Christian presence among the Alexandrian Jews already in the fifties.

Some interpreters doubt, however, that Apollos was a believer in Jesus; they see him as a (non-Christian) Jewish missionary.²⁴ Others think he was a disciple of John the Baptist.²⁵ The reference to the baptism of John makes it likely that Apollos had a background in circles connected with John the Baptist (see below),

¹⁷Dunn, *Romans*, 895. Also James, the brother of the Lord, may be regarded as an apostle (cf. Gal 1:19).

¹⁸Schnackenburg, “Apostles,” 293.

¹⁹Cf. Peter Lampe, “Urchristliche Missionswege nach Rom: Haushalte paganger Herrschaft als jüdisch-christliche Keimzellen,” ZNW 92 (2001): 123–27.

²⁰Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 739. Markku Kettunen (*Der Abfassungszweck des Römerbriefes* [Dissertationes humanarum litterarum 18; Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 1979], 77) thinks they were sent there from Jerusalem.

²¹His name is a shortened form of the name Apollonius (cf. MS D to Acts 18:24). This is an example of a Jew who bore the name of a Greek god.

²²Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 638.

²³This is not evident in the printed text; cf. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. B. Noble and G. Shinn; rev. ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 549–50.

²⁴Eduard Schweizer, “Die Bekehrung des Apollos, Apg. 18,24–26,” *EvT* 15 (1955): 247–54; Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 279.

²⁵Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), 183.

but there can be little doubt that he is portrayed as a believer in Jesus.²⁶ The reference to Apollos being “fervent in spirit” (ζέων τῷ πνεύματι, v. 25) is often taken as an indication of eagerness/zeal (so e.g., NRSV, NIV), but it could surely be a reference to the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Even if Acts presupposes a close connection between Christian baptism and the giving of the Holy Spirit (as 19:1–7 makes clear; cf. 2:38), there are exceptions from the rule (most clearly in 10:44–48).

Apollos is depicted as an “eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures” (v. 24),²⁸ speaking boldly in the synagogue in Ephesus (v. 26). There Paul’s co-workers Priscilla and Aquila heard him, detected a deficiency in his preaching (his lack of knowledge of the Christian baptism), and “took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately” (v. 26b). It is noteworthy that Priscilla and Aquila are still in the synagogue in Ephesus; at this point one gets the impression that “Jewish-Christians and Jews are still harmoniously gathered together.”²⁹

The most remarkable thing mentioned in connection with Apollos is that he had only knowledge of the baptism of John. It is probable that Apollos gained knowledge of John and his baptism in Judea rather than Alexandria.³⁰ It is thus likely that Apollos had belonged to a repentance-movement in Palestine prior to his coming to faith in Jesus, and afterwards worked as an independent Jewish-Christian missionary. This ministry led him to Ephesus, and it has been suggested that the “disciples” Paul later met in that city (Acts 19:1–7) in fact were baptized by Apollos, since they too only knew the baptism of John.³¹ If this is the case, there is more to say about Apollos’s ministry in Ephesus than Acts records.

Acts further records that Apollos went to Achaia, encouraged by the “brothers” in Ephesus who wrote a letter of recommendation for him (v. 27). There he was of great help to the believers and interacted with the unbelieving Jews, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (v. 28). This report corresponds on the whole with Paul’s mentioning of Apollos in 1 Cor 1–4. His activity had apparently created great enthusiasm among some of the believers in Corinth—as if in a sort of competition with Paul. Some tension between Paul and Apollos may be detectable in Paul’s references to Apollos in 1 Corinthians,³²

²⁶ That Apollos is simply called a Jew is not decisive. There are also other texts in Acts where the term “Jew” only refers to ethnic background, not to religious outlook (cf. 18:2; 21:39; 22:3).

²⁷ Alfons Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (ÖTK 5; 2 vols.; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1981–1985), 2:509; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 565.

²⁸ The terminology used here shows that Apollos is portrayed as a rhetor or sophist; cf. Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (SNTSMS 96; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 174–76.

²⁹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 551.

³⁰ Roman Heiligenthal and Axel von Dobbeler, *Menschen um Jesus: Lebensbilder aus neutestamentlicher Zeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 170.

³¹ Heiligenthal and Dobbeler, *Menschen*, 172.

³² See Donald P. Ker, “Paul and Apollos—Colleagues or Rivals?” *JSNT* 77 (2000): 75–97.

but there is no basis for claiming a doctrinal difference between the two.³³ It is more likely that the conflict in Corinth had its origin in the Corinthians' evaluation of the two speakers and their status.³⁴ Apollos did not belong to Paul's closest co-workers; in fact he seems mostly to have operated independently of Paul also in Corinth. Consequently, Paul could not order Apollos to travel to Corinth (see 1 Cor 16:12). This may also be the reason why Apollos is not mentioned in any other Pauline letter (except in a word of recommendation in Titus 3:12).

The information about Apollos is scanty but he is important as an early representative of Hellenistic Jews coming to faith in Jesus. His background and learning has made him a likely candidate for the authorship of the letter to the Hebrews.³⁵ This was first suggested by Martin Luther and has often been repeated.³⁶ It is, of course, nothing but an educated guess.

Aquila and Prisca (Priscilla). In Acts 18:2 Luke introduces a couple named Aquila³⁷ and Priscilla. They had recently come to Corinth from Italy, the reason being that the emperor Claudius had ordered "all Jews to leave Rome." In all likelihood this refers to Claudius's edict, which was issued due to tumults in the Jewish community caused by proclamation of the gospel.³⁸ This led to the expulsion of, at the very least, the leaders among the believing and the not-believing Jews in Rome. The implication is that Aquila and Priscilla belonged to the early Jewish believers in the capital, and perhaps they were even founding members.³⁹

³³Cf. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 7; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2003), 46–51. Contra Pier Franco Beatrice, "Apollos of Alexandria and the Origins of Jewish-Christian Baptist Encratism," ANRW 26.2:1232–75, 1245 and Heiligenthal and Dobbeler, *Menschen*, 176.

³⁴Stephen M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation in 1 Corinthians* (SB LDS 134; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992), 99–172. See also B. B. Blue, "Apollos," *DPL* 37–39.

³⁵A very specific (and unconvincing) theory concerning Apollos and Hebrews is put forward by Hugh Montefiore. For a presentation and critical evaluation, see L. D. Hurst, "Apollos, Hebrews, and Corinth: Bishop Montefiore's Theory Examined," *SJT* 35 (1985): 505–13.

³⁶See Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 4.

³⁷Aquila is a common Roman name; see Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989), 232–33. The name is attested as a Jewish name in Cyrenaica, cf. Gert Lüderitz, *Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse aus der Cyrenaika. Mit einem Anhang von Joyce M. Reynolds* (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients; B.53; Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1983), n. 47a.

³⁸On this event, see chapter 7 of this book.

³⁹So Adolf Harnack, "Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriebs," *ZNW* 1 (1900): 16–41; F. F. Bruce, *The Pauline Circle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), 46.

Aquila was a Jew from Pontus, working as a tentmaker.⁴⁰ For this reason Paul came in contact with him and his wife in Corinth, and he stayed with them (Acts 18:3). We have no details concerning Prisca's background,⁴¹ but we may suspect that she too was Jewish. This is, however, not quite certain. Her name occurs in the form Prisca in Paul's letters; Luke prefers the diminutive Priscilla (Acts 18:2–3, 18, 26). In four of the six times they are mentioned; Prisc(ill)a is mentioned before her husband. This may indicate that she was more active in missionary work and church life than her craftsman husband.⁴²

Our sources give the impression that the couple was among the most important missionaries in the middle of the first century. They were first active in Rome, then in Corinth as Paul's hosts and supporters. After moving on to Ephesus, they again became Paul's co-workers and were hosts of a house church (cf. 1 Cor 16:19). Paul says that the couple "risked their necks" for his life (Rom 16:4); this probably took place during his stay in Ephesus (cf. 1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8–9). In that city Aquila and Prisca also played an important role in relation to Apollos (Acts 18:26; see further under his name).

Around the year 55 or 56 (after Claudius's death in 54), the couple returned to Rome. In all likelihood this was strategically motivated: They were probably sent as Paul's vanguard to Rome, where the apostle wanted to establish a firm footing for his missionary work towards Spain.⁴³ In Rome, Prisca and Aquila again hosted a church in their home (Rom 16:3).

They also appear in a list of greetings in 2 Tim 4:19, which implies that they once more are located in Ephesus (cf. the connection with Onesiphorus; 1:16–18). Since most scholars today think that Paul did not write 2 Timothy,⁴⁴ many also ignore this notice. This is, however, no necessary corollary. If 2 Timothy reflects a post-Pauline situation, it is not unthinkable that Priscilla and Aquila at that stage once again had moved to Ephesus. Granted their mobility during earlier years, this cannot be ruled out.

Aristarchus. One of Paul's fellow workers (Phlm 24), also called a "fellow prisoner" (Col 4:10). His Jewish background is implied from what Paul says about him, together with Mark and Jesus Justus: "These are the only ones of the circum-

⁴⁰ For the meaning of the word σκηνοποιός, see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 626 (with further bibliography). For further information about the occupation of tentmaker, see Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 187–95.

⁴¹ See discussion in Bruce, *Pauline Circle*, 44–50; and Florence M. Gillman, *Women Who Knew Paul* (Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 49–57.

⁴² Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:510.

⁴³ Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 193.

⁴⁴ See, however, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 356–66 for recent advocacy of the authenticity of 2 Timothy and a possible reconstruction of the historical situation reflected in the letter. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (AB 35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001).

cision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God” (Col 4:11). This Aristarchus is almost certainly identical with the person bearing the same name and referred to as Paul’s traveling companion (*συνέκδημος*) in Acts 19:29⁴⁵; later he is said to be a Thessalonian (20:4).⁴⁶ In Acts 19 Aristarchus is present in Ephesus during the riot in the theatre. Later he is mentioned as a member of the delegation that accompanied Paul with the collection to Jerusalem (20:4) and again when Paul set sail from Caesarea for Italy (27:2). These data seem to imply that Aristarchus in fact followed Paul during (at least part of) the “third missionary journey” and his journey to Rome. This information is compatible with what Paul says about Aristarchus as a fellow prisoner—probably in Rome (Col 4:10). It has been suggested that Aristarchus is identical with the unnamed person referred to in 2 Cor 8:18–19 as “the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel” and said to be “chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering” (NIV).⁴⁷ Both here and in Acts 19:29 we find the term *συνέκδημος*, “traveling companion,” attested nowhere else in the New Testament. One may, however, wonder if this is too fragile a basis for identification.

Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus are referred to as “the ones who are from circumcision” (*οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς*) (Col 4:11). Elsewhere in the Pauline letters similar phrases occur with a hint of threat or hostility (Gal 2:12; Titus 1:10), but here it simply denotes Jews. In Col 4 it seems important to stress that these Jewish believers were active in the Pauline mission: “The reference presumably is intended to assure the Colossians that there were such Jews, or at any rate other Jews apart from himself, who, as Jews, were fully approving of and cooperative in the Gentile mission (‘fellow workers’), despite, presumably, the disapproval of most of their compatriots.”⁴⁸

Barnabas. Nickname given to the Cypriot Levite named Joseph (Acts 4:36). According to Acts he was a prominent figure in the Jerusalem church,⁴⁹ and the one who introduced Paul to the church after his Damascus experience (9:27). At an early stage he was sent to Antioch, where he, together with Paul, became one of the leaders in the church (11:22–26; 13:1). He accompanied Paul on the so-called first missionary journey; in fact he seems in the beginning to be the leader of the missionary group, which also included his cousin John Mark (cf. 13:1ff, 13). At the apostolic conference, Paul and Barnabas stood together fighting for the law-free gospel to the Gentiles (15:1–12; cf. Gal 2:1), and Paul reports that the leaders in Jerusalem acknowledged that he and Barnabas had a special responsibility for the Gentile mission (Gal 2:9). Paul and Barnabas were a team and there is noth-

⁴⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 275.

⁴⁶ We may conjecture that he became a believer during Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica.

⁴⁷ See discussion in Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; New York: Doubleday, 1984), 435–36.

⁴⁸ Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 278.

⁴⁹ See section 7 of chapter 3 of this book.

ing that indicates disagreement between them. On this background Paul reports with great sorrow about what happened when “certain men from James” came to Antioch: Peter withdrew from the table fellowship with the Gentiles. And he adds: “And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy” (Gal 2:13). The terminology used about Barnabas shows that Paul did not think that Barnabas acted out of conviction and willingly; the verb translated “led astray” or “carried away” (*συναπάγομαι*) has “a strong connotation of irrationality, implying that Barnabas was carried away by emotions.”⁵⁰ Even if Paul seems to spare Barnabas, nevertheless a split came between the two.

According to Acts, Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways after disagreeing as to whether to take Mark with them on the next journey (15:37–39). The relationship between this quarrel and the Antioch incident is much debated.⁵¹ Some scholars think that Luke wanted to tone down the conflict and thus deliberately replaced a serious theological issue with a clash of personalities⁵²; others think that there were in fact two different quarrels (a position which seems likely). In that case one could argue that Luke did not know about the conflict in Antioch recorded in Gal 2,⁵³ or that he knew both but chose to tell only the one.⁵⁴ Regardless of Luke’s knowledge, it is likely that the two quarrels were related. At any case, the two co-workers separated. At a later stage, however, Paul refers to Barnabas with no negative overtones: in 1 Cor 9:1–6 he is mentioned as Paul’s fellow apostle.⁵⁵ It is, however, difficult to claim—on the basis of this text—that Paul and Barnabas were fully reconciled.⁵⁶ We actually do not know.

Our knowledge about Barnabas is limited. Acts records that he went to Cyprus on a new missionary journey, taking John Mark with him (15:39). The references in Paul’s letters (1 Cor 9:6; Col 4:10) presuppose that he was known also in Achaia and Asia Minor. There are several legendary traditions about Barnabas’s further work, but they are not historically trustworthy.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 110. Betz goes on: “Barnabas was thus a different case compared with Cephas and ‘the other Jews’; he did not manipulate, but was the victim of manipulation.”

⁵¹ For a recent overview, see Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, “Paul and Barnabas: The Anatomy and Chronology of a Parting of the Ways,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity* (ed. I. Dunderberg, C. Tuckett, K. Syreeni; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 291–310, esp. 294–97.

⁵² Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:394–95.

⁵³ Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; 17. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 410.

⁵⁴ C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–1998), 2:756–57.

⁵⁵ According to Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 2.10.116; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.11.12; 2.1.1) Barnabas was one of the Seventy who was sent by Jesus (cf. Luke 10).

⁵⁶ Cf. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 210.

⁵⁷ See Bernd Kollmann, *Joseph Barnabas: Leben und Wirkungsgeschichte* (SBS 175; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1998), esp. 65–69, 76–101.

*Crispus.*⁵⁸ In Acts 18:8 we read that “Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with all his household.” The title used here, ἀρχισυνάγωγος, is variously translated (“ruler,” “leader,” or “official” of the synagogue), and its meaning is not quite clear. The occurrences in the New Testament give the impression that the person so labelled was supervising the worship of the synagogue (see esp. Luke 13:14; Acts 13:15).⁵⁹ Based on the Jewish inscriptive evidence, however, one can only say that it was an honorific title awarded by a community in gratitude for a donation to their place of worship.⁶⁰ The title could thus be given both to men and women, Jews and non-Jews. Absolutely speaking, therefore, Crispus may have been a well-to-do Godfearer and not a Jew.⁶¹ This is, however, unlikely since the previous verse (18:7) singled out Titius Justus as a Godfearer. As a respected person in the Jewish community, Crispus’s coming to faith could have had great impact on other Jews and Godfearers. Luke, at least, goes on to say that “many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized” (18:8b). Crispus is also mentioned in 1 Cor 1:14, as one of the few baptized by Paul himself. The reference to Crispus’s household (Acts 18:8) means that we also have to reckon with this group of unnamed Jewish believers in Corinth.

Eunice. The mother of Timothy (2 Tim 1:5). She is known from Acts, but Luke does not provide her name. Acts 16:1 says that Timothy was “the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer (πιστῆς); but his father was a Greek.” The fact that Timothy’s mother was married to a Gentile indicates that she was not very strict in her law observance.⁶² When she is characterized as πιστῆς this clearly refers to her Christian faith. Second Timothy 1:5 speaks about Timothy’s faith, “a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois⁶³ and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.” This indicates that Timothy’s grandmother and mother came to faith before him, but not necessarily long before. We may guess that they came to faith during the first visit of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra (Acts 14:6–7). Second Timothy 3:15 further says that Timothy from childhood has “known the sacred writings.” From this statement one cannot conclude that Timothy’s mother was a pious Jew, but she certainly had some contact with the synagogue and Jewish tradition.

Herodion. In Rom 16:11 Paul sends greetings to his fellow-countryman (συγγενής) Herodion. The name is probably a Greek equivalent of the Latin Herodianus, a

⁵⁸The name is attested as a Jewish name in Cyrenaica; cf. Lüderitz, *Corpus*, no. 12.

⁵⁹Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (175 B.C.–A.D. 135) (3 vols.; 2d ed.; rev. and ed. G. Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1987), 2:434.

⁶⁰Tessa Rajak and David Noy, “Archisynagogoi: Office, Title and Social Status in the Greco-Jewish Synagogue,” *JRS* 83 (1993): 75–93.

⁶¹Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul*, 267.

⁶²Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 582; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 471.

⁶³It is not quite certain if Lois was a Jew; see discussion in the last part of this chapter.

name that identified former Herodian slaves.⁶⁴ It is likely that Herodion was a former slave of Herod and that he had immigrated to Rome, as did many others in the same position. An inscription from a Jewish catacomb in Rome has been taken as evidence for the existence of a “synagogue of the Herodians,” made up of former Jewish Herodian slaves in Rome.⁶⁵ This reading of the inscription, however, is contested. It is more likely that the inscription is a witness to another occurrence of the name Herodion.⁶⁶

*Jason.*⁶⁷ In Rom 16:21 Paul transmits greetings from a person named Jason, one of his kinsmen. Since Romans is written from Corinth, this Jason could be a Jewish believer in that city—or he could be the same as the one mentioned in Acts 17:7.⁶⁸ According to Acts Jason had been the host of Paul and Silas when they visited Thessalonica. In all probability he was a Jew,⁶⁹ one of those who were persuaded by the preaching of Paul in the synagogue (17:4). It was a favorite practice among Jews to substitute the purely Greek name Jason ('Ιάσων) for the Jewish-Greek Jesus.⁷⁰ If the two are identical, it probably means that Jason was a delegate from the church(es) in Thessalonica, accompanying Paul on his way to Jerusalem. Käsemann thinks that the three Jewish believers mentioned in Rom 16:21 hardly could have been representatives of Gentile Christianity accompanying Paul with the collection.⁷¹ But this is unwarranted.⁷² Though the delegates represented churches with a majority of Gentiles, it is likely that most (if not all) Pauline churches also had a Jewish element. And these churches seemingly found it unproblematic that a Jewish believer represented them. If the Jason of Acts 17 is not identical with the Jason of Rom 16, we probably have evidence of two Jewish believers with this name.

Jesus Justus. A person mentioned in Col 4:10 together with Aristarchus and Mark as the “only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of

⁶⁴ Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 177–78.

⁶⁵ Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 178. The inscription is CII 173.

⁶⁶ David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe. Volume 2: The City of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 252–53.

⁶⁷ Jason was a very common Jewish name. It is attested of Jews in 2 Macc 3:23; by Josephus (e.g., *Ant.* 12.415; 13.169), in Rome (CII 289; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 421–22), Egypt (e.g., CPJ 22, 24, 28, 165, 250, 329, 406), and Cyrenaica (cf. Lüderitz, *Corpus*, no. 7b, 8, 72).

⁶⁸ For identification: Byrne, *Romans*, 460; Dunn, *Romans* (“could be”); Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 749 (“possibly the same”). Against: BAGD 368; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 595; Ollrog, *Mitarbeiter*, 30; cf. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 420 (“doubtful”).

⁶⁹ Hengel and Schwemer (*Paul*, 62) list Jason of Thessalonica as a Godfearer.

⁷⁰ BAGD 368; Richard Bauckham, “Paul and Other Jews with Latin Names in the New Testament,” in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. A. Christophersen et al.; JSNTSup 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 202–20, 213.

⁷¹ Käsemann, *Romans*, 420.

⁷² Dunn, *Romans*, 2:909. See also the discussion at the end of this chapter.

God.” Jesus (the Greek form of Joshua or Jeshua) was a common Jewish name.⁷³ The Latin name Justus could have been given him because of his loyal observance of the Law,⁷⁴ or it could simply be a sound-equivalent to the Hebrew name Joseph.⁷⁵ Also Justus was a common name among Jews and proselytes (cf. Acts 1:23; 18:7). We have no further information about this Jesus Justus, though it has been suggested that he is also mentioned in Phlm 23. This suggestion is based on a conjectural emendation: Instead of reading “Greetings from my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, Mark, Aristarchus . . .” one reads: “Greetings from my fellow prisoner in Christ; (also) Jesus, Mark, Aristarchus . . .”⁷⁶ In this reading there is a closer parallel between Col 4:10–12 and Phlm 23–24. It is, however, hard to imagine that Paul would have referred to “Jesus,” unqualified, referring to someone other than Christ. And since the emendation is without textual support, it has to be rejected.⁷⁷

*John Mark.*⁷⁸ A cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10). Mark was a “helper” ($\delta\pi\eta\rho\acute{e}t\eta\varsigma$) to Barnabas and Paul, accompanying them on their missionary journey to Cyprus, but he left them in Perga and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:5, 13). For this reason Paul refused to take Mark on a later missionary journey, with the result that Mark came to work together with Barnabas in Cyprus (Acts 15:37–39). Later, however, Mark appears as Paul’s co-worker (Phlm 24; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11). According to Col 4 there was a possibility that John Mark would visit Colossae, and 2 Timothy mentions him as especially useful in Paul’s ministry. It is difficult to know what is behind these statements, but they certainly indicate that Mark was an important figure in the Pauline mission. In addition, his connection with Peter and Silvanus (according to 1 Pet 5:12–13) makes him one of the few “effective bridge figures between different strands of the early Christian mission.”⁷⁹ Together with Silas/Silvanus he is among the few Jewish believers who were active both within the mission to the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

Junia. A relative of Paul, greeted together with Andronicus (Rom 16:7). In most versions (e.g., RSV, NIV, NASB) Ιούνια is understood as a masculine name (Ιούνιαν ; acc. of Ιούνιας ; Latin *Iunias*) and is translated Junias; in the King James and some more recent translations (e.g., NRSV, NKJV) the name is understood as a

⁷³ See, e.g., CPJ 118, 194, 410, 430, CII 1511 and 1476 (cf. William Horbury and David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 74 and 135); BAGD 373–74.

⁷⁴ John Gillman, “Jesus Justus,” ABD 3:1134.

⁷⁵ Bauckham, “Paul and Other Jews,” 212–14.

⁷⁶ Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (trans. W. R. Poehlmann and R. J. Karris; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 207.

⁷⁷ Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 343, n. 2.

⁷⁸ See also section 7 of chapter 3 of this book. Both John and Mark are widely attested as Jewish names, e.g., in the New Testament.

⁷⁹ Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 276.

feminine name, Junia ('Ιουνία; acc. of 'Ιουνία; Latin *Iunia*). Since the oldest manuscripts were written in majuscules without accents (ΙΟΥΝΙΑΝ) both interpretations are theoretically possible. The problem with the masculine interpretation is that the male name *Iunias* is not found elsewhere, and it cannot be demonstrated that it was used as a contraction of *Iunianus*.⁸⁰ *Iunia*, on the other hand, was a very common feminine name.⁸¹ In addition, patristic commentators up to about the 12th century,⁸² practically without exception,⁸³ read the name as a female name.⁸⁴ A woman from the clan *Iunius* (a common Latin *nomen*) would usually be named *Iunia*. Since *Iunia* in Rom 16 obviously is a Jew (Paul refers to Junia and Andronicus as τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου, "my relatives"), she is most likely a freedwoman or a descendant of former slaves.⁸⁵ Junia was probably the wife of Andronicus, and numbered among the apostles (see above on Andronicus). Chrysostom writes about Junia: "Why, what a great love of learning this woman possessed! Great enough indeed to be considered worthy of inclusion amongst the apostles."⁸⁶ It is possible that the comment about learning is based on specific information available to Chrysostom, but no other information about Junia is found in ancient sources. R. Bauckham has recently proposed that she is identical with Joanna (cf. Luke 8:1–3),⁸⁷ but this remains hypothetical.

Lucius.⁸⁸ A fellow-countryman (συγγενής) of Paul, sends greetings from Corinth to the Christians in Rome (Rom 16:21). Nothing else is known about this Lucius. It is not likely that he is identical with Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13:1). Lucius was a common Latin praenomen, and was one of the Latin equivalents for the Greek

⁸⁰ Richard S. Cervin, "A Note Regarding the Name 'Junia(s)' in Romans 16.7," NTS 40 (1994): 464–70, 466; John Thorley, "Junia, a Woman Apostle," NovT 38 (1996): 18–29.

⁸¹ Lampe (*Paul to Valentinus*, 176) records more than 250 instances of the name Junia in Rome alone.

⁸² Ray R. Schulz, "Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?" *ExpTim* 98 (1986–87): 108–10; a list of commentators are listed in page 110, n.2.

⁸³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 79 (cf. also Burer and Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle?" 77) draw attention to a statement by Epiphanius who obviously understands Junias to be a man. It is, however, doubtful that the work from which they have cited is actually written by Epiphanius; cf. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 166, n. 242. Since Epiphanius calls Prisca a man, he seems not to be especially trustworthy (cf. Burer and Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle?" 77).

⁸⁴ The variant reading (ΙΟΥΛΙΑΝ) in the MS Ω⁴⁶, the oldest extant manuscript that contains Rom 16:7, is also a woman's name. For a broad treatment of the name Junia and the interpretation of Rom 16:7, see Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*.

⁸⁵ Peter Lampe, "Iunia/Iunias: Sklavenherkunft im Kreise der vorpaulinischen Apostel (Röm 16:7)," ZNW 76 (1985):132–34; Cervin, "A Note," 468.

⁸⁶ PG 60:669–70; translation from Thorley, "Junia," 28.

⁸⁷ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 109–202.

⁸⁸ It is attested as a Jewish name both in Rome (CII 155; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 214–15) and in Cyrenaica (cf. Lüderitz, *Corpus*, no. 51a).

name *Loukas* (Luke). Thus Lucius has been identified with the Paul's co-worker Luke, but this is unlikely.⁸⁹ Luke was probably a Gentile Christian and Paul elsewhere calls him Λουκᾶς, not Λούκιος (Phlm 24; Col 4:14).

Lucius of Cyrene. A prophet and teacher in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), is mentioned together with Barnabas, Simon Niger, Manaen and Saul. He is known by his place of origin, the capital city of the Roman province of Cyrene in Northern Africa. It is not unlikely that he was among the Jewish believers of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and preached the gospel not only to fellow Jews, but also to Greeks (Acts 11:20). This makes him an early missionary and one of the founders of the church in Antioch. There is nothing to connect him with the Lucius of Rom 16:21 or to think that he was identical with Luke the evangelist.⁹⁰

*Manaen.*⁹¹ One of the leaders in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1). It is said that he "had been brought up with" (NASB) Herod the tetrarch, i.e., Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee 4. B.C.E.–39 C.E. Manaen is a Greek form of the Hebrew *Menahem*, a name known from the Old Testament (2 Kgs 15:14ff). Josephus tells of an Essene so named who was honored by Herod the Great for having foretold that he would become a king (*Ant.* 15.373–378). As far as chronology is concerned, he could have been the grandfather of the Manaen mentioned in Acts.⁹² We have no means, however, of establishing such a relationship.

Rufus. A person greeted by Paul in Rom 16:13. Paul also greets Rufus's mother, saying that she was "a mother to me also." This clearly means that Paul had been in close contact with Rufus and his mother earlier in his career somewhere in the East. Paul calls Rufus "a chosen in the Lord." Such a term could be applied to all Christians; here it possibly means that Rufus was known as one specially chosen for some role.⁹³ Rufus is a common Latin name, used of both freeborn and slaves.⁹⁴ It is thus not clear that Rufus was a Jew; in contrast to other persons listed in Rom 16 he and his mother are not labeled "kinsmen." Nevertheless, Rufus is known as the Latin equivalent of the Hebrew name Reuben, and was used by Diaspora Jews.⁹⁵ It is thus not unlikely that he was a Jew. This is further strengthened by the possibility that he was son of Simon of Cyrene, mentioned in Mark 15:21. Some commentators dismiss this as "pious speculation."⁹⁶ Admittedly it

⁸⁹ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 748; contra Dunn, *Romans*, 2:909.

⁹⁰ Bruce, *Acts*, 293.

⁹¹ On this name, see Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 227.

⁹² Bruce, *Acts*, 293.

⁹³ Dunn, *Romans*, 2:897.

⁹⁴ Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 181–82.

⁹⁵ Bauckham, "Paul and Other Jews," 211–12 (incl. n. 60), 218, n. 87; Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 75, n. 26; see also Naomi G. Cohen, "Jewish Names as Cultural Indicators in Antiquity," *JSJ* 7 (1976): 97–128, esp. 118–20. Jewish occurrences of the name is found, e.g., in *CIJ* 145 and 146 (cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 225–27).

⁹⁶ Käsemann, *Romans*, 414.

cannot be proven, but it is not completely unlikely. If the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome,⁹⁷ the reference in 15:21 surely indicates that the Christian community in Rome knew a Jewish believer named Rufus.⁹⁸

Silas (Silvanus).⁹⁹ In Acts he is mentioned as one of the two who were appointed to bring the official letter from the Jerusalem council to the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: “They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers” (15:22). This obviously means that Silas was one on the leading men in the Jerusalem church.¹⁰⁰ We are also informed that he was a prophet (15:32), and a Roman citizen (16:37–38).

For our purposes it is important to emphasize the role he plays as Paul’s co-worker. After the break with Barnabas, Luke says that Paul chose Silas as his traveling companion (15:40). The primary reason for this choice was probably that he was favorable to the gentile mission. It is, however, most likely that Paul had additional reasons for choosing a respected representative of the Jerusalem leaders: by doing so he (1) placed his mission, so to speak, under the auspices of the Jerusalem church, and (2) obtained a personal legitimization of his gospel.¹⁰¹ In other words: Silas could speak for the Jerusalem church and make clear that Paul was not at odds with the mother church.¹⁰² The fact that he was a Roman citizen may also have been useful when Paul was going to visit Roman colonies like Philippi and Corinth.

According to Acts, Silas travels together with Paul through Phrygia and Galatia, and further to Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) and Achaia. The last time he is mentioned in Acts is in connection with their stay in Corinth (18:5). Paul refers to Silas (and Timothy) as his colleagues in the proclamation of the gospel in Corinth (2 Cor 1:19), and Silas appears (again together with Timothy) as co-sender of Paul’s two letters to the Christians in Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1)—written from Corinth. Nothing further is said about his association with Paul after Corinth,¹⁰³ but he is later mentioned in connection with Peter (1 Pet 5:12).

Kaye has argued that Silas’s presence explains the Jewish character of Paul’s mission—until Corinth, when there was a change.¹⁰⁴ This is hardly correct. As we

⁹⁷ Cf., e.g., Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SCM, 1985), 28–30.

⁹⁸ Dunn, *Romans*, 2:897; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:793–94.

⁹⁹ Silas is a relatively rare name; see Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 230–31 (incl. n. 31).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. section 7 of chapter 3 of this book.

¹⁰¹ John Gillman, “Silas,” *ABD* 4:23.

¹⁰² Witherington, *Acts*, 473; Bruce, *Pauline Circle*, 26. Michael D. Goulder (“Silas in Thessalonica,” *JSNT* 48 [1992]: 87–106) argues, unconvincingly in my view, for a doctrinal disagreement between Paul and Silas. According to Goulder, Silas is the author of the false teaching in the church in Thessalonica.

¹⁰³ Note Richard Bauckham’s suggestion about a split between Paul and Silas “because in Corinth Paul decided he could not enforce the whole of the decree of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:29) on his Gentile converts there” (section 7 of chapter 3 of this book).

¹⁰⁴ B. N. Kaye, “Acts’ Portrait of Silas,” *NovT* 21 (1979): 13–26.

have argued elsewhere, Paul's connection to the synagogue is easily explained by his missionary strategy: in the synagogues he could reach both Jews and Gentiles.¹⁰⁵ The fact that Paul chose a Jew as his closest co-worker during his second "missionary journey" is, however, scarcely accidental. In all probability, Paul saw his presence as an advantage to the mission among his kinsmen. Thus, it does not explain the Jewish character of Paul's mission, but it certainly strengthens it.

Simeon, called Niger. One of the prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch, mentioned together with Barnabas, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen and Saul (Paul) (Acts 13:1). Simeon is a Hebrew name, very common among first-century Jews. Niger ("black") is a Latin name, also attested as a name of Jews in Egypt.¹⁰⁶ The name was apparently a descriptive addition, given to him perhaps because he was an African.¹⁰⁷

*Sopater.*¹⁰⁸ Mentioned in Acts 20:4 as a believer from Beroea,¹⁰⁹ and son of Pyrrhus. He is named together with other delegates from the Pauline churches, accompanying Paul with the collection to Jerusalem. Because Sopater may be a shortened form of *Sosipater*,¹¹⁰ he is probably identical with the person of the latter name spoken of in Rom 16:21.¹¹¹ There he is mentioned along with Lucius and Jason, and together with them designated as οἱ συγγενεῖς μου ("my fellow countrymen").

Sosthenes. In 1 Corinthians Paul mentions "our brother Sosthenes" as a fellow-sender of the letter (1:1). It is possible that this Sosthenes is identical with the one mentioned in Acts 18:17¹¹² as an official of the synagogue (ἀρχισυνάγωγος)¹¹³ in Corinth. If the two are not identical, we have no basis for claiming that Sosthenes in 1 Cor 1:1 was a Jew. The fact that he is named in a letter to the church in Corinth—and nowhere else—makes the identification plausible, though not proven. In the report of Acts, Sosthenes is not mentioned as a follower of Paul, but he may

¹⁰⁵ See my chapter 5 of this book.

¹⁰⁶ Two Jews by this name are found on several ostraca; cf., e.g., CPJ 164 and 254.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce, *Acts*, 202; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 220.

¹⁰⁸ The name is attested as a Jewish name by Josephus, *Ant.* 14.241.

¹⁰⁹ We may conjecture that he came to faith during Paul's ministry in Beroea.

¹¹⁰ Attested as a Jewish name in 2 Macc 12:19, 24.

¹¹¹ Wolf-Henning Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter: Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission* (WMANT 50; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 58; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 749 ("undoubtedly the same"); Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 236 ("probably identical").

¹¹² Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 31; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 630. Many commentators leave the question open, cf., e.g., Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 26; Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief und die Korinther: 1 Teilband: 1 Kor 1,1–6,11* (EKKNT 7.1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991), 100.

¹¹³ On this title, see above on Crispus.

have become a believer at a later stage.¹¹⁴ As official of the synagogue he would then have been a colleague of Crispus (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14).

*Timothy.*¹¹⁵ One of Paul's closest co-workers and co-sender of six of his letters (1–2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, Colossians). According to Acts, Timothy came from Lystra in the province Galatia. He was the son of a Jewish woman, but he was uncircumcised—obviously because his father was a Gentile (16:1–3). Paul circumcised him and he joined Paul and Silas on their missionary journey through Asia Minor to Troas, and further to Macedonia.¹¹⁶ He worked together with Paul for a long period, and was his delegate both to Thessalonica and Corinth (cf. 1 Thess 3:1ff; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Acts 17:1–15; 18:5; 19:22). He was present in Corinth when Paul sent his letter to the Romans (16:21), and he accompanied Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem (according to Acts 20:4). Acts gives no information about his presence together with Paul during the latter part of Paul's ministry. However, if the captivity letters are written from Rome, these letters show that Timothy was present during Paul's custody in the imperial capital (Phil 1:1; Phlm 1; Col 1:1). At that time, Paul planned to send Timothy to Philippi, giving him excellent references (Phil 2:19–24). According to 1 Timothy he was later given responsibility for the Ephesian church (1:3).

First and Second Timothy give further information about Timothy's background. It is said that his mother's name was Eunice¹¹⁷ and his grandmother was named Lois (2 Tim 1:5). It is also said that Timothy from childhood knew the sacred Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15), which probably means the Greek version of Tanak. In 1 Tim 1:2 Timothy is called Paul's “true child in the faith” (cf. 1 Cor 4:17), an expression that indicates that he came to faith through Paul's ministry. If this is correct, Timothy probably became a believer during Paul's first visit in Lystra (recorded in Acts 14:6–21; cf. 2 Tim 3:11).

2. Other Possible Jewish Believers Attested in the Pauline Letters and Acts

Some eighty-eight individuals are named in connection with Paul's mission and churches in the Pauline letters and Acts. Above we have listed twenty-four persons who with some certainty can be identified as Jewish believers.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Barrett, *Acts*, 2:875.

¹¹⁵ Timothy is a Greek name, attested, e.g., in 1 Macc 5:6; 2 Macc 8:30 and Josephus, *Ant.* 12.329 (of a Greek commander fighting against the Jews).

¹¹⁶ On the circumcision of Timothy, see section 3 of chapter 5 of this book.

¹¹⁷ See above under “Eunice.”

¹¹⁸ The number includes Prisca and Rufus's mother. It further presupposes that there is only one Jason (at least only one who certainly was a Jew), that Sopater and Sosipater is the same person, and that the Sosthenes mentioned in 1 Cor 1:1 was a Jew. The last is the most uncertain.

But could there be even more? We shall discuss this possibility by briefly examining the relevant texts, primarily using the process of elimination: Who can be excluded because it is said (directly or indirectly) that the persons referred to are Gentiles? In some cases this is rather simple, but not in all. Consequently, we will be left with some persons whose ethnic background is quite open to interpretation.

The texts will be discussed according to the geographical regions to which they are connected. Because of the long and illuminating list of names in Rom 16, we will start our examination in Rome.

2.1. Rome

In Rom 16 Paul lists thirty-five individuals¹¹⁹; twenty-six persons are greeted; eight persons send their greetings, and one is commended (Phoebe). In six cases, Paul refers to persons as kinsmen.¹²⁰ In Romans, where the destiny of the Jews is very much in focus (especially in chaps. 9–11), it is likely that Paul is eager to single out all Jewish believers, illustrating the “remnant of Israel” (cf. 11:1–5). Consequently, there is reason to believe that all Jewish believers in fact are mentioned as such in Rom 16.¹²¹ There are exceptions, however: There are Jews in the list who are not labelled as kinsmen, namely Aquila (and Prisca) (v. 3), and Timothy (v. 21); probably also Rufus and his mother (v. 13)—as argued above. There may also be other exceptions, e.g., Mary (v. 6). The text witnesses vacillate between Μαρίαπ¹²² which reflects the common Hebrew name *Miryām*, and Μαρίαν which most likely is a feminine form of the Latin name Marius.¹²³ While statistics may favor the latter option,¹²⁴ it is not unlikely that a woman, who is praised for her work among the Roman Christians, belonged to the early Jewish segment of the church. The rest of the persons listed in Rom 16 are, however, in all probability non-Jews.¹²⁵

Of the persons referred to in the last chapter of Romans, twenty-six are located in Rome. Eighteen of these are surely Gentiles, five are surely Jews (Aquila, Prisca, Andronicus, Junia, and Herodion), and the remaining three are probably of Jewish descent (Rufus and his mother and Mary). If these numbers are

¹¹⁹ Including two unnamed persons: Rufus’s mother (v. 13) and Nereus’s sister (v. 15). In addition we find references and various groups of people (cf. vv. 5a, 10b, 11b, 14b, 15b).

¹²⁰ Among the addressees in Rome: Andronicus, Junia (v. 7) and Herodion (v. 11); together with Paul in Corinth: Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (v. 21).

¹²¹ Cf. Lampe, “The Roman Christians,” 224–25.

¹²² Found, e.g., in P⁴⁶ & D F G.

¹²³ Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 737.

¹²⁴ See discussion in Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 74–75 (nn. 25–26) and 175–76.

¹²⁵ These are—in Rome: Epaenetus (v. 5), Ampliatus (v. 8), Urbanus (v. 9), Stachys (v. 9), Apelles (v. 10), Tryphaena, Tryphosa (v. 12), Persis (v. 13), Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas (v. 14), Philologus, Julia, Nereus (and his sister), and Olympas, (v. 15); in Corinth: Phoebe (v. 1), Tertius (v. 22), Gaius, Erastus and Quartus (v. 23).

representative for all Jesus-believers in Rome, at least 19 percent were Jewish believers¹²⁶; probably the number was closer to 30 percent.

2.2. Asia Minor

Another list of names is found in Col 4:10–14. Paul conveys greetings from Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus, who is called Justus—and adds: “These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me” (v. 10–11).¹²⁷ The implication seems to be that the others mentioned in the context are non-Jews. These are Epaphras¹²⁸ (v. 12), Luke, and Demas (v. 14).¹²⁹ Admittedly the name Demas is used of Jews,¹³⁰ but for the person referred to here, this seems to be out of the question. What about the two persons mentioned earlier, namely Tychicus (v. 7) and Onesimus (v. 9)? The Greek name Tychicus is very common, and was also used by Jews.¹³¹ The Tychicus mentioned in Col 4 is almost certainly the same as the one mentioned in Eph 6:21, 2 Tim 4:12, Titus 3:12, and Acts 20:4. In Acts he is said to be from Asia. Nothing that is said about him excludes the possibility that he is a Jew, but the proximity to Col 4:10–11 creates uncertainty (see, however, below).

The same holds true of Onesimus. The name was common,¹³² and is also attested as a Jewish name.¹³³ Onesimus is mentioned in Phlm 10 as the slave of Philemon. In Col 4:9 it is said that he is “one of you” (ἐξ ὑμῶν), which means that he came from Colossae. These data do not exclude the possibility that he was a Jew, but nothing that is said about him points clearly in that direction.

In Col 4:15 a person named Nympha(s)¹³⁴ is mentioned, and this person probably is a woman. The name is not attested as a Jewish name and we have no other indication that she was a Jew. Col 4:17 (and Phlm 2) refer to a certain Archippus. According to Phlm 2 he belonged to the church in Philemon’s house in Colossae. There is no indication that he was a Jew. He may indeed have been the son of Philemon.¹³⁵

¹²⁶ Lampe, (“The Roman Christians,” 224–25) does not even include Prisca. Consequently he thinks that the portion of Jewish believers in Rome is as low as 15 percent.

¹²⁷ Timothy could also be included as one of the circumcised, but he is co-sender of the letter (cf. Col 1:1). For a detailed discussion of v. 11, see Markus Barth, Astrid Beck, and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians* (AB 34B; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 480–81.

¹²⁸ Cf. also Col 1:7 and Phlm 23.

¹²⁹ Both Luke and Demas are also mentioned in Phlm 24 and 2 Tim 4:10–11 (where it is said that Demas has left Paul).

¹³⁰ Cf. CPJ 166, 223, 273 (Egypt) and an inscription from Cyrenaica. On the latter, see Lüderitz, *Corpus*, appendix no. 19d. See also Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 57.

¹³¹ CII 412; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 91.

¹³² See *NewDocs* 4:179–81.

¹³³ CII 1457 (cf. Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 113–14) and 761.

¹³⁴ It is not quite clear whether the name is female (Nympha) or male (Nymphas), though the former is most likely. For further discussion; see Gillman, *Women*, 39–42.

¹³⁵ Cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon* (AB 34C; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 88.

In the short letter to Philemon two names in addition to those also found in Colossians occur: Philemon and Apphia (Phlm 1–2). They are probably husband and wife, living in Colossae.¹³⁶ The Greek name Philemon is rather common; many occurrences are found, especially in Rome,¹³⁷ and it is a name that appears among the Jews in Egypt and Cyrenaica.¹³⁸ Apphia is a well-attested Phrygian name,¹³⁹ but never found as the name of a Jewish woman. Therefore, it is not likely that the couple were Jewish believers.

In Acts Luke refers to two men from Asia among the delegates going to the church in Jerusalem with the collection. The first is Tychicus (mentioned above); the second is Trophimus (20:4). Trophimus is reported later to be in Jerusalem together with Paul. He then is said to be an Ephesian (21:29), and in this context he is mentioned as part of a group of Greeks, i.e., a Gentile (21:28–29).¹⁴⁰

In Acts 20:4 Luke also mentions a Gaius from Derbe, while he in 19:29 (recording events in Ephesus) refers to Gaius and Aristarchus as Macedonians. This may be the reason for the variant reading of 20:4 (MS D), which identifies Gaius as Δούβηριος, a person from Doberus, a town in Macedonia.¹⁴¹ It is difficult to decide whether Luke is referring to one person or two persons who have the same name.¹⁴² Since the name is very common, it is probably best to think that there was one Gaius from Macedonia and one from Derbe.¹⁴³ Gaius from Macedonia may have been a co-worker of Paul in Ephesus, while Gaius of Derbe was a member of the collection delegation en route to Jerusalem. The name “Gaius” is attested several times as being used of Jews,¹⁴⁴ and it is not unlikely that one of the two mentioned above was a Jew. Unfortunately, we have no basis for making a decision on this matter.

In connection with Paul’s stay in Ephesus, Luke also refers to a certain Erastus, a “helper” of Paul who was sent to Macedonia together with Timothy (19:22). Nothing else is known about him, and there is no indication that he was a Jewish believer.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁶ On Philemon and Apphia, see, e.g., Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 311–12; Fitzmyer, *Philemon*, 12–13, 88–87.

¹³⁷ For references, see *NewDocs* 3:91.

¹³⁸ CPJ 312 and Lüderitz, *Corpus*, no. 32c.

¹³⁹ For further documentation, see Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 228–29.

¹⁴⁰ CII 169 refers to a Jew with this name. See, however, discussion in *NewDocs* 3:91–93.

¹⁴¹ See *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 421–22.

¹⁴² In addition we have a Gaius in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23); he may in fact be a native from Macedonia, living in Corinth, but this is not very likely. Fitzmyer (*Acts*, 659) mentions the possibility that Gaius from Derbe “could have accompanied Paul from some place in Macedonia and thus be designated loosely as ‘Macedonian traveling companions.’”

¹⁴³ So Ollrog, *Mitarbeiter*, 51.

¹⁴⁴ From Rome: CII 263 and 465 (cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 196 and 13); on evidence from Cyrenaica, see Lüderitz, *Corpus*, no. 12, 32a, 51f, 53c, 70; appendix 13a, 22g.

¹⁴⁵ He is probably not identical with the Erastus mentioned in Rom 16:23 (cf. Ollrog, *Mitarbeiter*, 50–51). It is impossible to know if he is the same as the one referred to in 2 Tim 4:20. See also Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 235.

2.3. Macedonia and Achaia

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he refers to the following members of the church: Euodia,¹⁴⁶ Syntyche (4:2), Clement (4:3) and Epaphroditus (2:25; 4:18). Only one of these names is known to have been used of Jews, and there is nothing in the texts to signal that the persons referred to in fact were Jewish believers. This corresponds to the picture found in Acts: Nothing is said explicitly about Jews in this Roman colony.¹⁴⁷ Luke refers to a "place of prayer" (προσευχή—16:13),¹⁴⁸ but the only person mentioned by name is Lydia, a God-fearer (Acts 16:14).

Acts also mentions a certain Secundus¹⁴⁹ as member of the collection delegation (20:4). He and Aristarchus are said to be from Thessalonica. There is no reason to exclude Jewish believers from the delegation to Jerusalem, but since Aristarchus belonged to that category, it is more likely that Secundus was a Gentile (see further below).

In the Corinthian correspondence we find several references to Paul's co-worker Titus.¹⁵⁰ In Gal 2:3 he is explicitly said to be a Greek and a non-Jew. Also excluded as Jews are the Corinthians Gaius,¹⁵¹ Erastus, and Quartus (mentioned in Rom 16:23 and discussed above under Rome). In addition, Paul refers to the following members of the church in Corinth: Stephanas, Fortunatus,¹⁵² Achaicus, and possibly Chloe (cf. 1 Cor 1:11).¹⁵³ Nothing is known of Fortunatus and Achaicus except that they traveled together with Stephanas to visit Paul in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:17). Their names are typically Greek, and there is no indication that they were Jews. Stephanas is twice mentioned together with his house, as being baptized by Paul (1 Cor 1:16), and as "the first fruits of Achaia" who have "devoted themselves for ministry to the saints" (1 Cor 16:15 NASB). The fact that the household of Stephanas was among the first in Achaia who came to faith in Jesus makes it likely that they heard the gospel in the synagogue in Corinth (cf. Acts 18). Since Stephanas also

¹⁴⁶ Attested as the name of a Jewish woman and her daughter in Rome (*CIJ* 391; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 93–94)

¹⁴⁷ Until recently there was no archaeological evidence for Jews in Philippi. A marble grave stele does, however, witness to the existence of a Jewish synagogue in Philippi in the late third century. See Chaido Koukouli-Chrysantaki, "Colonia Iulia Augusta Philipensis," in *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after His Death* (ed. Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koester; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1998), 5–35, 28–35.

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion of the word, see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 585 (with further references) and Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (vol. 5 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. B. W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 213–25.

¹⁴⁹ Secundus is (probably) attested as the name of a Roman Jew (*CIJ* 164; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 321).

¹⁵⁰ 2 Cor 2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18; cf. also Gal 2:1, 3; 2 Tim 4:10; Titus 1:4.

¹⁵¹ Gaius is also mentioned in 1 Cor 1:14 as one of those baptized by Paul himself.

¹⁵² Attested as the name of a Jew in Rome (*CIJ* 418; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 100).

¹⁵³ Fee (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 54) thinks Chloe was located in Asia.

is known to be a Jewish name,¹⁵⁴ it is not unlikely that the family of Stephanas were Jewish believers.

Chloe we do not know; we do not even know that she was a believer. What Paul refers to are Chloe's people (*οἱ Χλόντς*) giving him information about the situation in Corinth (1 Cor 1:11). It is not clear whether Chloe was located in Corinth or Ephesus, but members of Chloe's house were evidently known in Corinth. The implication may be that they were living in Corinth¹⁵⁵ or that they regularly traveled from Ephesus¹⁵⁶ for business reasons. We have no hints that Chloe and her household were Jews. In addition to the persons referred to in Paul's letters, Acts 18:7 refers to a Godfearer named Titius Justus.

Paul himself refers to Athens just in passing (1 Thess 3:1), but Acts reports of his ministry there. He is said to preach in the synagogue, but no converts are mentioned in that connection (Acts 17:15–17). After his sermon on Areopagus, however, Luke refers to people coming to faith, among them Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman called Damaris¹⁵⁷ (17:34). There is no indication that they were Jews. Admittedly the popular name Dionysios was also used of Jews,¹⁵⁸ but it is unlikely that a member of the Athenian council was a Jew.

2.4. Individuals Mentioned only in the Pastoral Epistles

Even if the authenticity of 1–2 Timothy and Titus is highly disputed by a majority of scholars, many seem to think that the letters contain reliable historical information about the time of the apostle or the time shortly after the apostle's death. The letters mention several individuals by name, and there is no compelling reason to believe that the persons are fictitious.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately for our study, many persons are mentioned only by name, with little or no additional information. This makes it almost impossible to make any decisions concerning ethnicity. In a few cases we have some further information, and this may help us to identify one or two Jewish believers.

In addition to individuals known from the other Pauline letters and Acts,¹⁶⁰ the Pastoral Epistles mention some fifteen other believers (including people who have abandoned the faith). Some of the names are attested as names used by Jews, but this in itself is not sufficient to claim that they are Jews. The list contains the

¹⁵⁴ The form Stephanos is found in Acts 6:5 and attested as a Jewish name in Rome (CII 405; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 129).

¹⁵⁵ So Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 93.

¹⁵⁶ Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 272–73; Gillman, *Women*, 38.

¹⁵⁷ On Damaris, see Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 232.

¹⁵⁸ CPJ 241, 294, 411; CII 1538.

¹⁵⁹ Cf., e.g., Quinn and Wacker, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 614.

¹⁶⁰ Among these is included Eunice, Timothy's mother.

following names: Hymenaeus¹⁶¹ and Alexander¹⁶² (1 Tim 1:20), Phygelus and Hermogenes¹⁶³ (2 Tim 1:15), Onesiphorus¹⁶⁴ (2 Tim 1:16–18; cf. 4:19), Philetus¹⁶⁵ (2 Tim 2:17), Crescens¹⁶⁶ (2 Tim 4:10), Carpus (2 Tim 4:13), Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia¹⁶⁷ (2 Tim 4:21), and Artemas¹⁶⁸ (Titus 3:12). There is no basis for claiming that any of these were Jews, though it cannot be totally excluded.

In addition to these names there are two that need some closer examination. The first is *Zenas*, who is introduced as a νομικός, “lawyer” (Titus 3:13). This could mean that he was a person trained in civil (Roman) law, but in this context it is much more likely that it refers to a person “skilled in the Law par excellence, the Torah, even the whole OT.”¹⁶⁹ It is correct that the letter to Titus is critical of Jewish myths and “quarrels about the law” (cf. 1:14; 3:9), but this does not exclude a reference to a Jewish expert in the law.¹⁷⁰ On the contrary, one could imagine the need of a νομικός who was able to interpret the Jewish Scriptures adequately.¹⁷¹ Besides, such a use of the word νομικός would be in accordance with the use elsewhere in the New Testament where it is used of Jewish scribes (cf. Luke 7:30; 10:25; 11:45, 46, 52; 14:3; Matt 22:35). Admittedly Zenas is a contraction of Zenodorus, “gift of Zeus,” and it is argued that it is “unlikely” that a Jewish lawyer would have such a pagan name.¹⁷² This argument is, however, not valid. There are several examples of Jews with typical pagan names, e.g., the female equivalent Zenodora,¹⁷³ further

¹⁶¹ Probably the same person as the one mentioned in 2 Tim 2:17.

¹⁶² Alexander is a very common name, often used by Jews (cf., e.g., Mark 15:21; Acts 4:6; CII 934; 1490). It is possible, but not certain, that the Alexander mentioned here is the same as the one referred to in 2 Tim 4.14.

¹⁶³ The form “Hermogenus” is used of a Jew in Rome (CII 324).

¹⁶⁴ The name is attested in many inscriptions (cf. *NewDocs* 4.181–182), but not as a Jewish name.

¹⁶⁵ This name is rarely attested; see, however, *NewDocs* 4.32.

¹⁶⁶ The Latin form of the name is common; the Greek quite rare (cf. BAGD 450). A Jewish proselyte with the Latin name Cresces is attested in Rome (CII 68).

¹⁶⁷ The common Latin name Claudia is used by Jews in Rome (CII 366, probably also 461; see Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 143–44).

¹⁶⁸ Artemas is a pagan name, being a shortened form of Artemidoros, “gift of Artemis.” It is attested as a Jewish name; cf. Lüderitz, *Corpus*, no. 57b, 57c, 57 d.

¹⁶⁹ Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus* (AB 35; New York: Doubleday, 1990), 265.

¹⁷⁰ Contra J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Harper, 1964; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 258, who thinks it is “highly unlikely” that Zenas was a convert from Judaism “in view of the bias against Jewish law shown in the letter.”

¹⁷¹ This holds true regardless of the authorship of the Pastorals. The author is not negative to the Law, only the wrong use of it (cf. 1 Tim 1:8).

¹⁷² So I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 343. Mounce (*Pastoral Epistles*, 458) is open for the possibility that he was an expert in Jewish law.

¹⁷³ Used of a Jewish woman in Rome (CII 43; cf. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 100).

Dionysius,¹⁷⁴ Apollonius,¹⁷⁵ and Serapion.¹⁷⁶ Thus, the name Zenas does not rule out the possibility that he in fact was a Jew, or more precisely a Jewish believer, as was his companion, Apollos (cf. Titus 3:13).¹⁷⁷ On the contrary, it is rather likely.

The second name to be examined more closely is *Lois*, the grandmother of Timothy (2 Tim 1:5). She is called μάμη, which means “grandma,” without indicating whether she is the mother of Timothy’s father or his mother. In the former case she would be a Gentile, in the latter case a Jew (cf. Acts 16:1). In fact we have no basis for a secure decision. Her name, Lois, is probably Cilician, but this does not help us very much in light of what we know of Jewish names. There is, however, a 50 percent chance that Lois was a Jew. The fact that she is juxtaposed with Timothy’s Jewish mother increases the probability.¹⁷⁸

3. Conclusion

We have found several names that were used by Jews, but in many cases other evidence leads us to conclude that the individuals were not Jewish believers. In other cases it is very unlikely. Among those discussed above, I think there is a certain probability that the following were Jewish believers: Stephanas (and his family—1 Cor 16:17), Tychicus (Col 4:7; Acts 20:4), Zenas (Titus 3:13), and Lois (2 Tim 1:5).¹⁷⁹

Concerning Stephanas, I think it is important to take into consideration that Paul’s mission was closely related to the synagogue. It is thus more than likely that some of his “first fruits” were Jews. In fact, Acts gives evidence for a leading figure in the synagogue in Corinth, Crispus, coming to faith (Acts 18:8). It is not surprising that other members of the synagogue may have followed him, and the family of Stephanas could have been among them. As is the case with Crispus, Stephanas and his family are among the few in Corinth baptized by Paul himself (1 Cor 1:14, 16).¹⁸⁰

With regard to the second name, Tychicus, I have above discussed the problems connected with Col 4. The occurrence of the name in Acts 20:4 is in need of

¹⁷⁴ Several occurrences are found in Jewish inscriptions from Egypt (*CPJ* 241, 294, 411).

¹⁷⁵ Several occurrences are found in Jewish inscriptions from Egypt (*CPJ* 23, 70); cf. also the female name Apollonia (*CPJ* 144). Apollos is a shortened form of the name Apollonius, which is found in MS D to Acts 18:24.

¹⁷⁶ Lüderitz, *Corpus*, no. 53a, 53b, 53c, 72.

¹⁷⁷ Quinn, *Titus*, 266.

¹⁷⁸ Marshall (*Pastoral Epistles*, 694) thinks she was the mother of Timothy’s mother.

¹⁷⁹ There is also a possibility that Mary (Rom 16:6) was Jewish.

¹⁸⁰ Following this argument one could argue that Gaius too (mentioned together with Crispus in 1 Cor 1:14) was a Jew. This is, however, excluded by what is said in Rom 16:21–23 (see discussion above).

further comment, however. In this text Luke seems to list the delegates following Paul to Jerusalem with the collection.¹⁸¹ Paul was accompanied “by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia” (NASB). There is no doubt that an important aspect of the collection was to demonstrate the unity between Gentile and Jewish believers in Jesus,¹⁸² and we have already seen that some of the participants were Jews (Sopater, Aristarchus, and Timothy). This is hardly a coincidence. In fact, it is probable that Paul encouraged his dominantly Gentile churches to be represented by Jewish believers. This would demonstrate the close link between the Pauline churches and the mother church in Jerusalem. When a church sent two delegates, the natural choice would be to send one Jewish believer and one Gentile believer. This seems to be the case with Aristarchus and Secundus, who represented the Thessalonians. The former was a Jew, the latter probably a Gentile. If this in fact reflects Paul’s strategy, it is more than likely that also the delegates for Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus, represented both Jews and Gentiles. Since Trophimus clearly was a Gentile, we may conclude that Tychicus seems to be a Jewish believer.

It is further probable that Gaius in fact represented the churches in Galatia.¹⁸³ In the list Timothy is put next to him, probably because Timothy also came from Galatia (Lystra). By analogy one could thus argue that Gaius of Derbe was a Gentile believer, since Timothy represented the Jewish segment of the Pauline churches in that region. However, Timothy’s role as one of Paul’s closest co-workers and his delegate to different churches makes it unlikely that he was seen as a delegate from one region. If Gaius of Derbe was the only representative of the Galatian churches, he could be a Jewish believer, but we have nothing that can determine his ethnicity.

To sum up, in addition to the twenty-four Jewish believers mentioned in section 1, we may probably add four more names. This makes a total of some twenty-eight believers of Jewish background among the total number of approximately eighty-eight individuals mentioned in the Pauline letters and Acts in connection with Paul and his churches. If those mentioned by name are representative, the Jewish believers comprise about 30 percent of the total number of believers connected with the Pauline mission and churches. If we disregard the individuals who are listed as “probably Jewish,” the portion of Jewish believers will be about 25 percent.

¹⁸¹ Ollrog, *Mitarbeiter*, 57.

¹⁸² Cf., e.g., Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 811.

¹⁸³ Ollrog, *Mitarbeiter*, 55–56.

Jewish Believers and Jewish Influence in the Roman Church until the Early Second Century

Reidar Hvalvik

According to an old tradition, the history of the Roman church was closely connected with the ministry of two Jews, the apostles Paul and Peter. In the late second century it is claimed that the two apostles taught together in Italy and were martyred on the same occasion.¹ Irenaeus claims that Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and “founding the church.”² A somewhat different story is given in the *Acts of Peter*. There Paul is the first to come to Rome, serving as a shepherd for the congregation. After a time, however, he leaves because he gets a calling to proclaim the gospel to the Spaniards. The congregation says farewell to their shepherd and equips him for his mission to Spain. Soon afterwards the heretic Simon Magus arrives in Rome and many believers are led astray. For this reason Peter is called to go to Rome. He arrives, combats Simon and leads a successful ministry, characterized by many miracles. The story ends with Peter’s martyrdom on the cross, where he is hung with his head down.³

In the center of this story stand the apostles, the pillars of the church of Rome. Even if they are not described as the first bishops of Rome, as in other sources, they nevertheless are depicted as playing a crucial role in the early history of the Roman church. This picture is, however, far from what can be deduced from historically reliable sources about the first Jesus-believers in Rome. Even if the sources leave a lot of questions open, we will try to reconstruct the history of the early church in Rome.

¹ Dionysius of Corinth according to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.8.

² *Haer.* 3.11; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.2–3.

³ Text in J. K. Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 399–426.

1. The Origin of the Church in Rome

We do not know how the church in Rome was founded. The first undisputable evidence for Christians in Rome is found in Paul's letter to the Romans, written sometime between 56 and 58. At that time there evidently was a significant Christian community in the capital (cf. Rom 1:8; 16:19), and Paul says that he had longed to come to them "for many years" (15:23). Luke, who in his second book records the history of the early mission, confirms the presence of believers in Rome in the beginning of the 60s. When Paul arrived in Rome, he was met by the "brothers there" at the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns (Acts 28:15).⁴

Even if Acts does not tell us how and when the gospel first came to Rome, Luke conveys an interesting detail in connection with Paul's coming to Corinth in the spring of 50 C.E.:⁵ "There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them" (Acts 18:2–3).⁶ The context makes it clear that they not only had the same trade; they obviously also had the same faith.⁷ If not, we should expect that Paul had mentioned Aquila and Priscilla among the first converts in Achaia (cf. 1 Cor 16:15) or among those he baptized in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 1:14–16), but he does not. Besides, if the Jewish couple were expelled from Rome due to turmoil which in some way was connected with the preaching of Christ (see below), it is extremely unlikely that they should have welcomed a prominent Jesus believer and missionary like Paul if they had not themselves shared his faith. The implication is that the couple coming from Rome is a witness to Jewish believers in Rome in the late 40s.

Further information about this episode can be found in *De vita Caesarum*, written by the Roman historian Suetonius. Concerning Claudius he writes: "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome"⁸ (*Iudeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit*). Who is this Chrestus? Some scholars claim that he is an otherwise

⁴In fact Paul and his followers found Christian brothers already at Puteoli, a seaport approximately 195 km away from Rome (Acts 28:13f).

⁵The date of this event is based on information concerning Gallio's proconsulate in Achaia (cf. Acts 18:12). A full treatment of the question is found in Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (trans. Dough Stott; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 202–11.

⁶Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in USA.

⁷Cf. Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (trans. M. Steinhauer; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 11–12; Karl Paul Donfried, "A Short Note on Romans 16," in *The Romans Debate* (rev. and exp. ed; ed. Karl P. Donfried; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 44–52, 47.

⁸*Divus Claudius* 25.4. Translation J. C. Rolfe, LCL.

unknown Jew bearing the popular name Chrestus⁹ (*chrestos* meaning ‘good’ in Greek). This is, however, most unlikely since the name, though widespread, nowhere refers to a Jew.¹⁰ On the other hand it is easy to explain how *Chrestus* could be a misspelling for *Christus*. The first name was well known, and the pronunciation would have been the same for both. For that reason we also find that Christians by Latin speaking people were called *Chrestianus* instead of *Christianus*,¹¹ and in Greek we find the form χρηστιανός in stead of χριστιανός.¹² It is thus most likely that *Chrestus* refers to the founder of the group called *Christiani*.¹³

Admittedly there are problems linked with Suetonius’s record. He introduces the Christians as a group in connection with Nero and the fire of Rome (*Nero* 16.2), without any indication that he has written about them earlier. Thus it is possible that Suetonius himself was not aware of the link between Chrestus and the Christians.¹⁴ This does not, however, exclude that Chrestus in fact was Christ.¹⁵ Suetonius may have thought that Chrestus was a person present in Rome, while in reality there was turmoil among the Jews in Rome *concerning* Christ.

This makes perfect sense on the background of what is recorded about Paul’s missionary work in Acts: When Jesus was proclaimed as Christ/Messiah, there was more than once controversy among the Jews and it even led to disturbance of public order (13:45, 50; 14:2, 5; 17:5–9; 18:12–17; cf. also 6:9–14). Similar events seem to have taken place in Rome; and the emperor decided to get rid of the problem by expelling those involved.

It should be noted, however, that the claim that Jesus from Nazareth was the Messiah would not in itself necessarily be a reason for disturbance. For one thing, Jewish doctrine concerning the Messiah was not fixed, and theological orthodoxy was not a central issue in first century Judaism. What mattered was orthopraxy.¹⁶

⁹ H. Solin, “Juden und Syrer im westlichen Teil der römischen Welt: Eine ethnisch-demographische Studie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der sprachlichen Zustände,” *ANRW* II.29.2 (1983): 587–789, here 659 and 690.

¹⁰ Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 12, n.3.

¹¹ Tertullian, *Apol.* 3 and *To the Heathen* 1.3; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44 (texts quoted in Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 13).

¹² So, e.g., in the New Testament manuscript *Sinaiticus* (N*) in Acts 11:26; 26:28 and 1 Pet 4:16.

¹³ So a majority of scholars; cf., e.g., Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976–84), 2:113–17.

¹⁴ So E. A. Judge and G. S. R. Thomas, “The Origin of the Church at Rome: A New Solution?” *Reformed Theological Review* 25 (1966): 81–94, esp. 85.

¹⁵ There is no reason to think that Chrestus was “some religious star whose appearance at Rome caused an upheaval among the Jews, but whose fame was sufficiently ephemeral for his precise identity to have been lost” (so Judge and Thomas, “Origin,” 87). Similarly, Marcus Borg (“A New Context for Romans xiii,” *NTS* 19 [1972–73]: 205–18, esp. 212) thinks that Suetonius’s reference is to nationalistic messianic agitation, not the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah.

¹⁶ Cf. David E. Aune, “Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism?” *JSJ* 7 (1976): 1–10, 2. Aune concludes his article saying that the “... belief system was definitely subordinate in

To a certain extent this is supported by what Luke tells in Acts. When he reports about turmoil in the wake of Paul's preaching, we seldom get any explanation of what was the real issue. In Thessalonica the non-believing Jews formulate a political accusation against Paul and Silas, saying that they put Jesus in the place of the emperor (17:7). In Corinth, however, the accusation is that Paul persuades people to worship God "contrary to the law"—certainly the Law of Moses is meant.¹⁷ In any case the governor thinks that is the case (18:13–15). That Paul's preaching in the synagogues also involved questions concerning the role of the Torah can be inferred from the only example Luke gives of such a sermon (cf. 13:38–39).

On this background it seems likely that it was not the messiahship of Jesus alone that created turmoil in Rome. However, when the Jews in Rome became aware that the Christian message could have implications for Jewish self-definition and that questions concerning the interpretation of the Law were involved, it is likely that opposition arose.¹⁸ The implication seems to be that also in Rome the gospel was preached in a form that implied an "unorthodox" view of the Law. Already Stephen was accused of preaching against the Law, proclaiming that Jesus would "change the customs that Moses handed on to us" (Acts 6:13–14). In all likelihood it was a message similar to that preached by Stephen and the Hellenists that created tumult in the Jewish community in Rome.¹⁹ This does not mean that this was the only form of the gospel that was preached in Rome; some believers would certainly tend towards a less radical message. According to Suetonius, the Jews "constantly" (*assidue*) made disturbances due to Chrestus, i.e., the preaching of the gospel. When Claudius took measures against the Jews, believers could have been preaching the gospel for quite some time already.

The dating of Claudius's edict is disputed. Some scholars advocate an early date—41 C.E.²⁰ This is based on information from the Roman historian Dio Cassius (ca. 160–230). In connection with Claudius's reign he writes as follows: "As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city,

both a functional and structural way to Jewish traditions of ritual practice and ethical behaviour" (p. 10).

¹⁷ Some commentators see an ambiguity in the expression, but this seems unwarranted; cf. Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation. Volume 2: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 226.

¹⁸ Cf. James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Changing Self-Definitions in earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1993), 61.

¹⁹ Cf. A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 56. Martin Hengel (*Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* [London: SCM, 1979], 107–8) suggests that "the community in Rome was founded by 'Hellenists' who had been driven out of Jerusalem" and that the 'disturbances caused by Chrestus' "may be connected with the attempt of the Jewish Christians there to go over to a Gentile mission apart from the law even in Rome" (as was the case in Antioch; cf. Acts 11:19–20).

²⁰ E.g., Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (trans. F. Stanley Jones; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 164–71; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 9–13.

he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings" (*Historia Romana* 60.6.6).²¹ Even if there is room for some doubt, this event seems to have taken place in the first year of Claudius's reign.²² The crucial question, however, is whether Dio Cassius speaks about the same event as the one recorded by Suetonius. This is hard to decide,²³ but the most likely answer is that the two authors are speaking about two different events. The strongest argument for this solution is that Dio Cassius explicitly says that Claudius "did not drive them out" while Suetonius says the opposite: "he expelled them from Rome." The two events may, however, be related. Since the disturbance, according to Suetonius, had been going on for a while, Claudius's decree "forbidding meetings of AD 41 may therefore have been an earlier measure designed to solve the same problem."²⁴

With regard to the dating of Claudius's edict, additional information is found in a much later source, Paulus Orosius's *Historia adversus Paganos*, published in 417/18. He writes: "In the ninth year of the same reign, Josephus reports that the Jews were expelled from the City by Claudius" (7.6).²⁵ Throughout his entire work, Orosius is very much dependent on earlier sources, though in this particular case he is in error in attributing his information to Josephus. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that he is right in his dating. The ninth year of Claudius's reign would be between 25 January 49 C.E. and 25 January 50 C.E. This means that Orosius's date comes close to what can be calculated on the basis of Acts.

As noted above, it seems likely that Paul came to Corinth in the spring of 50 C.E. In that connection Luke writes that Aquila and Priscilla "had recently (προσφάτως) come from Italy" due to Claudius's edict (Acts 18:2). The most immediate sense of the adverb would imply that they had *a short time before* been expelled from Rome. This gives 49 C.E. as the most likely year for Claudius's decree.²⁶

Who was affected by the edict? Luke says that "all Jews" were expelled. In light of the large number of Jews in Rome²⁷ this is certainly an exaggeration.²⁸ What

²¹ Translation E. Cary, LCL.

²² Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 170–174.

²³ See a more comprehensive discussion in Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 174–79; John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan* (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 303–6.

²⁴ Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (SNTSMS 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 93.

²⁵ Quotations from Paulus Orosius are from *The Seven Books of History against the Pagans* (trans. Roy J. Deferrari; FC 50; Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964).

²⁶ So, e.g., Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 15; Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 36–38; Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 201; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 620; Barclay, *Jews*, 305–6 (hesitantly).

²⁷ Cf. Dio Cassius's statement: "by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city" (*Hist. Rom.* 60.6.6).

²⁸ Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 14; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 620; Barclay, *Jews*, 306.

seems likely is that the “troublemakers”—on both sides—were expelled.²⁹ Different opinions concerning the interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures—including the question of the identity of the Messiah—were of no interest to the Roman authorities (cf. Acts 18:15; 25:19). Consequently, the edict would affect Jews (and possibly also Gentiles who lived like Jews³⁰) independent of their belief in Christ.³¹

At this point it is also interesting to note how the aforementioned Paulus Orosius understands Claudius’s edict. Even if he may have a somewhat anachronistic view of the role of Christianity at that early date, it is still noteworthy that he takes it for granted that the expulsion was related to Christ—and that it also could have affected Christians.³² This is what he writes:

In the ninth year of the same reign, Josephus reports that the Jews were expelled from the City by Claudius. But Suetonius convinces me more who speaks in the following manner: ‘Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, who were constantly stirring up revolution because of their ill-feeling towards Christ.’ But it is by no means discernible whether he ordered the Jews to be checked and repressed because they were stirring up revolutions against Christ, or because he wished the Christians also to be expelled at the same time as those of a related religion (7.6).

The information concerning Claudius’s expulsion of the Jews makes it relatively clear that there were Jesus-believing Jews in Rome in the late 40s. If it is correct that the edict in 49 C.E. was related to the edict in 41 C.E., as suggested above, then we have indirect evidence of Roman Christianity dating back at least to the beginning of Claudius’s reign (41–54). In any case, Suetonius’s statement implies that the “disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus” had lasted for quite some time. It is also clear that the cradle of Roman Christianity is to be found within the Jewish community—to which we now move.

2. The Jewish Community in Rome

When Philo came to Rome in 41 C.E., he found that “the great section of Rome on the other side of the Tiber³³ is occupied and inhabited by Jews, most of

²⁹ For a similar opinion, see A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Library of Pauline Studies; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 57–58.

³⁰ The Romans defined Jews not merely in ethnic terms but also included those who lived as Jews; see the following quotation from Dio Cassius: “The country has been named Judaea (Ἰουδαία) and the people themselves Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι). I do not know how this title came to be given them, but it applies also to all the rest of mankind, although of alien race, who affect their customs” (37.16.5–17.1; trans. E. Cary, LCL).

³¹ It is thus unlikely that the edict only affected Jews who believed in Jesus, as argued by Rudolf Brändle and Ekkehard W. Stegemann, “The Formation of the First ‘Christian Congregation’ in Rome in the Context of the Jewish Congregations,” in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 117–27, 126.

³² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.9, on the other hand, does not give more information than what he found in Acts 18.

³³ This was the Transtiberne section of the capital (the modern Trastevere).

whom were Roman citizens emancipated.³⁴ For having been brought as captives to Italy they were liberated by their owners . . ." He also tells that the Jews have their "houses of prayer and meet together in them, particularly on the sacred Sabbaths" (*Legat.* 155).³⁵ We do not know the number of Jews in Rome, but we have to count on tens of thousands.³⁶ This is evident from the number of graves in the Jewish catacombs, and from numbers given by, e.g., Josephus and implied by, e.g., Dio Cassius (see above).³⁷

From inscriptions we have secure knowledge of ten synagogues in ancient Rome.³⁸ It is not likely that all these congregations existed at the same time, but there are reasons to think that there were at least four, probably five, synagogues in Rome at the beginning of the first century C.E.³⁹ The inscriptions also give important information about the organization of the Roman Jewish community. One of the remarkable things is that there is no undisputable evidence for "a body exercising supervision over Roman Jewry as a whole or for an officer holding authority over the entire Jewish community."⁴⁰ At this point the Jews in Rome seem to differ, for example, from the Jewish community in Alexandria, which was headed by an *ethnarch* and later controlled by a central council. This is still a matter of debate but the conclusion above seems plausible.

This loose structure is, according to Wolfgang Wiefel, "an essential prerequisite for the early penetration of Christianity in Rome." He goes on:

The multitude of congregations, their democratic constitutions, and the absence of a central Jewish governing board made it easy for the missionaries of the new faith to talk in the synagogues and to win new supporters. . . . Since Rome had no supervising body which could forbid any form of Christian propaganda in the city, it was possible to missionize in various synagogues concurrently or to go successively from one to the other.⁴¹

It is possible that Wiefel makes too much of the independent status of the various Jewish congregations. Even if there was no central governing body among

³⁴ Pompey brought a large number of Jewish slaves to Rome after his capture of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E.

³⁵ Translation Colson, LCL.

³⁶ Cf. Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (updated ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 135–36.

³⁷ In connection with King Herod's death, Josephus records that over eight thousand Roman Jews escorted the legation that arrived in Rome (*Ant.* 17.61).

³⁸ Leon, *Jews*, 140–166, reckons with eleven synagogues. Pieter W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy* (300 BCE–700 CE) (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), 86–89, has corrected the number to ten.

³⁹ See Peter Richardson, "Augustan-Era Synagogues in Rome," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Erdmans, 1998), 17–29.

⁴⁰ Leon, *Jews*, 193–94.

⁴¹ Wolfgang Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," in *The Romans Debate* (ed. Karl P. Donfried; rev. and exp. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 85–101, 92.

the Jews, there may have been frequent contact between the synagogues and their leaders. This is likely since most of the synagogues probably were located within a limited area.⁴² Besides, Margaret Williams has drawn attention to texts in Josephus in which she says that “the Jewish community” or “all Jews” in Rome were gathered.⁴³ The gathering of Jews from the whole city indicates at least some (regular or irregular) communication between the different synagogues.

Nevertheless, the lack of a central governing body probably means that there was no unified attitude or action towards the proclamation of the Christian gospel in the synagogues. Besides, a unified attitude is not even guaranteed by a central governing body. Recent scholarship has emphasized the plurality of ancient Judaism, claiming that one should speak of “Judaisms” in plural. If we take this fact into consideration, we can imagine—within certain limits—considerable differences also between the various synagogues in the city of Rome.⁴⁴ From this perspective the great number of Jews and the many synagogues could thus have made it easier for Jesus-believers to gain hearing among their kinsmen.

If this historical reconstruction is correct, one can also go a step further—following the suggestion of C. K. Barrett: “It is not impossible that the first Christians in Rome, won to the faith by travellers unknown to us by name and perhaps of no official standing, formed a synagogue community within the general framework of the Jewish groups in the city. . . .”⁴⁵ Additional support for the origin of the Roman church within the Jewish community can be found in the fourth-century writer known as Ambrosiaster. He writes:

It is established that there were Jews living in Rome in the times of the apostles, and that those Jews who had believed passed on to the Romans the tradition that they ought to profess Christ but keep the law One ought not condemn the Romans, but to praise their faith; because without seeing any signs or miracles and without seeing any of the apostles, they nevertheless accepted faith in Christ, although according to a Jewish rite.⁴⁶

⁴²Cf. Leon, *Jews*, 136.

⁴³Margaret Williams, “The Structure of the Jewish Community in Rome,” in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (ed. M. Goodman; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 215–28, 223, refers to J.W. 2.80f/Ant. 17.300f and J.W. 2.105/Ant. 17.330. In the first case Josephus talks about τὸ Ἰουδαικὸν πλῆθος, an expression which could be translated “the Jewish community” (cf. 1 Macc 8:20; Acts 24:24) rather than “the Jewish crowd.”

⁴⁴Cf. the different attitudes among the Jews in the synagogues in Thessalonica and Beroea (according to Acts 17:1–12).

⁴⁵C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2d ed.; BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1991), 6.

⁴⁶Prologue to his commentary on Romans. Translation from John Knox, “The Epistle to the Romans,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (12 vols.; ed. G. A. Buttrick; New York: Abingdon, 1954), 9:362. Latin text in CSEL 81:5–6.

Even if this text is very late, it is interesting because it conveys an impression of how one early Christian imagined the origin of the Roman church: it was the result of Jewish believers in Jesus proclaiming their faith *and* Law observance. If this is historically correct, then we have evidence of Jewish believers in Rome who were more conservative than those preaching a gospel according to the Hellenists. In all likelihood they represented a Christianity associated with James and the Jerusalem church, loyal to the Jewish customs.⁴⁷

In summary, all available information seems to point in one direction: the Roman church had its origin within the Jewish community.⁴⁸ How the gospel actually came to Rome, we do not know. Many commentators have, however, drawn attention to Acts 2:10, a text referring to Jewish “visitors from Rome” in Jerusalem at the day of Pentecost. It has been speculated that some of them came to faith in Jesus and returned to Rome, where they proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah among their kinsmen.⁴⁹ To this Raymond Brown remarks: “It is sheer imagination to contend that these went back to Rome and planted Christianity immediately after Pentecost. Those described in the list of foreign Jews in Acts 2 were *resident* at Jerusalem . . .”⁵⁰ This dismissal is, however, too simple. Both textual and historical reasons speak against it.

On the level of the text itself, we have to ask what Luke actually says. When Luke introduces the people present at the Day of Pentecost, he clearly is speaking about Jews from all over the world who have settled in Jerusalem (cf. the use of κατοικέω in 2:5). He is not speaking about temporary pilgrims. In 2:10, however, he uses the participle ἐπιδημοῦντες, a word referring to people who temporarily live in a place as strangers.⁵¹ In other words, they are “visitors,” as the word is usually translated.⁵²

Where did they come from? Literally ἐπιδημοῦντες Ρωμαῖοι means “Roman visitors,” and the word Ρωμαῖος does not necessarily say anything about a person’s origin. Elsewhere in Acts it refers to Roman citizens, not indicating their place of

⁴⁷ Cf. Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 110.

⁴⁸ Cf. Brändle and Stegemann, “Formation,” 117–27.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 118; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 242–43.

⁵⁰ Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 104, n. 215.

⁵¹ BAGD 292. This sense is also found in the Western text of Acts 18:27, speaking of some Corinthians sojourning at Ephesus (ἐν δὲ τῇ Εφεσῷ επιδημουντες τινες Κορινθιοι) and who urge Apollos to “go with them to their homeland” (εις την πατριδα αυτων). Cf. also Josephus, *Life* 200; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* I.3,61 and Demosthenes 1357. The two last references I owe to Chrys C. Caragounis, “From Obscurity to Prominence: The Development of the Roman Church between Romans and *1 Clement*,” in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 245–79, 250, n. 26.

⁵² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*. (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992), 44.

origin (16:21, 37, 38; 22:25–29; 23:27).⁵³ In the context of the list of nations in Acts 2:9–11, however, ‘Ρωμαῖοι clearly refers to people from Rome. The function of the list is clearly to illustrate the Jewish Diaspora (cf. 2:5, which mentions people from “every nation under heaven”).⁵⁴ The geographical names are listed in four groups, corresponding to the four compass points, beginning in the east and moving counter clockwise.⁵⁵ In such a context there is no sense in referring to people’s status as Roman citizens.⁵⁶ Roman citizenship is not relevant in connection with the language-miracle taking place (cf. 2:11b). Jews—and in particular proselytes (cf. 2:11a)—from Rome are listed because they were expected to speak a foreign language, Latin, and could therefore witness to the miracle that took place.⁵⁷ The text thus clearly presupposes that there were visitors from Rome present in Jerusalem at the day of Pentecost.

This is quite in accordance with what we know about pilgrims coming to Jerusalem to the large festivals. Philo says that “countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others over sea, from east and west and north and south at every feast” (*Spec. 1.69*; LCL; cf. Josephus, *Ant. 14.337*; 17.254; J.W. 1.253; 2.42–43). The pilgrims, particularly those from the Diaspora, did not travel to the feast every year, but when they traveled to Jerusalem, they often stayed for a longer period. Safrai gives an additional reason for this practice: “The pilgrimages to the feasts served as occasions for the study of the Torah under the Sages, and this of course required a longer stay in the city.”⁵⁸ Therefore there was no clear distinction between the pilgrims and the Diaspora Jews who had settled in Jerusalem. To serve both groups, synagogues of various communities were established (cf. Acts 6:9). A Greek inscription illustrates the connection between pilgrims and synagogue: “Theodosius the son of Vettenus, . . . built this synagogue for the reading of the Torah and the study of the commandment, and the hostel and the rooms and the water installations, for needy travellers from foreign lands. . . .”⁵⁹

⁵³ Cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:123.

⁵⁴ For details concerning the background of the list, see James M. Scott, “Luke’s Geographical Horizon,” in *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf; vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 483–544, esp. 527–41.

⁵⁵ Richard Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 415–80, 419.

⁵⁶ Contra Judge and Thomas, “Origin,” 83.

⁵⁷ Olof Linton, “The List of Nations in Acts 2,” in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World* (ed. Mark E. Glaswell and Edward W. Fasholé-Luke; London: SPCK, 1974), 44–53, esp. 52.

⁵⁸ S. Safrai, “Relations between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, vol. 1 (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; CRINT I; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 184–215, here 193.

⁵⁹ CII II;1404; translation quoted from Safrai, “Relations,” 192. Tannaitic sources also mention synagogues of Jews from Alexandria and Tarsus (*t. Meg. 3.6; b. Meg. 26a.*).

There was a large Jewish population in Rome in the first century; many of them were freedmen (Philo, *Legat.* 155). Undoubtedly some of them returned to the land of their fathers and settled in Jerusalem. The existence of a “synagogue of the Freedmen” (Acts 6:9) is evidence of this fact.⁶⁰ Others traveled to Jerusalem as pilgrims. In both cases the Jews from Rome would certainly have been in close contact with their home city. Visitors would soon return to their homes, and immigrants would probably be in regular contact with their families and friends. When the frequent communication between the Jewish communities in Jerusalem and Rome⁶¹ is taken into consideration, it is not far-fetched to imagine that the Christian gospel came to Rome by incidental travelers, be they pilgrims, merchants, or artisans.⁶²

It is, of course, impossible to know if pilgrims who were in Jerusalem at the Day of Pentecost brought the gospel to Rome. The importance of the text in Acts 2 is that it reminds us of the possibility that Jewish pilgrims from Rome in fact could be the first missionaries in the capital. It may not have happened directly following the Jewish feast mentioned in Acts 2. But there were plenty of feasts and pilgrims in the following years.

We can thus imagine Jewish pilgrims from Rome coming to faith in Jesus during a stay in Jerusalem and bringing the new faith back home. There they continued to live within the Jewish community. This could certainly have taken place in the 30s. At a somewhat later stage other pilgrims or travelers probably brought back the gospel in a form close to that of the Hellenists. Among them we may find some of the people Paul greets in Rom 16, e.g., Andronicus and Junia. Whoever these travelers were, their proclamation in turn led to conflict within the Jewish community, resulting in Claudius’s edict in 49 C.E. At that time there probably had been people who believed in Jesus among the Jews in Rome for more than a decade. As in many other cases concerning the history of early Christianity, we do not know for certain what actually took place. A course of events along these lines, however, is far from unlikely.

When we underline that Christianity in Rome had its origin in the Jewish synagogues, we do not mean to imply that the first Jesus-believers in Rome were exclusively Jews. From Acts and other sources we know that Gentiles often frequented the synagogues—and these included not only proselytes, but also a

⁶⁰Cf. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 356.

⁶¹Cf. Bauckham, “James,” 424–25. Note also the many delegations sent from Judea to Rome (attested, e.g., by Josephus, *J.W.* 2.80–81, 111, 243–244; *Ant.* 17.342–344; 20.131–132). Further evidence for contact between the Diaspora and the Jewish homeland is collected in Margaret H. Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (London: Duckworth, 1998), 67–83.

⁶²In this connection it is also interesting to note the evidence found in Rom 16 concerning people who had moved to Rome from an earlier location in the east: Andronicus, Junia, Herodion, possibly also Rufus and his mother. See further on these names chapter 6 of this book.

considerable number of so-called “Godfearers.”⁶³ In addition, concerning Rome in particular we have direct reports of Jewish proselytism and of Romans who became proselytes (cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.2; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96–106; Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 57.18.5a; 67.14.1–2). For that reason we also have to reckon with a certain number of Gentile adherents in the synagogues of Rome. This also counts for Gentile Jesus-believers in Rome from a very early stage; however, these Gentile believers would have been to some extent Law observant.

The early history of the Roman church is thus closely connected with the Jewish community. It was in this highly charged milieu that the initially intra-Jewish conflict began; one which would lead eventually to the Claudian edict. The edict would in turn have consequences both for the relationship between Jews and Christians in Rome and for the internal relations among the Jews and Gentiles who believed in Jesus. The last point becomes clear from Paul’s letter to the Romans.

3. Paul’s Letter to the Romans

Sometime in the period 56–58 the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome—or more literally: “to all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints” (1:7). What does this letter tell us about the congregation(s) in Rome? Let us begin with the last chapter of the letter.

3.1. *The Evidence of Jewish Believers from Romans 16*

One of the most notable traits in Romans is the long section of greetings in chapter 16. Scholars have wondered how Paul could send greetings to so many people in a church that he himself had not founded. Some have found this so unlikely that they claim that chapter 16 originally did not belong to the letter but rather was a letter of recommendation to the church in Ephesus.⁶⁴ Today this theory has less support since there is no sign in the textual history that Romans did not originally include chapter 16. Besides, plausible reasons can be given for the many greetings precisely in this letter.⁶⁵

⁶³ On the debate concerning the Godfearers, see Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century* (WUNT 2.82; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 249–67 and the literature referred to there. On the whole question concerning Gentiles in the synagogues, see the useful observations by Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” *HTR* 82 (1989): 13–33.

⁶⁴ So, e.g., T. W. Manson, “St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans—and Others,” in *The Romans Debate* (rev. and exp. ed.; ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 3–15. Manson’s article was first published in 1938.

⁶⁵ See especially Harry Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (SD 42; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), 84–95; Wolf-Henning Ollrog, “Die Abfassungsverhältnisse von Röm 16,” in *Kirche: Festschrift für Günther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag* (ed. Dieter Lührmann and Georg Strecker; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1980), 221–44; Donfried, “A Short Note,” and Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 153–64.

As already mentioned, Paul writes Romans to a church not founded by him. He is very much aware of that. On the other hand, he had for a long time wished to come to Rome—probably due to its importance. When he writes Romans he has concrete plans about a visit, and would like to have the support of the believers in the capital for his future mission to Spain. Paul knows, however, that his theology and ministry have been disputed and he reckons with possible opposition also in Rome. For that reason he uses all possible strategies to win the Romans for his case. Since he is unknown to so many of them, he writes extensively about his calling and theology. And for the same reason he would like to demonstrate that he actually has many friends and allies among the Christians in Rome. This is probably the main reason for the long list of greetings.⁶⁶

In the list of greetings in Rom 16 we find clear evidence of the mixed nature of the congregation—or rather, congregations.⁶⁷ One thing that Rom 16 makes clear is that there are many congregations or house churches in Rome. In 16:3–5 Paul sends greetings to Prisca and Aquila and “the church in their house” (*καὶ τὴν κατ’ οἴκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν*). In 16:10–11 Paul greets “those who belong to Aristobulus” (*τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοβούλου*) and “those who belong to Narcissus” (*τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ναρκίσσου*). Some translations add the word “family” (e.g., NRSV) or “household” (e.g., NIV; NASB) of Aristobulus and Narcissus, but it may be more adequate to add the word “house” meaning house church. In verse 14, Paul greets Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, “and the brothers who are with them” (*καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀδελφούς*). Similarly in verse 15: “Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them” (*καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς πάντας ἄγιους*). In both these verses the named individuals and those who are “with” them almost certainly comprise a house church.

This means that Rom 16 witnesses to the existence of five house churches in Rome. In addition to those included in these groups, there are still fourteen other individuals mentioned in this chapter. Probably they belonged to more than one house church. Consequently we can reckon with at least seven house churches in Rome at the time Paul wrote his letter.⁶⁸

Of special interest in our connection is the fact that one of these churches is located in the home of Prisca and Aquila. This means that they were back in Rome when Paul wrote his letter. When Claudius died in 54 Jews were free to return to Rome, and among those who returned were the Jewish-Christian couple Prisca and Aquila. At their return they probably found it difficult to attend

⁶⁶On the broader question of the reason(s) for Romans, see Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate* (rev. and exp. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991) and the balanced view in Wedderburn, *Reasons*.

⁶⁷It is, however, not likely that the Christian community in Rome was split into two congregations, one consisting of Jewish Christians, the other of Gentile Christians; contra Watson, *Paul*, 94–102.

⁶⁸Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 359; cf. also Peter Lampe, “The Roman Christians of Romans 16,” in *The Romans Debate* (rev. and exp. ed.; ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 216–30, 229–30.

a Jewish synagogue, and they had to continue their worship within the framework of a house church. The reason for this is as follows.

In the years between Claudius's edict and his death we must reckon with a growing gap between the Jewish believers in Jesus (as well as former Godfearers) and the rest of the Jewish community. This is to be expected since the expulsion of the Jews was directly connected to the proclamation of the gospel in the synagogues. It is thus hard to imagine that the non-believing Jews in Rome would welcome people like Prisca and Aquila. Consequently, the Jewish believers became isolated from their earlier social framework, and had to find a substitute. This they found in the small groups of believers in Jesus. The majority of these were probably Gentiles, though many of them may earlier have been associated with the synagogues.⁶⁹

This is confirmed by Paul's letter to the Romans. On the one hand it is evident that Paul is writing to a predominantly Gentile Christian audience.⁷⁰ When he presents himself in the opening verses he writes that he has "received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles (ἐν πάσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) for the sake of his name." And he goes on: "And you are also among those (NIV)" (ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς, 1:5–6). Then Paul writes about his future plans and reveals that he had planned many times to visit Rome "in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles" (ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν, 1:13). Later on, in his large section on the Jewish people, he says: "Now I am speaking to you Gentiles . . ." (11:13). Throughout the whole of chapter 11 he distinguishes clearly between his addressees and the Jewish people (cf. verse 17–18, 24, 28–31). There can thus be no doubt: When writing to the Romans, Paul primarily has Gentile believers in mind.

On the other hand, he seems to take it as a matter of course that his addressees know the Holy Scriptures. "I am speaking to those who know the law," he says (7:1), and refers frequently to the *Tanak* as something well known (cf. 1:2; 4:3; 11:2; 15:4). He also takes for granted that they have knowledge about Adam, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Esau, Moses, Pharaoh, Elijah, the prophets, the covenants, the giving of the law, and so on (cf., e.g., 4:1, 19; 5:14; 9:4, 7–13, 17; 11:2). Such extensive knowledge about persons, events and institutions in the Jewish Holy Scriptures makes sense among Gentiles only if they were acquainted

⁶⁹The record of the Pauline mission in Acts shows that the Godfearers constituted an important element in most churches in the Diaspora. There is no reason that the situation should be radically different in Rome.

⁷⁰As elsewhere in this chapter, "Gentile" denotes ethnic background, not theological position. In all likelihood, many Gentile Christians in Rome held a "Jewish Christian" theological position. On this question, see Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 1–9 and 105–22; Raymond E. Brown, "Further Reflections on the Origin of the Church of Rome," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1990), 98–115.

with the Jewish traditions. It is most likely that they had such knowledge through earlier contact with the synagogue.⁷¹

Even if the majority of the Christians in Rome in the 50s were Gentile believers, there was still a Jewish element present. We have already seen that the Jewish couple Prisca and Aquila were among the believers in Rome, and they were not the only Jews.⁷² In Rom 16 Paul labels three more individuals as συγγενής (16:7, 11). This word is variously translated “kinsman” (KJV, RSV) or “relative” (NIV). In light of the use of the word in 9:3 (“my kinsmen according to the flesh”—κατὰ σάρκα) it is evident that Paul is talking about Jews like himself.⁷³ The persons so labeled are Andronicus, Junia (v. 7) and Herodion (v. 11). Together with Prisca and Aquila we then have the names of five Jewish believers living in Rome when Paul wrote Romans. Of the twenty-six persons greeted in Rom 16, five are Jews; i.e., 19 percent. It is, however, possible, even probable, that some more of the individuals listed in Rom 16 were of Jewish origin, namely Rufus and his mother⁷⁴ (16:13) and Mary (16:6).⁷⁵ If this is correct, the portion of Jewish believers in Rom 16 would be close to 30 percent. If we suppose, for the sake of the argument, that Paul knew a representative number of believers in Rome, we can estimate the percentage of Jewish believers in the Roman churches to something between 20 and 30 percent.⁷⁶ This is, of course, hard to prove, but the estimate is not unlikely.

The many greetings in chapter 16 clearly show that Paul had many friends and acquaintances in the Roman churches. For that reason it is also plausible that Paul was well informed about the situation within the Christian community there. It is thus not surprising that he could write about their internal problems. This seems to be the case in chapters 14–15, a section of the letter that gives further glimpses into the composition of the churches in Rome.

3.2. The Evidence of Jewish Believers from Romans 14–15

In Rom 14 Paul begins a section dealing with “weak” and “strong” in the Christian community. We shall quote the parts that seem to contain the key terms for an identification of the people in question:

⁷¹Cf. Brändle and Stegemann, “Formation,” 124.

⁷²Acts 18:2 states explicitly that Aquila was a Jew. Nothing is said about Prisc(ill)a, though we may suppose that she too was Jewish.

⁷³Contra Steve Mason, “‘For I am not Ashamed of the Gospel’ (Rom 1.16): The Gospel and the First Readers of Romans,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* for Richard N. Longenecker (ed. L. A. Jarvis and P. Richardson; JSNTSup 108; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 254–87, 259–60.

⁷⁴If the unnamed mother of Rufus is included in the calculation, we also have to include the unnamed, Gentile, sister of Nereus (16:15). Both are greeted by Paul.

⁷⁵See further discussion in my chapter on “Named Jewish Believers Connected with the Pauline Mission” in this volume (ch. 6).

⁷⁶It is thus not pertinent to say that the Roman church was “almost exclusively Gentile” (so Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 66).

¹As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. ²One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. . . .

⁵One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. . . .

¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself (οὐδὲν κανὸν δι' ἑαυτοῦ); but it is unclean for any one who thinks it unclean. . . .

²⁰Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean (πάντα μὲν καθαρά), but it is wrong for any one to make others fall by what he eats; ²¹it is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble (RSV).

It is clear that the people called “weak” were concerned about food and the observance of certain days. They abstained from meat and wine and ate only vegetables. The “strong ones” (οἱ δυνατοί), a term used only in 15:1, had no scruples concerning these things. Paul included himself among the strong ones. But who were the weak?

This has been a matter of much dispute. The majority of scholars think that the weak are Jewish believers, a minority that they are Gentile Christians. Others think that individuals from both groups are involved. This is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of all questions related to the text, but we have to examine the possibility that the weak are indeed Jewish believers. The chief arguments in favor of this conclusion include the following.⁷⁷

(a) Romans as a whole is oriented to the issue of Jews and Gentiles. It occurs frequently in chapters 1–11 and is explicit also in 15:7–13. Thus it would be surprising if the discussion in 14:1–15:6 were unrelated to that issue.

(b) The key terms of the discussion best fit a Jewish context. While abstinence from meat and wine could fit various ascetic groups, the combination with festivals best suits a Jewish concern. Besides, the focus on purity (cf. the words “unclean” and “clean” in 14:14, 20) undoubtedly points in the same direction. In fact the word “unclean” (*κοινός*) is a specific Jewish word; it is found nowhere outside a Jewish context in the meaning “profane.”⁷⁸

(c) Dietary laws were among the most visible identity markers among Jews in the Diaspora. Since the time of the Maccabees the observance of these laws had in fact become a test of Jewishness: “But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food (μὴ φαγεῖν κοινά). They chose to

⁷⁷The following list of arguments is partly based on James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (WBC 38; 2 vols.; Dallas: Word, 1988), 2:800–801.

⁷⁸Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1–15.13 in Context* (SNTSMS 103; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 98.

die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die” (1 Macc 1:62–63). In a pagan context the piety of a Jew thus became visible by the refusal to eat the food of the Gentiles (cf. Dan 1:3–16; 10:3; Tob 1:10–12; Jdt 12:2, 19; *Jos. Asen.* 7.1; 8.5). Many Gentile authors also reflect the centrality of the food laws for Diaspora Jews: observance of these laws is repeatedly mentioned in references to Jews and Jewish customs (Plutarch, *Quest. Conviv.* 4.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4.2; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.98).⁷⁹ The same holds true for the observance of the Sabbath.⁸⁰

(d) Admittedly, the Torah does not contain a general prohibition against meat; it forbids only swine. In addition, however, there are laws requiring that the blood be properly drained from the animal (Lev 3:17; 7:26–27; 17:10–14; cf. Acts 15:20, 29). Besides, in the Diaspora environment there certainly was a fear of eating food tainted by idolatry. Consequently a Jew could not buy his meat everywhere and would be reluctant to eat food served him by Gentiles. An example of such a scrupulous attitude is recorded by Josephus: Some Jewish priests imprisoned in Rome chose to eat only figs and nuts (*Vita* 14). In other words: To be sure that they did not eat something unclean, some preferred to eat only vegetables.⁸¹

An additional reason for abstaining from meat may be found in the historical situation in Rome. After the controversy among the Jews (that caused Claudius’s edict), Jewish butchers in Rome may have refused to sell meat to Jewish Christians.⁸² For that reason Jewish believers might have had no other choice than to abstain totally from meat.

The abstinence from wine could easily be seen as a sign of asceticism, and sometimes this seems to be the case.⁸³ In other cases, however, it was simply another example of the scrupulous attitude towards everything served in a Gentile environment (cf. Dan 1:8; 10:3; Tob 1:10–12; Jdt 12:1, 19; *Jos. Asen.* 7.1). One could, for instance, not be sure that the wine had not been used in pagan libations.⁸⁴

Based on the arguments above, it seems fairly certain that the position of the “weak” was strongly influenced by Jewish piety and that many of the weak were Jewish believers.⁸⁵ This conclusion does not exclude the possibility of other

⁷⁹ The texts are found and discussed in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1: no. 258; 2: no. 281 and 301.

⁸⁰ For details, see Dunn, *Romans*, 2:805–6.

⁸¹ Cf. also 2 Macc 5:27: Judas Maccabeus ate “nothing but wild plants to avoid contracting defilement.”

⁸² Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT 6; 3 vols.; Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1978–1982), 3:95; Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 73, n. 21.

⁸³ Cf. what is said about the Therapeutaes (Philo, *Contempl.* 37), and James, the Lord’s brother (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.5); cf. also *T. Reu.* 1.10; *T. Jud.* 15.4.

⁸⁴ So Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 73–74.

⁸⁵ Mark D. Nanos (*The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], esp. 103–39) argues, unconvincingly in my view, that the ‘weak’ are Jews not believing in Christ. For a refutation of Nanos’s argumentation, see Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Why the ‘Weak’ at Rome Cannot be Non-Christian Jews,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 64–82; cf. also Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 69–74.

influences and the possibility that the weak also comprised Gentile believers.⁸⁶ Both possibilities are in fact most likely.⁸⁷ In our connection, however, the point we wish to emphasize is the evidence for Jewish believers in the Roman churches in the late 50s.⁸⁸

This conclusion is in the main in accordance with the views of the earliest commentators of Romans. Origen held that the weak were “those who believed from the circumcision, who still observed a differentiation among foods according to the tradition of the law.”⁸⁹ One of the later Greek Fathers, John Damascene, gives the following commentary, including an explanation for the abstinence from meat:

Many from among the Jews had believed. But they still held in conscience the law after faith; they kept the observance of foods, not yet having complete confidence to stand away from the law, for since it would not be easy to detect those who abstained only from pork, they therefore abstained from all meats, and ate vegetables, that it would rather appear to be a fast, though this was not the observance of the law.⁹⁰

Lastly a comment from Ambrosiaster:

As I mentioned in my prologue to the epistle, those who led the Romans to faith had mixed it up with the law because they were Jews, which is why some of them thought that they should not eat meat. But others, who followed Christ apart from the law, thought otherwise, that it was permissible to eat meat, and for this reason there were disputes among them.⁹¹

4. The Roman Churches until Nero’s Persecution

4.1. Paul’s Coming to Rome

During Nero’s reign the apostle Paul came to Rome as a prisoner. This is hardly disputed, though our knowledge of his stay in Rome is very limited. According to Acts he was allowed to stay by himself with a soldier guarding him (28:16). The Western text is more explicit, adding that Paul stayed “outside the barracks.” This means that he was under some kind of house arrest, known as *custodia militaris*.⁹² He lived in his own dwelling and was able to receive regular visi-

⁸⁶ For a somewhat similar conclusion, see Reasoner, *Strong and Weak*, 138, 214.

⁸⁷ Cf. Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 69, for the possibility of a significant number of Law-observant Gentiles in the Christian community in Rome.

⁸⁸ According to Mason (“For I am not Ashamed,” *passim*), Christianity in Rome was still mainly Jewish at the time Paul wrote his letter.

⁸⁹ Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 9.35. English translation from Reasoner, *Strong and Weak*, 6.

⁹⁰ PG 95.549. English translation from Reasoner, *Strong and Weak*, 7.

⁹¹ CSEL 81:433; English translation in Gerald Bray, ed., *Romans* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 4; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998), 337.

⁹² For details concerning this type of custody, see Harry W. Tajra, *The Martyrdom of St. Paul* (WUNT 2.67; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 43–44.

tors and conduct his own business. As Acts 28:30–31 indicates, Paul was free to preach the gospel. Nonetheless, he was a prisoner, constantly guarded by one or more soldiers.⁹³ This lasted for two years.

What did this mean for the development of the church in Rome and its relation to the Jews? Luke's account does not give us much help. However, two things become clear. First, immediately after his arrival in Italy, Paul comes in contact with the Christian community. This is an indication that there were believers in Rome (and Puteoli) who had knowledge about the apostle and were eager to meet with him (Acts 28:14–15). That this contact continued must be taken for granted even if Luke has no interest in telling us about it. Second, Paul makes contact with the Jewish leaders in Rome (28:17). This is in accordance with Luke's record elsewhere: Paul always went to the Jews first. In Rome his chains made it impossible to go to the synagogues, but they did not hinder him in inviting the Jews to his dwelling. I see no compelling reason to doubt a historical kernel behind this text, though the presentation is dependent on Luke's literary aim.⁹⁴ It is of course impossible to know the number of Jewish leaders involved and how representative they were; did they, for instance, only come from some of the synagogues in Rome? We do not know. But we may assume that the outcome of Paul's preaching to the Jews had limited impact on the Jewish community (cf. Acts 28:24–29). This does not mean, however, that the ending of Acts (according to Luke and/or Paul) implies the end of the proclamation of the gospel to the Jews. The turning to the Gentiles announced in Acts 28:28 is no more final than similar announcements earlier in Acts (cf. 13:45).⁹⁵ Luke, however, does not give us further information. He only says that Paul in the next two years was welcoming “all who came to him” (28:30), and there is no reason to doubt that this meant both “Jews and Greeks,” as the Western text adds.⁹⁶

It is, however, reasonable to think that the number of Jewish visitors was rather small. Even if some Jews were willing to listen to their kinsman Paul shortly after his arrival in Rome, they nevertheless had a distant relationship to the Christian “sect” (cf. Acts 28:22). And there are no other indications of close connections and an ongoing debate between Christians and Jews in Rome at that

⁹³ For further details, see Brian Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody* (vol. 3 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 177–82.

⁹⁴ For a recent discussion of some of the problems connected with the text, see Conrad Gempf, “Luke's Story of Paul's Reception in Rome,” in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (ed. Peter Oakes; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 42–66.

⁹⁵ For a similar position, see Robert L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (SBLMS 33; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1987), esp. 74–77; Robert C. Tannehill, “Rejection by the Jews and Turning to Gentiles: The Pattern of Paul's Mission in Acts,” in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. Joseph B. Tyson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 83–101; David P. Moessner, “Paul in Acts: Preacher of Eschatological Repentance to Israel,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 96–104.

⁹⁶ Note also Acts 28:24, which tells that some of the Jews were convinced by what Paul said.

time. This was probably the result of a process that had been going on for a while. Let us recapitulate.

4.2. Separation between Jews and Christians

The relations between the Jewish community and the believers in Jesus had been obviously strained in connection with the events that lead to the edict of Claudius. In the period following this event it is likely that the Jews were eager to distinguish themselves from the Christians, possibly using their contacts within the Roman administration.⁹⁷ As James Walters comments, “The Jews had nothing to lose and everything to gain by making their autonomy clear.”⁹⁸ The expulsion in 49 C.E. was—at least partly—a result of the Romans’ failure to distinguish between Jews and Christians, and the Jews scarcely wished a repetition of such circumstances.

In this situation it is hard to imagine that Jewish believers were still welcomed in the synagogues. The existence of several house-churches independent of the synagogues (cf. Rom 16) points in the same direction. This means that the Christian community developed as an entity distinct from the Jews, and it became more and more Gentile over time. During the years when Claudius’s edict was in force (until the emperor’s death in 54), Gentile Christians would certainly have attracted other Gentiles who had not previously been involved with Judaism.⁹⁹ As a consequence, the believers in Jesus gradually developed a new identity and self-definition with fewer ties to their Jewish roots (a situation Paul takes into account in Romans 11:13–36). Theologically speaking, this new identity may have been close to Paul’s idea of “the church of God” as something that could be distinguished both from Jews and Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor 10:32). From a historical point of view such a self-definition probably was due more to social and political factors than to theological reflection.

By the time of Nero’s persecution the separation between the Jewish and the Christian community was evident also for the Roman authorities. Traditionally this persecution is connected with the fire of Rome in the year 64, though this is not attested by any classical author other than Tacitus.¹⁰⁰ According to his report, there was rumor that the emperor himself had ordered the fire of Rome. In order to stop such gossip, Nero started a persecution of the Christians:

Therefore to put an end to the rumor, Nero supplied, as a matter of diversion, people to be prosecuted and visited them with most extraordinary punishments, people whom the mob loathed for their abominations and called Christians. Christ, the ori-

⁹⁷ Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (SNTSMS 10; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 42.

⁹⁸ Walters, *Ethnic Issues*, 62.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 63–64.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the problems with Tacitus, see Paul Keresztes, “The Imperial Roman Government and the Christian Church: I. From Nero to the Severi,” *ANRWII.23.1* (1979): 247–315, esp. 249–57.

gin of the name, had been punished with the death penalty by the procurator Pontius Pilate under the rule of Tiberius, and the deadly superstition, checked for the moment, broke forth again not only in Judaea, the birth place of that evil, but even throughout the city of Rome. . . . (*Ann.* 15.44.2–3).¹⁰¹

In our connection it is important to note that there is no mention of Jews, even if the origin of the Christians is connected to Judea. Besides, Peter Lampe has drawn attention to a detail mentioned by Tacitus concerning the punishment of the Christians: They were “nailed to crosses” (*crucibus affixi; Ann.* 15.44.4). The implication is that the Christians did not possess Roman citizenship.¹⁰² On the other hand, we know that many Jews in Rome were Roman citizens. A high percentage of them were emancipated slaves or descendants of freedmen, and up to the time of Augustus manumission was as a rule connected with the awarding of Roman citizenship.¹⁰³ These facts indicate that by the time of Nero’s persecution the great majority of Christians in Rome were Gentiles from lower social classes. In more general terms the text of Tacitus presupposes that the Christians at this stage were a group that could be singled out.

In this connection it is also interesting to note how Suetonius characterizes the Christians when he mentions them for the first time (in connection with Nero’s reign): They are people following a “new and dangerous superstition” (*superstitionis novae et maleficae; Nero* 16). Judaism could also be labeled superstition, but it was far from new. Again we have an indication that in the eyes of the Romans the Christian community clearly was distinguishable from the Jewish community. Unfortunately we do not know what identifying factors were crucial in the minds of the Roman public, but one may guess that outsiders soon recognized that the Christians could not easily be characterized by the traditional Jewish identity markers. Admittedly there were some among them who venerated the Sabbath and were cautious regarding food (cf. Rom 14–15), but these features were not applicable to the Christian community as a whole. Besides, circumcision was no longer a central issue.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, in the 60s the links between the Jewish and the Christian community in Rome seem to have become almost invisible.

4.3. The Development of the Christian Community

What happened within the Christian community during Paul’s stay in the city? A possible source of information for this question can be found in the captivity letters, first and foremost the letter to the Philippians, assuming it is written from Rome. This is, of course, a matter of dispute, but there are good reasons for

¹⁰¹ Translation from Keresztes, “Imperial,” *ANRW* II.23.1:249.

¹⁰² Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 82.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰⁴ There is no evidence that circumcision was debated within the Christian community in Rome, either at the time Paul wrote his letter or later. See Wedderburn, *Reasons*, 60.

holding the traditional position that it is written during Paul's custody in Rome, ca. 60–62.¹⁰⁵ In this letter Paul gives some interesting glimpses into the situation in Rome. In chapter 1:12–18 he writes:

I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear. Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry ($\delta\imath\alpha\ \phi\theta\omega\nu\ kai\ \xi\rho\nu$), but others from goodwill. These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.

When Paul in verse 14 says that “most of the brothers and sisters ($\tau\omega\nu\ \pi\lambda\epsilon\iota\omega\nu\tau\omega\nu\ \acute{a}\delta\epsilon\lambda\phi\omega\nu$), having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment,” the implication seems to be: but not all. In other words, Paul’s imprisonment created different reactions. We may guess that these reactions in fact were related to the overall attitude to Paul and his theology. From Paul’s earlier letter to the Romans we know that he was aware of objections to his theological position. It is doubtful that all of these were eliminated due to his letter, and some of them may indeed have been strengthened during his stay in Rome. When Paul speaks of people who “proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry” ($\delta\imath\alpha\ \phi\theta\omega\nu\ kai\ \xi\rho\nu$), he seems to speak about members of the Christian community in Rome. These Christians (of Jewish or Gentile background) probably constituted some kind of opposition to Paul.

During his stay in Rome Paul continued to preach righteousness not based on the law, but on faith in Christ (cf. Phil 3:9). What did this “apart from the Law” actually mean? Acts reports the rumor that Paul taught “all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs” (21:21 RSV). Similar misunderstandings could easily arise anew. It is interesting to note how a later document reports Paul’s teaching directed to Jews in Rome: “Christ, on whom your fathers laid their hands, abrogated their Sabbath and their fasting and festivals and circumcision and abolished the teaching of men and other traditions” (*Acts of Peter* 1). This is hardly a fair summary of Paul’s teaching, but some people may have thought it to be so. If this was the case, it is no wonder that Paul met opposition, not only from those who claimed that Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be saved (cf. Acts

¹⁰⁵ So, e.g., some of the most recent commentaries: Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 19–26; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 34–37; Markus Bockmuehl, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1997), 25–32. So also Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (trans. E. Boring; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2005), 366–69.

15:2), but also from Jewish believers who stressed the importance of the traditions of the fathers, for themselves and their children.

If this reconstruction of the situation is correct, one can imagine tensions within the Christian community in Rome. Not all believers in Rome may have been happy about Paul. Oscar Cullmann goes even further.¹⁰⁶ He claims that the conservative Jewish believers were instrumental in the martyrdom of Paul (and Peter). The basis for this claim is what *1 Clement* says concerning the apostles' death: "Because of jealousy and envy the greatest and most upright pillars were persecuted, and they struggled in the contest even to death" (5.2).¹⁰⁷ Then Clement goes on speaking about the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. His sentiments may be compared with Tacitus's saying about the persecution of the Christians under Nero: "Therefore, first, those who confessed their faith and, then on the information supplied by them, a vast number were prosecuted and convicted . . ." (*Ann.* 15.44).¹⁰⁸ It is quite possible that Christians (perhaps under torture) informed on other believers (cf. Matt 24:10; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96). Whether it happened due to envy, we do not know. Besides, it is not quite clear that *1 Clem.* 5 refers to envy of fellow-Christians.¹⁰⁹ It could refer to jealousy among non-believing Jews,¹¹⁰ or among pagan informers against their Christian neighbors. It is far from obvious that Clement had party division in the Roman church in mind. This does not, however, mean that there were no tensions within the Christian community in Rome in the 60s.

In connection with the persecution under Nero not only Paul, but also Peter, is part of the story. Let us now turn our attention to what can be known about Peter's stay in Rome.

4.4. Peter in Rome

According to tradition the apostle Peter played an important role in the early history of the Roman church.¹¹¹ He is even considered to be the first bishop of Rome.¹¹² According to the *Liber Pontificalis* (which dates back to the early sixth century), Peter "occupied the seat of bishop for 25 years, 1 month and 8 days." The text, however, is confused about the time Peter arrived; it first says that he arrived under Nero, then that he arrived under Tiberius and was bishop until the

¹⁰⁶ Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (London: SCM, 1953), 89–109; cf. also Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 124–25.

¹⁰⁷ Translation Bart D. Ehrman, LCL.

¹⁰⁸ Translation from Keresztes, "Imperial," ANRW II.23.1:250.

¹⁰⁹ See the balanced discussion in Richard Bauckham, "The Martyrdom of Peter in Early Christian Literature," ANRW II.26.1 (1992): 539–95, 561–62.

¹¹⁰ So Paul Keresztes, "Nero, the Christians and the Jews in Tacitus and Clement of Rome," *Latomus* 43 (1984): 404–13.

¹¹¹ Cf. the *Acts of Peter*, referred to at the very beginning of this chapter.

¹¹² For the origin of this tradition in the late second or early third century, see Daniel Wm. O'Connor, *Peter in Rome: The Literary, Liturgical, and Archeological Evidence* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1969), esp. 27–35.

time of Nero. It seems most likely that his stay in Rome in fact was limited to the reign of Nero. There is no reliable evidence for a long-term ministry in Rome. The fact that there is no reference to Peter's presence in Rome in Paul's letter to the Romans or in the captivity letters makes the tradition of an early and long stay very doubtful. Paul's wish to go to Rome is also unthinkable if Peter in fact was the founder of the church there (cf. his statement in Rom 15:20: "... I would not build on another man's foundation").¹¹³ The legendary *Acts of Peter* may actually be closest to the truth when it presupposes a seemingly short ministry before Peter was executed by Nero. But we cannot be sure. As O'Connor concludes after a thorough analysis of the material concerning Peter in Rome: "Nothing can be determined, however, about when he came to Rome, how long he stayed, or what function of leadership, if any, he exercised within the Roman Church."¹¹⁴

Even if the traditions about Peter's ministry and martyrdom in Rome are heavily influenced by unreliable material, there is little reason to doubt the historical kernel of the traditions.¹¹⁵ The earliest evidence for Peter's Roman stay is probably to be found in 1 Peter. The authenticity and dating of the letter is disputed (see below), but in any case the greeting from the church in "Babylon" (1 Pet 5:13) clearly presupposes that Peter once was in Rome (cf. Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15.2; Ign. *Rom.* 4:3). That Peter suffered martyrdom is also an old tradition, (cf. John 21:18, 2 Pet 1:12, 1 Clem. 5:4), but its connection with Rome is first assuredly attested in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, dating from ca. 135 (*Apoc. Pet.* 14.4–6; cf. *Mart. Isa.* 4:3). There is no early and firm tradition connecting Peter's martyrdom with Nero's persecution; this is first stated explicitly by Tertullian, who also links his martyrdom with the martyrdom of Paul (*Scorp. 15, Apol. 5*; cf. also *Praescr. 36*).¹¹⁶

By about the year 200 the martyrdoms of both Peter and Paul seem to have been established traditions in Rome. A certain Gaius, quoted by Eusebius, says as follows: "But I can point out the trophies of the Apostles, for if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way you will find the trophies of those who founded this Church" (*Hist. eccl.* 2.25.7).¹¹⁷ The memory of the martyrdom of the two apostles was made visible, and they were honored as founders of the church in Rome.

¹¹³ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 5. ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), xxvi.

¹¹⁴ O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 207. Carsten P. Thiede (*Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1986], 154–58, 171) claims that Peter came to Rome in 42 C.E., returned to Jerusalem before 48 and went back to Rome ca. 57. His argumentation on this point—and many others—is burdened, however, with many problems and goes far beyond solid evidence. For a critique, see Raymond Brown's review in *Bib* 68 (1987): 583–84.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Cullmann, *Peter*, passim, and Pheme Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

¹¹⁶ See discussion in Bauckham, "The Martyrdom of Peter," ANRW II.26.1:539–95, and the literature referred to there.

¹¹⁷ Translation K. Lake, LCL. For a detailed discussion of this text, see O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 95–101.

As we already have seen, however, Ambrosiaster (ca. 375) was aware of another version concerning the foundation of the Roman church: “One ought not condemn the Romans, but to praise their faith; because without seeing any signs or miracles and *without seeing any of the apostles*, they nevertheless accepted faith in Christ, although according to a Jewish rite.” He was certainly correct, especially with regard to the Jewish influence on the first Christians in Rome.

5. Traces of Jewish Influence in the Roman Church after Paul and Peter

As we have seen, it is evident that Jewish believers in Jesus played an important role in the early history of the Roman church. Through Paul’s letter to the Romans we get an idea of the Jewish influence on the Christian community and we even get the names of some Jewish believers. The ministry of both Paul and Peter in the city, however limited, is also a testimony of a Jewish presence in the early Roman church. After their death, however, it is difficult to name specific Jewish believers.

We have already seen evidence for the separation between the Jewish and Christian communities in Rome, and there was probably little, if anything, that encouraged further contact. While the non-Christian Jews under the Julio-Claudian emperors had reasons to distance themselves from Christians, the situation changed during the Flavian period (69–96). The Jewish-Roman war and the special Jewish tax instituted by Vespasian constituted sufficient reasons for Christians to wish not to be connected with the Jewish community.¹¹⁸ This means that political events during the later half of the first century C.E. in various ways discouraged interactions between Jews and Christians—from both sides. In such a climate it is not likely that there was close contact between the members of the synagogues and the house churches in the imperial capital.

Despite this fact, it seems evident that the Jewish roots of the Christian community in Rome had impact also on later generations. We will briefly try to demonstrate this in connection with some early Christian writings that can be shown to have a Roman provenance or destination.

5.1. First Peter

1 Peter presents itself as a letter written by the apostle Peter (1:1), most likely from Rome (cf. the greeting from Babylon in 5:13).¹¹⁹ In accordance with this,

¹¹⁸ James C. Walters, “Romans, Jews, and Christians: The Impact of the Romans on Jewish/Christian Relations in First-Century Rome,” in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 175–95, esp. 183–89.

¹¹⁹ See John H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (AB 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 131–34.

along with the tradition of Peter's martyrdom in 64/65 C.E., 1 Peter has traditionally been seen as an authentic letter from the apostle, written ca. 60–64. Some of the problems connected with this view (e.g., the elegant Greek of the letter, the citations from the Greek Bible, and the affinity to the Pauline letters) have often been explained by Peter's use of an amanuensis, namely Silvanus (cf. 5:12).¹²⁰ In modern scholarship the traditional view has become a minority position¹²¹; the majority thinks it is written some decades later, probably by a Petrine group in Rome.¹²² The suggested date varies from ca. 65 to 100.¹²³ For our purposes it is sufficient to establish that 1 Peter is a letter written from Rome in the second generation of Christians in the city, and that it reflects Petrine tradition.

The letter is addressed to “the exiles of the Dispersion (διασπορά) in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1 RSV). The specific Jewish terminology in the greeting has led commentators to believe that the letter was written to Jewish believers. So, e.g., Eusebius who states concerning Peter's letter: “. . . he writes to those of the Hebrews in the Dispersion” (τοῖς ἐξ Ἐβραιῶν οὖσιν ἐν διασπορᾷ) (*Hist. eccl.* 3.4.2). This is a possible interpretation of 1:1, but it does not fit the rest of the letter. Other statements make it apparent that the author is addressing Gentile believers.¹²⁴

The way the readers are addressed reveals one of the most distinctive aspects of this early Christian writing: Gentile believers are identified with Israel. Terminology and imagery reserved for Israel in the Old Testament are used of the Gentile readers. They are “aliens and exiles” (2:11; cf. 1:1, 17), as were the Jews of the Diaspora. In 2:9–10 they are called the “chosen race” (cf. Deut 7:6), the “royal priesthood” (cf. Exod 19:6), and God's own people (cf. Exod 19:5; Hos 2:23). Thus it seems correct to say that, “For the first time in the NT, we can speak accurately of

¹²⁰ So, e.g., Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 6, 198. It is, however, almost sure that the phrase “by/through Silvanus” in 5:12 refers to the courier of the letter rather than the secretary. See Elliott, *1 Peter*, 123–24, 871–74.

¹²¹ Advocated, e.g., by Edward G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1947), 7–63 and J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988), lxii–lxvii (as a possibility). Other scholars supporting this position are listed in Elliott, *1 Peter*, 118, n. 35.

¹²² See the lengthy discussion of authorship and date in Elliott, *1 Peter*, 118–38; cf. also Marion L. Soards, “1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude as Evidence for a Petrine School,” *ANRW* II.25.5 (1988): 3827–49.

¹²³ See Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. H. C. Kee; rev. ed.; London: SCM, 1975), 425 (90–95 C.E.); Ernest Best, *1 Peter* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1971), 64 (80–100 C.E.); Norbert Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (EKKNT 21; Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1979), 41 (70–100 C.E.); Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 10 (64–68 C.E.); Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter* (ed. F. Hahn; trans. John E. Alsup; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 47 (65–80 C.E.); Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 30 (80–100 C.E.); Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 718–22 (70–90 C.E.); Elliott, *1 Peter*, 138 (73–92 C.E.).

¹²⁴ On this there is general consensus; see, e.g., Michaels, *1 Peter*, xlvi.

the consciousness of a ‘new Israel’”¹²⁵ This does not, however, mean that 1 Peter is advocating a “replacement theology.” It is not said that the believing Gentiles have *taken the place* of the Jews. What is said is that the believing Gentiles are *equal with* the Israel of the Old Testament. In Christ they have now become the people of God.

Strangely enough, there is no mention of Jews, Judaism, or Israel in the whole letter. And there is nothing that indicates that unbelieving Jews represented any challenge to the author and his milieu. Thus there is nothing that calls for polemic. This is clearly seen from the author’s use of Ps 118:22. This text, which speaks about the cornerstone that the builders rejected, is referred to in other early Christian writings precisely in order to blame the Jews for having rejected Christ (cf. Matt 21:42–45; Mark 12:10–12; Luke 20:17–19; Rom 9:32–33). But the author of 1 Peter avoids doing so. All kinds of people, not just the Jews in particular, are among those who rejected the cornerstone (2:4–8).¹²⁶

On the other hand there is nothing in the letter that indicates a positive concern for the Jews either. Unlike Paul in Rom 9–11, the author does not struggle with the future of the Jewish people. The Jews are simply not within the horizon of 1 Peter. The reason may be very simple: the letter is written to Gentiles. But it probably also indicate that the author and his church have moved away from close contact with the Jewish community.¹²⁷ First Peter thus is evidence of a new situation within the in Roman church. The Christian community does not any longer define itself in relation to the Jewish community. Its self-confidence has grown. It now dares to apply the Old Testament directly to believers in Jesus, irrespective of their ethnic background. In the case of 1 Peter the addressees are Gentiles who received the good news in form of a theology of the people of God.

If 1 Peter in fact is reflecting the theology of the apostle Peter, it seems that Peter had become an eager missionary to the Gentiles. There are indications of such a missionary ministry that in no way was limited to the Jews—Galatians 2:7 notwithstanding. His theology was certainly Jewish, but it was extended to embrace the Gentiles as well.

5.2. Hebrews

The so-called letter “to the Hebrews”¹²⁸ is a homily written by an unknown author¹²⁹ sometime between 60 and 90. This is agreed upon by a great number of

¹²⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (rev. ed.; London: SCM, 1999), 489.

¹²⁶ This is rightly stressed by Michaels, *1 Peter*, xl ix.

¹²⁷ Richardson, *Israel*, 171.

¹²⁸ The superscription is secondary and gives no reliable information concerning the addressees. It is probably the result of guesswork based on the content of the letter, which is heavily influenced by the Old Testament. See Hans-Friedrich Weiß, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 13; 15th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 67–69.

¹²⁹ Commentators through the centuries have suggested many possible candidates for the authorship of Hebrews, e.g., Barnabas or Apollos. For an overview, see Weiß,

scholars, but a more precise dating is debated.¹³⁰ So is the question about the writing's destination, though a growing number of scholars seem to think that Rome is the most likely candidate.¹³¹ The only concrete indication of destination is found in Heb 13:23–24: “Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you” (NASB). The last words seem to mean that some Italians who were living outside of Italy were sending greetings back home.¹³² The reference to Timothy makes sense since he must have been well known in Rome. He is the first who sends his greeting to the Romans in Paul’s letter (Rom 16:21), and he obviously was together with Paul during his imprisonment in the capital (cf. Phlm 1; Phil 1:1; 2:19; Col 1:1). Besides, the word used about the leaders in the church, ἡγούμενοι (cf. 13:7, 17) and its equivalent προηγούμενοι, is also found in other writings connected with Rome (*1 Clem.* 1:3; 21:6; *Herm. Vis.* 2.2.6; 3.9.7).

The external evidence for a Roman destination of Hebrews includes the following points: (1) *1 Clement* (which certainly was written from Rome near the end of the first century) seems to quote Hebrews (cf. *1 Clem.* 36:2–5; 17:1, 2).¹³³ (2) There are affinities between Hebrews and 1 Peter,¹³⁴ a letter probably written from Rome. (3) The question about the possibility of repentance for someone who has fallen away was a debated issue within the Christian community in Rome (cf. *Herm. Vis.* 2.2.4–5). This is also a topic for the author of Hebrews (6:4–8; 10:26; 12:7).

Hebräer, 61–66. The only thing that is certain is that the author belonged to the second generation of Christians (see 2:3).

¹³⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), xlili (shortly before 64 C.E.); Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 142–49 (75–90 C.E.); Helmut Feld, “Der Hebräerbrief: Literarische Form, religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergrund, theologische Fragen,” *ANRW* 25.4: 3522–3601, 3588–93 (about 60 C.E.); Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 9 (60–100 C.E.); William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas: Word, 1991), lxvi (64–68 C.E.); Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21 (65–70 C.E.); Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 33 (shortly before 64 C.E.); Knut Backhaus, “Der Hebräerbrief und die Paulus-Schule,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 37 (1993): 199 (80–90 C.E.); Brown, *Introduction*, 697 (80s C.E.); Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 54 (60–90 C.E.).

¹³¹ Adolf Harnack, “Probabilia über die Addresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs,” *ZNW* 1 (1900): 16–41; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 142–49; F. F. Bruce, “‘To the Hebrews’: A Document of Roman Christianity?” *ANRW* II.25.4 (1987): 3496–3521; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 10; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, lviii; Weiß, *Hebräer*, 76 and 765; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 29; Backhaus, “Hebräerbrief,” 196–99; Koester, *Hebrews*, 49–50.

¹³² There is no reason for stressing the difference between Italy and its capital Rome, cf. Acts 18:2.

¹³³ Donald A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and the New Testament in Clement of Rome* (NovTSup 34; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 179–95; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 6–7. If *1 Clement* does not quote Hebrews, the two writings share a common tradition.

¹³⁴ Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 30–31; Koester, *Hebrews*, 57–58.

All these pieces of evidence make Rome the most likely destination for the letter to the Hebrews. The anonymous author obviously knows the addressees well. For some reason he is separated from them at the time of writing, but he looks forward to seeing them soon (see 13:19, 23). But what does the letter tell us about its addressees and their situation?

When referring to the past history of the congregation, the author speaks about a time when “you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated” (10:32–34). The reference to persecution is variously interpreted, partly due to various hypotheses about the date of the letter. Some see a reference to the actions taken against Christians involved in the disturbances in 49 (which led to Claudius’s edict). Others see a reference to the persecutions under Nero in 64. The problem with the later solution is the remark in 12:4 that the addressees have not yet resisted “to the point of shedding your blood.” Admittedly this is said in connection with the struggle against sin, but it is hard to believe that the author would have used such a language if some in the community recently had suffered martyrdom.¹³⁵ Some commentators thus think that Hebrews was written to a house church that was not stricken by the persecution under Nero. We do not know. In any case it seems likely that Hebrews was written to one house church among many (cf. the greetings to the leaders and all the saints in 13:24).¹³⁶

What caused the author to write as he does? In general he reprobates the addressees for their sluggishness (5:11; 6:12), and they are admonished not to drift away from what they have learned. They seem to be in danger of falling away from faith (cf. 2:1; 3:12; 4:11). The concrete situation reflected in these exhortations is not easily grasped. The content of the writing does, however, make it fairly clear that the addressees in some way are attracted to Judaism. For that reason many commentators think that the addressees are Jewish believers tempted to return to Judaism.¹³⁷ This is far from obvious, however. There is little in the writing itself which reveals the ethnic background of the readers, but some sayings fit a (predominantly) Gentile audience better than a Jewish one (e.g., 6:1; 9:14).¹³⁸ The main objection against the theory that the addressees are Jewish Christians is the way “Judaism” is presented: all references to “Judaism” are in fact based on Old Testament texts. Typically there is no mention of the temple in Jerusalem; the author speaks about the tent or tabernacle (e.g., Heb 9:2, 3). The implication seems to be that the knowledge of Judaism presupposed by the addressees is drawn from the reading of the Jewish Scriptures. We can thus imagine

¹³⁵ Cf. Koester, *Hebrews*, 525. Heb 12:4 creates no real problem if one advocates a later dating, e.g., in the 80s (cf. Backhaus, “Der Hebräerbrief,” 199; Brown, *Introduction*, 699).

¹³⁶ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 12; Lane, *Hebrews*, lviii–lx; Weiss, *Hebräer*, 75.

¹³⁷ So, e.g., Bruce, *Hebrews*, xxiii–xxx. This position was common in earlier scholarship; for an overview of other more recent advocates of this view, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 46–47.

¹³⁸ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 399–400; Weiss, *Hebräer*, 70–72. For criticism of this reading, see Bruce, *Hebrews*, xxvi.

a situation where Gentile believers within the Christian community have been acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures. Reading these writings they may have been uncertain about central parts of their own faith, e.g., their worship without sacrifice.¹³⁹ In an attempt to meet such objections, the author of Hebrews shows how Christ's sacrifice is superior to the Mosaic sacrifices. For one thing, it does not need to be repeated (cf. 9:23ff). This is the background for one of the main features in the theology of Hebrews: Christ's superiority to Moses (3:1–4:13), and to the Levitical high priest (4:14–7:28), and the concomitant focus on the superiority of the new covenant to the old one (8:6–13).

The attraction to Judaism is thus not the result of judaizing propaganda, as was the case in Galatia.¹⁴⁰ The fascination for Judaism is rather a consequence of the use of the Jewish Scriptures within the Christian community.¹⁴¹ The recipients of Hebrews were surely aware of contemporary Jews worshipping God in the synagogues, but there is no evidence of close contact. In fact there is no clear reference to contemporary Jewish institutions or rites (e.g., circumcision).¹⁴² The only exception is Heb 13:9, where the author exhorts his addressees not to “be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings” and warns against observance related to food. The interpretation of the verse is most difficult, but it is likely that the foods ($\betaρωμα$) in question are related to some form of Jewish cultic meal.¹⁴³ We do not know if any of the addressees had in fact approached the Jewish community; they were probably so far only tempted to do so.

If this sketch of the circumstances is correct, Hebrews reflects a situation where the majority of the believers in the Christian community in Rome are Gentiles, at least in the specific house church to which the letter is written. The strong interest in Judaism thus is not evidence of the presence of Jewish believers, but a result of the Jewish roots of the Christian gospel. In order to define these roots, the author introduces the terminology of the old and the new covenants that later became crucial for the understanding of the relation between Christianity and Judaism. This terminology indicates both continuity and discontinuity. For the author, the continuity was a matter of fact; he possibly was himself a Jewish believer.¹⁴⁴ However, in order to keep his addressees from falling away from their faith, he stresses the superiority of the new covenant in Christ. In this way he,

¹³⁹ For a similar position, see Edvin Larsson, “Om Hebréerbrevets syfte,” *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 37–38 (1972–73): 296–309.

¹⁴⁰ So rightly Bruce, *Hebrews*, xxvi, n. 13.

¹⁴¹ Cf. James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), xvi.

¹⁴² The use of $\epsilon\pi\sigma\nu\gamma\omega\gamma\eta$ in 10:25 is hardly a reference to the synagogue; cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 290.

¹⁴³ Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 394–96; Lane, *Hebrews*, 530–36. For details concerning Jewish cultic meals, see Jukka Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräer: Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen vom Hebräerbrief* 13 (Acta Academiae Aboensis; Ser. A.47.1; Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1973), esp. 187–96.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, *Introduction*, 695.

among all New Testament writers, “moves furthest in the direction of the breach with Judaism which was later to take place.”¹⁴⁵

5.3. *First Clement*

According to the introduction of the letter, *1 Clement* was written from the church in Rome. The author does not name himself, but he was early identified as Clement, presumably a presbyter that wrote on behalf of the congregation.¹⁴⁶ This is first attested by Dionysius in Corinth, ca. 170 (according to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.11). Shortly afterwards Irenaeus of Lyon makes a similar statement, adding that Clement was the third bishop in Rome after the apostles Peter and Paul (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.3; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.6.1–3). It is doubtful, however, that Rome in the first and early second centuries had something like the monarchical episcopacy we know from the letters of Ignatius.¹⁴⁷

Eusebius places Clement’s ministry in the time of Domitian (*Hist. eccl.* 3.14–16), and the reference to “the sudden and repeated misfortunes and calamities which have befallen us” (*1 Clem.* 1.1) is usually taken as a reference to persecutions under Domitian (cf. *Hist. eccl.* 3.17–20). For this reason the majority of scholars have dated *1 Clement* at the end of Domitian’s reign (81–96) or at the beginning of Nerva’s (97–98).¹⁴⁸ There are some difficulties connected with this line of argument. For one thing, it is not clear that there was a persecution in Rome under Domitian.¹⁴⁹ Besides, the mentioning of “misfortunes and calamities” (*1 Clem.* 1.1) is so general that it gives no secure basis for dating.¹⁵⁰ For that reason some scholars think it is impossible to give a more precise dating than sometime in the period 70–140.¹⁵¹ However, taking other data into account, e.g.,

¹⁴⁵ Susanne Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews* (JSNTSup 44; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 124.

¹⁴⁶ A lengthy discussion of authorship (and date) is found in Hagner, *Use*, 1–6 and Horacio E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief* (Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 66–78.

¹⁴⁷ It is important to note that Ignatius in his letter to the Romans never mentions a bishop (as he does in all his other letters). *First Clement* itself gives no hint of a bishop; neither does Hermas. He speaks in fact about the presbyters who are in charge of the church in Rome (*Herm. Vis.* 2.4.2). See the discussion in Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 162–64.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 162–64.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Andreas Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 17; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 12.

¹⁵⁰ L. L. Welborn, “On the Date of First Clement,” *Biblical Research* 29 (1984): 35–54, esp. 38–44.

¹⁵¹ So Andrew Gregory, “Disturbing Trajectories: *1 Clement*, the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the Development of Early Roman Christianity,” in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (ed. P. Oakes; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 142–66, 149; Welborn, “Date of First Clement,” 37, sets the limits between 80 and 140. Since Polycarp seems to know *1 Clement*, the time limit 140 is too late. On Polycarp’s relation to *1 Clement*, see Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 90–92.

the church structure reflected in the letter, it is arguable that a date between 90 and 100 is most likely.¹⁵²

One of the most characteristic features of *1 Clement* is its extensive use of the Old Testament, in a Greek version close to the Septuagint. In addition to about eighty direct quotations there are a large number of allusions and there is frequent use of biblical language.¹⁵³

It should be noted that Clement's use of Scripture is not limited to the Jewish canon, but it also includes those writings in the Greek version that later were called the Apocrypha. He shows, for example, knowledge of the story about Judith (55.4–5), he alludes to Wis 12:12 (in 27.5), and seems to be familiar with the terminology of 4 Maccabees.¹⁵⁴ More generally one can say that *1 Clement* betrays clear influence from Hellenistic Judaism,¹⁵⁵ or more specifically: Alexandrian Judaism.¹⁵⁶ It seems likely that Clement had access to similar traditions as those found in Philo's writings.¹⁵⁷ This in fact can also account for the Stoic elements found in *1 Clement*, which have probably come to him through a Hellenistic Judaism with an Alexandrian flavor that was known in the synagogues of Rome.¹⁵⁸

In addition *1 Clement* also shows knowledge of New Testament texts and traditions.¹⁵⁹ The author clearly knows Paul's letter to the Romans and 1 Corinthians and some synoptic sayings, and there are important points of contact between *1 Clement* and Hebrews and 1 Peter. The similarity between the last mentioned writings may be explained as literary dependence or as a consequence of the three writings' connection with Rome.¹⁶⁰

What does *1 Clement* tell us about the situation in the Christian community in Rome at the end of the first century? Since the author obviously writes on be-

¹⁵² Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 12, and Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 77; cf. Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers* (2 vols.; LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1:24–25. Other arguments for the traditional dating are, on the one hand, the indication that the deaths of Peter and Paul took place within “our own generation” (chap. 5); on the other hand, the reference to the Corinthian church as “ancient” (47.6).

¹⁵³ Lists of the quotations are found in Hagner, *Use*, 351–352 and Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 46.

¹⁵⁴ Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 47.

¹⁵⁵ Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 75–76 (with further bibliography).

¹⁵⁶ That *1 Clement* shows specific Essene influence seems unlikely (contra E. G. Hinson, “Evidence of Essene Influence in Roman Christianity: An Inquiry,” in *Papers of the 1979 International Conference on Patristic Studies*; (3 vols.; ed. Elisabeth A. Livingstone; StPatr 17; Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 2:697–701).

¹⁵⁷ Examples listed in Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 59.

¹⁵⁸ Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 59–60, 63, 267–74 (on *1 Clem.* 20).

¹⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion, see Hagner, *Use*, 135–271. For a somewhat different evaluation of the material, see Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 48–58.

¹⁶⁰ Literary dependence is argued by many commentators, but see the recent discussion by Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 52–57. Clement's use of Hebrews was first noted by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.38.1–3).

half of the Roman church¹⁶¹ it is tempting to claim that his theology is representative for the church as a whole. We do not know. It is likely, however, that his theological position was shared with a significant part of the community. This also means that *1 Clement* is a witness to the strong Jewish influence on Roman Christianity.

First Clement has been rightly characterized as “a storehouse of Christianized Jewish traditions.”¹⁶² While these traditions are not radically changed,¹⁶³ the way they are used is radically new. This is best seen in Clement’s naïve use of Old Testament texts: They are applied directly to the Christian church, which is seen as the immediate continuation of Israel in the Old Testament.¹⁶⁴ The best example of this is probably found in *1 Clem.* 29–30 where the author quotes Deut 32:8–9 concerning God’s election of Israel: “His people, Jacob, became the portion ($\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\varsigma$) for the Lord.” Then he goes on applying the words on the Christians: “Since then we are a holy portion ($\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\varsigma$) . . .” (30.1).

The way Clement uses the Old Testament may be characterized as follows: “So directly is the Old Testament applied to the Church, that the author betrays no awareness of a radical new beginning, a new covenant established by Christ; no awareness of the deep disruption between the Christian community and the Jewish people.”¹⁶⁵ This means that we find no hint of a theological reflection about the relationship between “Judaism” and “Christianity.” Nor is there any polemic against Jews and Judaism. Thus *1 Clement* seems to reflect a situation in the Roman church when there was no living memory of a conflict with the Jewish community (almost 50 years earlier), and probably no direct contact with the synagogues. The heritage from the synagogues had been “domesticated” and taken for granted, but its source seems to have been forgotten.

¹⁶¹This seems to imply that the Christian community in Rome could act as one united church, not only as scattered house churches. This point is strongly argued by Caragounis, “From Obscurity,” 259–60, 271, 277.

¹⁶²Walters, “Romans, Jews, and Christians,” 191.

¹⁶³Cf. James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 275: *1 Clement* (and the *Shepherd of Hermas*) “abound with only slightly Christianized Jewish traditions, and might have been written by any Hellenized Jew anywhere.”

¹⁶⁴Cf. Harnack’s statement: “Das Christentum des Clemensbriefs erkennt seine von Gott gegebene vollständige und suffiziente Grundlage im A.T. und will daher nichts anderes sein als Religion dieses Buchs . . . Dieses Christentum identifiziert sich einfach mit der Religion des A.T.” Adolf Harnack, *Einführung in die alte Kirchengeschichte: Das Schreiben der Römischen Kirche und die Korinthische aus der Zeit Domitians. (I. Clemensbrief)* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1929), 66.

¹⁶⁵Oskar Skarsaune, “The Development of Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries—except Clement and Origen,” in *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300): Antiquity* (Vol. 1.1 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*; ed. M. Sæbø et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 381–82; cf. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 326–27.

If this picture is correct, it is difficult to imagine that Clement himself was a Jewish believer in Jesus.¹⁶⁶ This is supported by Clement's lack of interest in Israel's salvation-historical uniqueness.¹⁶⁷ It is therefore more likely that he was a Gentile believer. Due to his knowledge of the Old Testament and Hellenistic Jewish traditions, it has been suggested that Clement had background as a Godfearer in the synagogue.¹⁶⁸ Given the strong Jewish heritage in the Roman church, however, it is quite possible that he has gotten his knowledge in the Christian community itself.¹⁶⁹ His teachers may have been Jewish believers, but his own naïve approach to the Jewish traditions seems more characteristic of a third generation Gentile believer. With regard to the composition of the Roman community, Lampe has an appropriate comment:

Neither a quantitative nor a qualitative preponderance of Jewish Christians can be inferred from the strong synagogal tradition in Roman church life. We must formulate more generally: Christians from the sphere of influence of the synagogues, Jewish Christians as well as Gentile Christians, exercised an astonishing influence on the formulation of theology in urban Roman Christianity in the first century. These Christians from the sphere of influence of the synagogues presumably formed the majority.¹⁷⁰

5. 4. *The Shepherd of Hermas*

There is no real reason to doubt the Roman origin of the work called the *Shepherd*.¹⁷¹ The text has explicit references to Rome, the Tiber, and the Via Campana (*Vis.* 1.1–2; 4.1.2), which are best explained as being part of the author's milieu. The author calls himself Hermas, and appears to be a freedman, formerly owned by a woman named Rhoda (cf. *Vis.* 1.1.1).¹⁷² He was a contemporary of a Clement (*Vis.* 2.4.3), probably the author of *1 Clement*. According to the *Muratorian Canon* (ca. 170), however, Hermas "wrote the Shepherd recently in our times while his brother Pius was sitting as bishop in the chair of the church of the city of Rome."¹⁷³ There is a tension between these dates, since Clement probably died around 100 C.E. while Pius died ca. 155. In recent scholarship, however, there is a growing consensus that the *Shepherd* was composed over a long

¹⁶⁶This is argued by, e.g., Leslie W. Barnard, "The Early Roman Church, Judaism, and Jewish Christianity," *ATHR* 49 (1967): 371–84, esp. 372–78; cf. also E. Nestle, "War der Verfasser des ersten Clemens-Briefes semitischer Abstammung?" *ZNW* 1 (1900): 178–80.

¹⁶⁷Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 76, n. 32.

¹⁶⁸Otto B. Knoch, "In Namen des Petrus und Paulus: Der Brief des Clemens Romanus und die Eigenart des römischen Christentums," *ANRW* II.27.1 (1993): 3–54, esp. 26.

¹⁶⁹For a similar reasoning, see Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 162.

¹⁷⁰Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 76.

¹⁷¹The name comes from *Vis.* 5, where a shepherd appears to Hermas, saying that he is sent by "the most reverend angel"; he commands Hermas to write.

¹⁷²On the author's social status, see Carolyn Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas: An Exegetical-Social Investigation* (CBQMS 15; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 130–32.

¹⁷³Lines 73–77; translation from Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 18–19, n. 141.

period of time, “perhaps from the very last years of the first century, but stretching through most of the first half of the second century.”¹⁷⁴ Other scholars simply date the final redaction of the work to ca. 140.¹⁷⁵

The *Shepherd* is a very complex work, consisting of five *Visions*, twelve *Mandates*, and ten *Similitudes*. As these different sections indicate, the work has both apocalyptic, parenetic and allegorical elements.¹⁷⁶ The issue of sources and influences is also rather complex. There are points of contact between the *Shepherd* and Old and New Testament writings, but no direct quotations.¹⁷⁷ The only direct quotation is from the lost apocryphal work, *The Book of Eldad and Modat* (Vis. 2.3.4).¹⁷⁸ Different scholars have emphasized either the Jewish or the pagan, Greco-Roman influences of the work. No doubt both are present.¹⁷⁹ In our discussion, only a few typical Jewish elements need briefly to be mentioned.

In the ethical sections of the *Shepherd* there are evident similarities to Jewish thought. In *Mand.* 6.2.1–4 (cf. 12.1) the Shepherd speaks about the angel of righteousness and the angel of wickedness which are in the heart of a human being:

A person has two angels, one of righteousness and the other of wickedness. “And how, then, Lord,” I asked, “will I know the inner workings of these, since both angels dwell with me?” “Listen,” he said, “and you will understand these things. The angel of righteousness is sensitive, modest, meek, and mild. And so, when he rises up in your heart, he immediately speaks with you about righteousness, purity, reverence, contentment, every upright deed, and every glorious virtue. When all these things rise up in your heart, realize that the angel of righteousness is with you. These are the works of the angel of righteousness. Trust this one, therefore, and his works. See now also the works of the angel of wickedness. First of all, he is irascible, bitter, and senseless, and his works are wicked, bringing ruin on the slaves of God. And so, when this one rises up in your heart, recognize him from his works.¹⁸⁰

This notion has a close parallel in Qumran, in the *Rule of the Community* concerning the two spirits that God has put in men’s heart: the spirits of truth and of deceit (1QS 3.13–4.26). Similar ideas are also attested in other Jewish literature (e.g., *T. Ash.* 1:1–9).¹⁸¹ It thus seems evident that behind the idea of the two angels in the *Shepherd* is a much earlier Jewish notion.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁴ Osiek, *Shepherd*, 20.

¹⁷⁵ Norbert Brox, *Der Hirt des Hermas* (Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 23–25.

¹⁷⁶ On the question of genre, see Brox, *Hirt*, 33–43; Osiek, *Shepherd*, 10–12.

¹⁷⁷ For details, see Graydon F. Snyder, *The Shepherd of Hermas* (vol. 6 of *The Apostolic Fathers*; ed. Robert M. Grant; Camden, N.J.: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1968), 13–16; Brox, *Hirt*, 45–47.

¹⁷⁸ The two characters appear in Num 11:26–29.

¹⁷⁹ On this, see Brox, *Hirt*, 49–55; Osiek, *Shepherd*, 24–28.

¹⁸⁰ Translation Bart D. Ehrman, LCL.

¹⁸¹ See further C. Haas, “Die Pneumatologie des ‘Hirten des Hermas,’” ANRW 27.1 (1993): 552–86.

¹⁸² Cf. L. W. Barnard, “Hermas, the Church and Judaism,” in *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and their Background* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 151–63, 160.

In general, the angelology of Hermas shows many points of contact with ancient Jewish literature.¹⁸³ Great importance is given to an angel called the “most reverend” (*σεμνότατος*) (*Vis.* 5.2) or the “great and glorious” (*μέγας καὶ ἐνδοξός*) angel (*Sim.* 8.3.3). He is the one who sent the Shepherd to Hermas (*Vis.* 5.2) and who also is given a soteriological role (cf. *Mand.* 5.1.7). In *Sim.* 8.3.3 he is identified with Michael, while “the glorious man” in *Sim.* 9.12.8 is identified with the Son of God. The exact relationship between Christ and the angel is disputed, but there are reasons to think that they in some way are seen as identical.¹⁸⁴ A possibility is that the Son of God appears in the form of an angel.¹⁸⁵ Whatever the solution is, the connection between Christology and angelology clearly has a Jewish ring.

Another typical Jewish element found in the *Shepherd* is the focus on “the Name,” especially in *Sim.* 9 with its recurring references to the name of the Son of God. Of special interest is the following statement: “The name of the Son of God is great and boundless, and it supports the entire world” (*Sim.* 9.14.5). This has clear parallels in Jewish literature, where the Name may take an almost “quasi-hypostatic sense.”¹⁸⁶ Thus *Jub.* 36:7 can speak about the “glorious and honored and great and splendid and amazing and mighty name which created heaven and earth.”¹⁸⁷ In apocalyptic literature we also find the idea that a special name was given to the Son of Man before the creation of the world (*1 En.* 48.2–4).

Due to such parallels between Hermas and ancient Jewish literature, in particular the Dead Sea Scrolls, some scholars have postulated a close connection between Hermas and Qumran. Some have even suggested that Hermas could have been the “son of an Essene convert, who came to Rome from Jerusalem after A.D. 70.”¹⁸⁸ This is, however, extremely unlikely. For one thing the similarities between the Qumran community and Hermas are not that close. It is more appropriate to speak of a general Jewish background informing both works. Besides, such a theory is not able to explain other features in the *Shepherd*.¹⁸⁹

There is no doubt about the affinities shared between Hermas and ancient Jewish literature. There is, however, no basis for claiming that the author was a Jew or that he had close links to contemporary Judaism. In fact, a most conspicu-

¹⁸³ See Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*. Vol. 1 of *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea* (trans. and ed. J. A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), 117–27.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Brox, *Hirt*, 490–91; 502–3; Halvor Moxnes, “God and His Angel in the Shepherd of Hermas,” *Studia theologica* 28 (1974): 49–56.

¹⁸⁵ Osiek, *Shepherd*, 35.

¹⁸⁶ Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 151. This usage is prepared in the Old Testament; see H. Bietenhard, “οὐοῦ,” *TDNT* 5.257–58.

¹⁸⁷ Translation from *OTP* 2:124.

¹⁸⁸ Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 39.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy: A Study of the Eleventh Mandate* (NovTSup 37; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 26.

ous feature in the *Shepherd* is its total silence about Jews and Judaism.¹⁹⁰ There is no mention of Jewish rites or institutions,¹⁹¹ and there is nothing that indicates a consciousness of the Jewish roots of the church. This is most evident in *Sim.* 9.17 where Hermas talks about the twelve tribes and explains that they are “twelve nations” which dwell under heaven, without even naming one of them as Israel. Admittedly, when he speaks about the foundation of the church (*Sim.* 9.15.4), he possibly refers to the patriarchal generation and the generations from Noah to David,¹⁹² but this is not made explicit.¹⁹³ For Hermas the church is a pre-existent entity (*Vis.* 2.4.1), and there is no focus on its roots in the Jewish people; nowhere do we find the names of the patriarchs, the kings or the prophets of Israel.

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is a witness to the continuing influence of Jewish thought and notions on the Christian community in Rome. It is, however, so general that it hardly is helpful to speak of “the Jewishness” of Roman Christianity.¹⁹⁴ There are no signs of any direct links to the Jewish community, and there is nothing that points to a Jewish author. As Lampe reminds us: “In general it must be maintained that, whenever one comes across originally Jewish traditions in the second century church, one cannot infer ethnic conclusions: these occurrences do not prove a Jewish origin of the bearer of the tradition, unless other evidence is added (e.g., Hebrew speaking).”¹⁹⁵ In the first half of the second century the Jewish element in the Roman church is nothing more than tradition.

6. Epilogue

In subsequent centuries, the Jewish element in Roman Christianity seems more or less to disappear. Nevertheless there remained a memory of its beginning. Certainly there was a strong focus on the apostles Peter and Paul, but they were seldom if ever remembered as Jewish believers. It is, however, interesting to note that late in the fourth century, Ambrosiaster was very much aware of the Jewish origin of the Roman church.¹⁹⁶ This fact was not forgotten. It was even

¹⁹⁰Cf. Brox, *Hirt*, 55; cf. Johannes Klevinghaus, *Die theologische Stellung der Apostolischen Väter zur alttestamentlichen Offenbarung* (BFCT 44.1; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1948), 123.

¹⁹¹No importance can be ascribed to the use of the word συναγωγή in *Mand.* 11.9, 13, 14 (contra Mark D. Nanos, “The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *CBQ* 61 [1999]: 283–304, 288). Here, and elsewhere in early Christian literature (cf., e.g., Ign. *Pol.* 4.2; Dionysios of Alexandria in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.9.2), the word simply refers to the congregation gathered for worship. See further W. Schrage, “συναγωγή,” *TDNT* 7:840–41.

¹⁹²Cf. the number of generations in Luke 3:36–38 and 31–36.

¹⁹³Besides, there are difficulties in interpreting the next “thirty-five” and “forty”; cf. Osiek, *Shepherd*, 237; Brox, *Hirt*, 430.

¹⁹⁴Cf. Walters, “Romans, Jews, and Christians,” 195.

¹⁹⁵Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 79.

¹⁹⁶See the quotation above, p. 186.

celebrated in the decoration of one of the churches in Rome. In Santa Sabina, on the Aventine hill, there is a mosaic celebrating the establishment of the church sometime between 422 and 432. Enclosing an inscription we find two female figures, each holding a book in her hands. Under the woman at the left we read: *Ec[c]lesia ex circumcisione*. On the right hand we read: *Ec[c]lesia ex gentibus*.¹⁹⁷ Long after the bonds to the living Jewish community were actually broken, there was a consciousness of the church as a community of both circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles believing in Jesus.



Santa Sabina, Rome. Detail of mosaic
(ca. 425). “The Church of the
Circumcision.” (Photo R. Hvalvik)



Santa Sabina, Rome. Detail of mosaic
(ca. 425). “The Church of the
Gentiles.” (Photo R. Hvalvik)

¹⁹⁷ See Walter Oakeshott, *The Mosaics of Rome from the Third to the Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), 89; cf. Simon C. Mimouni, “La représentation figurative de l’ecclesia ex circumcisione et de l’ecclesia ex gentibus dans les mosaïques romaines,” in Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 25–37.

Jewish Believers in Asia Minor according to the Book of Revelation and the Gospel of John

Peter Hirschberg

Today, in opposition to earlier tendencies of interpreting the Gospel of John primarily in a gnostic-docetic context,¹ opinions increasingly emphasize the Jewish character of the Gospel of John and tend to see it as a document of a community with severe Christian-Jewish controversies. In this context stand above all Brown,² Martyn,³ and Wengst.⁴ In terms of method they all agree that the gospel has to be read not only on “the level of Jesus” but also on “the level of contemporary history.” On the level of contemporary history, the Jewish-Christian conflict

¹Above all Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); Ernst Käsemann, *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1980); Luise Schotroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt: Beobachtungen zum gnostischen Dualismus und seiner bedeutung für Paulus und das Johannesevangelium* (WMANT 37; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970); Georg Richter, *Studien zum Johannesevangelium* (Biblische Untersuchungen 13; ed. J. Hainz; Regensburg: Pustet, 1977). They understood the various conflicts hinted at in the Gospel of John as recollections of vanquished arguments. Particularly influential was R. Bultmann, who understood the stereotype expression “the Jews” in the gospel to be a symbol of the enmity in the world, so that from the beginning real possibilities of understanding were restricted. Cf. also Erich Grässer, “Die Antijüdische Polemik im Johannesevangelium,” in Grässer, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985), 135–53, esp. 150.

²Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Lives, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (London: Chapman, 1979); Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966–1970).

³J. Louis Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 90–121; J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968; repr., Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1979).

⁴Klaus Wengst, *Bedrängte Gemeinde und verherrlichter Christus: Ein Versuch über das Johannesevangelium* (Kaiser-Traktate 114; München: Kaiser, 1990).

becomes central. With regard to Revelation, scholars became more quickly aware of its Jewish-Christian shape.⁵ The only problem was that most commentators made too great a distinction between the Jewish-Christian traditions in Revelation and the symbolizing, mainly Gentile Christian interpretation of the “apocalyptic,” declaring the latter to be the true Christian explanation. Thus, the Jewish-Christian dimension of the exegesis remained of lesser importance, and not enough attention was given to the Christian-Jewish conflict as it is reflected in the texts of the Seven Letters (Rev 2:8–11; 3:7–13) as well as in the main part of Revelation.

In the following section we shall first investigate the significance given to the Jewish believers in Jesus in John and Revelation. On the one hand, we shall investigate what role they played in the presumed Jewish-Christian conflict. On the other hand, we shall use central themes to show the consequences of that Jewish-Christian dimension for the intention and the theological conception of the gospel and Revelation.

First a remark on the so-called “Johannine question”: because of differences in language and theological understanding in the two writings, scholars today are placing an ever-greater distance between Revelation and the gospel and the letters. At best there are those who are ready to place Revelation near the edge of the Johannine circle.⁶ If, in the following reflections, Revelation is considered to be part of the circle of Johannine Scriptures, it will be not least because of the above-mentioned topics. The commonality of certain Jewish-Christian themes suggests not only a similar spiritual background, but even a common origin. Even the specific form of these Christian-Jewish controversies, reflected in the gospel and in Revelation, alludes to the same region, geographical and temporal, in Asia Minor at the end of the first century.

1. The Revelation of John

Among the New Testament writings Revelation bears the clearest stamp of Jewish-Christian origins. This is because John himself was a Jewish believer in

⁵ Particularly useful here is Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (KEK 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906).

⁶ Jens-W. Taeger, *Johannesapokalypse und johanneischer Kreis* (BZNW 51; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 133, puts Revelation at a Trito-johannine level, developing from the Gospel (and its editing), continuing through the Letters, and ending in Revelation. An opposite development—from Revelation to the Gospel—is assumed by Jörg Frey, “Erwägungen zum Verhältnis der Johannesapokalypse zu den übrigen Schriften im Corpus Johanneum,” in Martin Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage: ein Lösungsversuch* (WUNT 67; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993), 326–429. See also Otto Böcher, “Das Verhältnis der Apokalypse des Johannes zum Evangelium des Johannes,” in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament* (ed. J. Lambrecht; BETL 53; Louvain: Duculot, 1980), 289–301; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Quest for the Johannine School: The Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel,” *NTS* 23 (1977): 402–27, sees traditional-historical connections, but speaks of two independent school traditions.

Jesus, and he had accepted many Jewish-Christian motifs and traditions in Revelation. In addition, Jewish believers in Jesus had a decisive role in the Jewish-Christian conflict that John describes. Revelation, therefore, contains much Jewish-Christian material, because John wanted to relate specifically to the Jewish-Christian problems that grew out of this conflict. This thesis will be verified in what follows. I will first ask if there are indications in the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia that the sufferings and the tribulations described there are directly connected with the Jewish believers in Jesus. Following that I will examine whether Jewish-Christian themes of Revelation 4–22 are developed in a way that connects them to the supposed problems in the communities of the Seven Churches.

1.1. Introductory Questions

In spite of some attempts at early dating,⁷ it is most likely—based on the assumed historical and religious situation of the church⁸—that Revelation was written in the 90s of the first century in Asia Minor. Certainly the specific identity of the seer can hardly be discovered; nevertheless, we know the name of the author (John), and pseudonymity is out of the question.⁹ There are several indications that John was a Jewish believer in Jesus. Among these are his semitizing Greek¹⁰ and the numerous Jewish-Christian theological topics, some of which are addressed below. Because of the prophetic self-understanding of the author and his clear affinity to the “Itinerant Charismatics,” it can be supposed that John, within the framework of his prophetic activity, reached Asia Minor, where he was soon deemed to be an authority. Many seemingly very archaic Jewish-Christian traditions in Revelation suggest that John came originally from the region of the land of Israel.

1.2. The Significance of Jewish Believers in Jesus in the Jewish-Christian Conflict Reflected in the Letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia

In his letters to the communities of Smyrna (Rev 2:8–11) and Philadelphia (Rev 3:7–13), John describes the Jewish communities as “the synagogues of

⁷ So, for example, A. A. Bell, “The Date of John’s Apocalypse: The Evidence of some Roman Historians Reconsidered,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 93–102; D. W. Hadorn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 18; Leipzig: Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928), 221; Klaus Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen-Basel: Francke, 1994), 569–71.

⁸ Specifically: (1) The problems mentioned in the Seven Letters are typical problems of the second and the third generation. (2) The tribulations of the Christians are strongly related to the worship of the Emperor and to the relationship with the Jewish community. They are typical for the Domitianic period. (3) The testimony of the ancient church. See further, Peter Hirschberg, *Das eschatologische Israel: Untersuchungen zum Gottesvolkverständnis der Johannesoffenbarung* (WMANT 84; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 15–19.

⁹ In opposition to Frey, *Erwägungen*, 326–429.

¹⁰ Certainly this Greek is artificial; on the other hand it provides a clear testimony to the linguistic background of the author.

Satan” and expressly denies to them the honorable title of Jew (Ἰουδαῖος): “They say that they are Jews and are not” (2:9; 3:9).¹¹ These polemics have historically been understood mostly as a kind of dogmatic judgment of the Jewish people: Jews are satanic because they do not believe in Christ. However, one should be careful not to accept too quickly the dogmatic developments of a later time. Neither should one rush to see in John the proponent of a later replacement theory. Significantly, both the immediate and the wider contexts of the Seven Letters urges us to see in this polemic above all a judgment on specific Jewish behavior.

It is evident that the tribulations¹² of the Christian communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia are related in some way to hostility on the part of the Jewish communities there. It is an open question whether the Jewish communities are directly or indirectly responsible for the suffering of the Christians. Remarkable in this connection is the interpretation of Jewish behavior in Smyrna as being a blasphemy (βλασφημία, βλασφημεῖν, 2:9). In the New Testament this word often has a non-religious meaning¹³ (“mockery,” “slander,” “denunciation”; e.g., Rom 3:8; 1 Pet 4:4; Mark 15:29 par; Luke 22:65) as well as a religious meaning (“blasphemy”). Therefore, it is possible that an essential aspect of the “blasphemy” of the Jewish community in Smyrna—and perhaps also in Philadelphia—lies in the fact that Christians have been defamed and slandered, perhaps even denounced. But this will be plausible only if it can be shown that the Jewish communities had good reasons to proceed against the Christians in this manner, and if indications can be found in the Seven Letters confirming this interpretation.

If we are asking which arguments the Jewish communities used to contend against the Christians, one must obviously first consider the religiously contested questions. There is no doubt that such issues were the basis for the whole conflict. Nevertheless, the described behavior cannot be explained satisfactorily if motivated only by religious questions. Rather, we can assume that religious and socio-political factors were intermingled and that this mixture created a disruptive

¹¹ The theory that they are not Jewish (M. H. Shepherd, “The Gospel According to John,” in *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* [ed. C. M. Laymon; New York: Abingdon, 1971], 707–28, 708; Helmut Köster, *Einführung in das Neue Testament im Rahmen der Religionsgeschichte und Kulturgeschichte der hellenistischen und römischen Zeit* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980], 689; P. Prigent, *L’Apocalypse de Saint Jean* [Commentaire du Nouveau Testament 2.14; Lausanne: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1981], 47, 70), but that instead they are Judaizing groups of Gentiles or Jewish believers in Jesus, has to be denied, because these groups clearly confront the community from outside. So Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ÖTK 19; Gütersloh-Würzburg: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1984), 107.

¹² The letter to Smyrna (2:9) describes tribulation (θλῖψις), distress, and pressing trouble (of imprisonment). This explicit indication is missing in Philadelphia. However, the references to the “little power” (3:8) and the “hour of trial” (3:10) in connection with the polemic against the synagogue presumes that there is also a situation of affliction.

¹³ See O. Hofius, “Blasfemia,” EWNT 1:527–32.

force. This becomes even more plausible when we examine the special situation of the Jewish communities in Asia Minor at the end of the first century.¹⁴

The Jewish communities in Asia Minor had been struggling for quite some time to be accepted in the cities where they lived. In the second half of the first century—also due to massive Roman support—they entered a phase of more or less successful integration into the urban life of the polis. This integration had not been immediately endangered by the Jewish-Roman war in Judea. The Romans were quite ready to differentiate between the Jews of the Diaspora and the Judean Jews infected by the revolt. But the temple taxes that had to be paid from then on to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome strained this developing acceptance.¹⁵ This humiliating step was taken in order to impress upon the Jews of the Diaspora that revolt against Rome does not pay.¹⁶ The consequence of this threat imposed by the Romans might have been that the Jews now had to provide more proof that they were loyal to Rome and to their own *polis* and that they did not have anything in common with the Jewish Zealots.

This increased effort to show loyalty must have had a variety of consequences for the Jewish-Christian relationship. One factor in this conflict was certainly the group of the “Godfearers”¹⁷ which was very strongly represented, especially in Asia Minor. Often they occupied high social positions and were therefore an important factor for the social integration of the Jews. Losing even one Godfearer to the Christian community could bring about a substantial loss of social prestige to the group. Even more decisive as a factor may have been the increasing criminalization of Christianity. From the Roman-Hellenistic perspective, Christianity was an abominable superstition and politically dangerous. This view was nourished by the fact that these Christians worshiped a Jew who had been executed under suspicion of being a political rebel. Not only were these Christians opposed to the imperial cult, they also could be considered close to the Zealot movement. Even if we take into consideration that from the external pagan perspective Christianity had already been perceived as an autonomous religious community separated from the Jewish community during the nineties of the first century, nevertheless, there existed numerous connections between the two faiths. Christianity’s intimate contact with Jewish biblical traditions as well as certain personal relationships (Jewish believers in Jesus, Godfearers) could

¹⁴ On the Jewish communities in Asia Minor see A. T. Kraabel, “Judaism in Western Asia Minor under the Roman Empire with a Preliminary Study of the Jewish Community at Sardis, Lydia” (PhD diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1968); Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁵ See E. M. Smallwood, “Domitian’s Attitude Toward the Jews and Judaism,” *Classical Philology* 51 (1956): 1–13, 4.

¹⁶ Rome had good reasons for these precautionary measures as is shown by the revolts which broke out later in the Diaspora (115–117 AD) in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Cyprus, and Mesopotamia.

¹⁷ On Godfearers in general see Josephus, *Ant.* 14.110; *J.W.* 7.45; *Ag. Ap.* 2.123; Philo *QE* 2.2. On Asia Minor see Hirschberg, *Israel*, 49–52.

easily discredit the Jewish community. As a result, the Jews must have had a fundamental interest in separating from the Christians. When John in the Seven Letters refers to Jews emphasizing their own identity (“those who say that they are Jews”), this may be understood as a Jewish call to pagan society to consider the Jewish communities as an independent entity that has nothing in common with the subversive Christian movement. First of all, efforts had to be made for a clear separation from the Jewish believers in Jesus to avoid the still existing “possibilities of confusion.” This was especially true because Jewish believers could be seen as “proof” that “Christianity” still somehow belonged to Judaism. The Christian communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia consisted to a large extent of Jewish believers in Jesus, and the Jewish communities themselves may have been large. Thus there existed real potential for confusion. This hypothesis is strengthened when we remember that the expulsion from the synagogue explicitly mentioned in John’s gospel (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) is related to Asia Minor and dates from about the same time period.

In Jewish eyes Christianity itself was interpreted as destructive, and Jewish efforts to keep separate included also Gentile Christians. Nevertheless, Jewish believers in Jesus may have suffered the most from Jewish hostility during this period. When they were expelled from the synagogue, they lost their domicile and perhaps even their families. Further, they faced social isolation within the *polis* and even the loss of their jobs and the resulting economic hardships. In fact, they lost precisely the social acceptance the Jewish communities had been fighting for so intensely. Beyond this, there would be increasing confrontations with the government. If they were banished from the synagogue, such “Jews,” refusing to worship the emperor,¹⁸ would no longer benefit from the special status enjoyed by Jews; they would be unprotected, at the mercy of the Romans. In this context, the increasing burden of the *fiscus Judaicus* would become a pitfall for Jewish believers in Jesus.¹⁹ Payment of the *fiscus* was probably done centrally through the Jewish communities. If they publicized that someone, being Christian, no longer belonged to the community, this would quickly have caused conflicts with the authorities. One may conclude that the outcasts mentioned in the prophesized imprisonment (Rev 2:10), were first of all Jewish believers in Jesus.

John condemns this declared solidarity between the Jewish communities and the Roman-Hellenistic world against the Christians, and he calls it the “Syna-

¹⁸In this context, the worship of the Emperor, which was propagated and practiced more intensely under Domitian, is frequently cited. Here it has to be emphasized vis-à-vis older descriptions that there were no persecutions of the Christians under Domitian. See Hirschberg, *Israel*, 83–85, and concerning Domitian in general, 59–71, esp. 66–67. Yet it seems that towards the end of his rule he suffered from an increasingly pathological distrust that led him to act harshly against persons he suspected of *impietas*, and to stimulate the worship of the Emperor. This might have also been detrimental to Christians.

¹⁹Especially important here is Suetonius, *Domitianus* 12, 2. For the interpretation see Hirschberg, *Israel*, 61–66.

gogue of Satan.” In Revelation “Satan” is identified primarily with Rome and the worship of the emperor.²⁰ For John, the desire of the Jewish communities for integration and its resulting bid for loyalty to the pagan world is therefore satanic. It is idolatry ($\beta\lambda\alpha\sigma\phi\eta\mu\alpha$) in the very original Jewish sense of denying the true God by assimilating with paganism.²¹ Such an attitude prevents an open encounter with the gospel, and it leads, from the start, to a conflict with those who had been chosen by Israel’s God in the name of his Messiah. Now the seer’s christological conviction manifests itself, and he sees in the Jewish rejection of Christ the deepest form of “satanic decay.” Yet it is characteristic that he does not proceed from a dogmatic prejudice, but rather interprets the present reality of Jewish animosity to be related to their attitude towards the Messiah, who, as the Jewish believers in Jesus were convinced, had already appeared. It may be, therefore, that his judgment upon Jews not believing in Christ would have been less harsh if their behavior against the Christians had been different. It is precisely this esteem of concrete behavior—a characteristic trait of his Jewishness—which also leads him to judge the Christian communities.²²

Jewish believers in Jesus have a central significance in the communities of Smyrna and Philadelphia. This is confirmed twice in Revelation 3:7–13, with the theme “Open and Shut” (Rev 3:7–8) in connection to the “overcome” formula (Rev 3:12), which is related here especially to Jewish identity (the new city of Jerusalem as a symbol of the real chosen people). In 3:7 Christ is represented as he who has the key of David and therefore can open and shut. The key of David is, in Isa 22:22, a symbol for the one who can grant or deny membership in the house of David. Therefore, if Christ has the key of David, it means that he alone decides who is a real, valid member of the house of David or, as we may say, the true Israel. This is a great comfort for the Jewish believers in Jesus, who had painfully experienced the Jewish communities’ slamming the door shut on them. Were they no longer Jews? These words assure them that they belong to the true Israel.²³ On the other hand it is announced to the Jewish community that in the eschatological future it will have to throw itself at the feet of the Christian community in order to realize “that I have loved you” (Rev 3:9).

²⁰ How important it was for John to reject this pagan lifestyle is shown by the fact that he also harshly condemns similar behavior by Christians. In any case, the dogmas condemned in his Seven Letters (Nicolaitans, 2:15; Balaam, 2:14; Jezebel, 2:20ff) might have been connected to a pagan way of life tolerant toward the worship of the emperor, rather than being a preliminary stage of the Gnosis. See H.-J. Klauck, “Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon und der Kaiserkult in der Johannesoffenbarung,” *Bib* 73 (1992): 153–82.

²¹ See Hirschberg, *Israel*, 120–23.

²² Also, the lampstands of the Christian communities might be overthrown if they did not repent. Christological confession alone was not enough.

²³ This is confirmed once more in the *Überwindungsspruch*, where the “overcomers” are assured that they will be pillars of the Heavenly Jerusalem in days to come.

1.3. Theological Themes Influenced by the Conflict between Christian and Jewish Communities

Many themes in the main section of Revelation are determined primarily by the conflict between Jewish believers in Jesus and other Jews. John's intention is to refute the Jewish objections, thereby reassuring the faith of both the Jewish believers in Jesus and the Gentile Christians. The question of the chosen people and the relationship to Christology/Messianology is a particularly delicate subject. It is therefore advisable to consider these topics carefully.

1.3.1. The Question of God's Chosen People

The problem of self-identity constituted a flash point for the Jewish believers in Jesus, and caused theological conflict between Jews and Christians. In reply to the Jewish believers in Jesus the Jews might have pointed out that true Judaism consists only in the chosenness of the Jewish people and with it the obligations of the Torah. The Gentile Christians (and perhaps the former Godfearers in particular) might have been reproached by the Jews that the possibility of belonging to the chosen people was given only to those who accepted—as did the proselytes—the yoke of the Torah. So we hear not only “We are Jews, and we have nothing in common with the subversive Christian movement,” but also “We are Jews and as Jews we are the chosen people who has been taught the divine truth; the (Jewish) believers in Jesus do not belong to it (anymore).”

In both of his central texts about God's people (Rev 7 and Rev 21–22), John was able to relate to the Jewish polemic. Revelation 7 is composed of two parts: 7:1–8 and 7:9–17. The first section tells about the sealing, in the face of divine judgment, of 144,000 who were chosen from all the tribes of the sons of Israel. The second section describes the eschatological completion of the community of salvation out of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues. From the context it is obvious that both groups finally become one identical entity.²⁴ But this entity is described both from an earthly perspective (*ecclesia militans*) and from the perspective of the eschatological completion (*ecclesia triumphans*). Yet the major difference in the characterization of the two groups remains clear. The Jewish particularity of the sealed 144,000 (7:4–8), which is determined mainly by the assimilation of early Jewish traditions of the eschatological completion of God's people,²⁵ makes it difficult to read it as a simple metaphorization of “the church.”²⁶ This Jewish particularity stands in a clear contrast to the troop of the

²⁴ Revelation 9:4, in which the sealed ones are exempted from judgment, supports this interpretation. The universalism of the Seer makes it unthinkable that only the Jewish believers in Jesus should be exempted from the judgment while the Gentile Christians will be defenselessly surrendered to it. On the other hand, the descriptions of the judgment are explained so globally that it cannot be about a judgment within Israel (between Jewish believers in Jesus and other Jews).

²⁵ See Hirschberg, *Israel*, 135–200.

²⁶ So, first of all, Boussel, *Offenbarung*, 330–38. For a more detailed discussion see Hirschberg, *Israel*, 129–202.

completed who are described in universal terms (Rev 7:9–17). If, in spite of these differences, both groups in the end have to be identical, there is actually only one given solution: the text must be read as salvation history. In 7:1–8 the Seer remains deliberately in the Jewish milieu, so that the readers associate automatically with the eschatologically renewed Israel, and from here they are led to the understanding, developed especially in 7:9–17,²⁷ that within this Israel there are also Gentiles. By leading the readers in this way, the author attains the following:

(1) He adheres to a priority of the salvation history of the Jewish people and differentiates between Israel and the Gentiles by letting the movement flow—in a good biblical manner—from Israel to the Gentiles. (2) He emphasizes that the true Israel is the Israel that found its completion in Christ, reckoned here as the Jewish Israel believing in Jesus. (3) This Israel, in return, has opened itself to the Gentiles and they belong now—in the soteriological sense—entirely to it, but from the point of view of salvation history they are “being added.”

Similarly John argues in Rev 21–22: The new Jerusalem—a symbol for the completed people of God, i.e., the redeemed humanity—is described, in a similar way to Rev 7:1–8, through biblical and early Jewish traditions,²⁸ as being the eschatological restoration of Israel.²⁹ These traditions also reveal that this Israel is precisely the Israel which is completed in Christ.³⁰ At the same time, the names of the tribes as written above the gates (21:12), the adopted tradition of the pilgrimage of the nations (21:24, 26; cf. above all Isa 60:3, 11–12), and the description of the wall and the gates in general,³¹ all relate to the fact that this Israel, which has

²⁷ Is it really a surprise? Rev 7:1–8 is constructed in a way that Gentiles may feel addressed and have to feel addressed. The discrete references in the text: (1) consignation refers to circumcision and baptism; (2) the grouping of the tribes interprets the inclusion of the Gentiles [see Hirschberg, *Israel*, 177–85]; (3) the eschatological restitution of the *Zwölftämmebund* [that awakens the theme of the Gentiles] may easily be missed because of this strong Jewish character. Only a reader who has read to the end and realizes that Gentile Christians also belong to God’s chosen people is, after a repeated reading, sensitive enough to perceive these allusions.

²⁸ Against D. Georgi, “Die Visionen vom himmlichen Jerusalem in Apk. 21 und 22,” in *Kirche: Festschrift für Günther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag* (ed. D. Lührmann and G. Strecker; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1980), 351–72.

²⁹ Many traditions, already used in Rev 7:1–8, are picked up again intentionally, as, for example, traditions relating to the Restitution of the Covenant of the twelve tribes. Others are being added anew: the pilgrimage of the nations, traditions about the new Jerusalem, the fundamental conception related to the twelve Apostles, the symbolism of the gems whose forms are related to Israel, etc.

³⁰ Through the traditions about the restitution of Israel, first of all the symbolism of the twelve tribes makes clear that the reference is to Israel. Through the twelve foundation stones (21:14, 19) representing the Apostles we see Israel completed in Christ. On the prominent significance of the fundamental metaphors see Hirschberg, *Israel*, 244–60.

³¹ It should be noted that the wall and the gates of the new Jerusalem are characterized by being open towards the outside. The gates are open day and night (21:25), their purpose is aesthetic rather than defensive (cf. Ezek 40:6–16, 20–37): the wall consists of jasper (21:18), so that the city becomes utterly clear and transparent and, together with the symbolism of the gems, becomes extremely attractive.

opened up to a kind of “proexistence” for the nations, therefore includes the Gentile Christians. John, who is describing the last completion as an opposition of Israel and the nations, does not do so to stress that there will still remain opposition between Jews and Gentiles after the final eschatological completion. Rather he does so because he wants to point that the way to the new creation leads through the eschatologically renewed Israel. For John, the difference between the Jewish believers in Jesus and the Gentile Christians in salvation history is therefore also relevant in this text.

From the background of the presumed Jewish-Christian conflict, this type of theology about God’s people is most relevant. John comforts the Jewish believers in Jesus, who are distressed due to Jewish animosity, by praising them and telling them that they are the representatives of the true Jewish identity. They are the basis and the core of the eschatological Israel. They are not apostates, unlike the members of Israel who do not believe in Christ. Similarly, he reasons anew regarding Gentiles who, because of Jewish criticism, doubt their belonging to God’s people. John argues that their participation is God’s will, because through Christ the eschatological Israel has become reality and because, according to the Scriptures, the eschatological Israel has been opened up to include the nations.

1.3.2. Christology

A central point of dispute between Christians and Jews was the confession to Christ. The declaration of Jesus being the revealed Christ stood, from the Jewish perspective, in contradiction to the factual reality. The temple was destroyed, Rome was still strong, and the Christian community who confessed the messiahship of Jesus did not give the impression of being a new messianic reality because of its miserable outward reality (Rev 2:9). This tension between claim and reality must have seemed irreconcilable for the Jews and also, perhaps, made (Jewish) Christians sympathetic towards Jewish criticism. John takes up this question and makes it clear in a threefold manner that the salvation, started by Christ, will lead to a concrete transformation of reality.

(1) In Revelation, Christ is designated as the one who is fighting for the liberation of creation from the power of evil, until the final realization of the kingdom of God. This becomes clear in Rev 5: the slain lamb, clearly the lamb of Passover and of sacrifice, receives from God dominion over eternity in the form of the sealed scroll. In the end this dominion will lead to the entire creation being drawn into the Kingdom of God and Christ (5:13). The community is described as standing between the times, between the beginning of the Kingdom of God and the definite-eschatological realization. This is used to explain the temporary situation of material deprivation. John’s answer to the questions posed by the Jews is that, though the reality is still “speaking another language,” the external messianic kingdom of Christ is already realized (in heaven) and will continue to gain acceptance from now on.

(2) John takes up concrete Jewish-messianic expectations, reshapes them and integrates them into his theological conception, making it clear in his own

way that salvation will modify the present-day situation. John presents these three arguments:

(a) A very concrete trait of the Early Jewish or Jewish Christian eschatology within Revelation is the expectation of the millennium (Rev 20:1–10), with its capital Jerusalem, the “beloved city” (Rev 20:9). This expectation is taken seriously as a theme of the Jewish believers in Jesus, because John expects, in an entirely unmetaphorical manner, a concrete kingdom.³² This expectation is, of course, clearly denationalized. It is not simply the Israel which is messianically renewed and ingathered, as in Early-Jewish expectations, nor is it the Israel which at the end of times will be converted to Christ.³³ It is, rather, the Israel which, through Christ, has reached its goal, joined by the Gentile Christians (in the sense of the Rev 7). This Israel will, in the time of the Millennium, receive justice and reign from Jerusalem.

(b) Eschatological conceptions of the Jewish believers in Jesus are often concrete because they enable an eschatological salvation for Israel. For John, Judaism which does not believe in Christ no longer belongs to the chosen people of God. It has, so to speak, expelled itself. Nevertheless, the question whether John is waiting for an eschatological salvation of Israel is not yet answered. In this connection we have to look again at the central texts about God’s people (Rev 7:1–8 and 21–22). These texts show the ideal eschatological Israel. The past, the present, and the future are interpreted in the light of the Prophets. These texts contain, therefore, different elements, which are related to the dimensions of time, but unfortunately, cannot always be clearly separated. I will show this using the example of Rev 7. The eschatologically sealed Israel of the 144,000 is clearly a selection: 12,000 of each tribe will be sealed. Consequently the text can be interpreted as relating to the past and the present: a small remainder of Jewish believers in Jesus against the whole of the Jewish people who reject faith in Christ. This would well correspond to John’s historical situation.

But now the conception of a remnant in Rev 7 is applied in such a manner as to give the impression of an eschatological abundance and not of a meager remainder. This is indicated in the symbolic number 144,000 (12 x 12,000).

³² Witness three main arguments for this concrete expectation: (1) By making it clear that the kingdom of Christ is already present on this earth, John shows, as an antithesis to the Roman Empire, that Jesus is the true Lord, not only of the future but also of the present. (2) The Christians who have suffered injustice and martyrdom in this world will be justified already in this world (20:4). (3) By inserting the millennium into his general conceptual framework, John shows that the creation is being brought under the kingdom of Christ, or better, alongside it. See also Jürgen Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ZBK 18; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1987), 192.

³³ So Hans Bietenhard, *Das tausendjährige Reich: Eine biblisch-theologische Studie* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1955), 95–98.

In addition, we have to consider that the main concern of this paragraph is not the separation of the remainder of the Jewish believers in Jesus, on the one hand, from Israel, who do not believe in Christ, on the other, but rather the separation of the eschatological people of God from the rest of humanity. How can this tension be interpreted? One possibility could be to take the Gentiles into consideration. The small remainder of the Jewish believers in Jesus would be brought to its eschatological fullness through the Gentiles. If our preceding ideas are correct, the text must be read first as referring to the Jewish people. It is a problem to fill in the 144,000 “too quickly” with Gentile believers. The “not too quickly” is certainly not a transparent solution—in symbolic-visionary texts there can often be no solutions of this kind—therefore the idea of filling the 144,000 with the Gentiles cannot be dismissed entirely.

A second solution could be to differentiate between a completion of quantity and a completion of quality. In other words, it is a question of a numerically small remainder of Jewish believers in Jesus, representing nevertheless the divine completion. This possibility is conceivable, because the expression “eschatological completion” is not clear enough.³⁴ But I would plead for a third possibility.

Completion described in 7:1–8 stands in such a striking contrast to the then existing miserable remnant of Jewish believers in Jesus that it is obvious to think of it in a futuristic dimension.³⁵ But even if this solution were correct, it still remains noteworthy that John refrains from any speculation about how the completion will be achieved, whether in the ongoing period or in the final event. Here he is much more discrete than Paul in Rom 11:25–27. Wanting to remain on firm ground, one can only say that John believes with certitude that God will reach his goal with Israel, no matter how small or how big this Israel will be in the end.

(c) Finally, in correlation to this and because of the seriousness in the manifestation of the concrete reality on earth, God the Creator has to be men-

³⁴ See Rainer Stuhlmann, *Das eschatologische Maß im Neuen Testament* (FRLANT 132; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 198.

³⁵ Cf. also Rev 11:1–2. John is speaking here about the Holy City and the Court of the temple being trampled down by the Gentiles during 42 months, while the inner part of the temple and the worshippers are being measured. The measured are, analogically to Rev 7:1–8, the people of God who believe in Christ who will be protected by God during the coming conflicts. The Jewish people could be represented by the Holy City, since there is a clear allusion to the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans. This would imply that the destruction of the temple and the resulting tribulation of the Jewish people is understood as a temporally limited trial. It is possible, therefore, that, as a final point, the Jewish people in a collective sense will also receive a time of grace. Yet, here too this possibility is more suggested than clearly articulated. For a more detailed discussion of Rev 11:1–14 see Hirschberg, *Israel*, pp. 216–21.

tioned.³⁶ In antithesis to clearly apocalyptic conceptions (*4 Ezra, 2 Bar*) about the world seen at this point to be radically fallen into evil and therefore not valued anymore as creation,³⁷ the Seer emphasizes the faithfulness of God to his creation. The creation still needs to be redeemed because it has radically fallen into evil. But, as we must point out, the salvation is not a salvation *from* the creation. In this sense, Revelation may be understood as a Jewish speech by Jewish believers in Jesus in defense of a faith which is gracious and relates to the new creation as something both spiritual and physical.

1.4. The Eschatological Israel

The “Ecclesiological Texts” in Revelation reveal that John knows only one people of God, one Israel. This Israel is the Jewish people which has found its completion in Christ and which has opened itself towards the Nations. Thus the real basis of this unity are the Jewish believers in Jesus. Israel forms almost the central point of the eschatological people of God. The new people of God may therefore be interpreted as Israel only because at its center are Jews, in the sense of being rooted in salvation history as well as in the sense of concrete sociological reality. For John it is impossible to think in terms of a metaphor that would designate a purely Gentile Christian church as Israel. By asserting that precisely the Jewish believers in Jesus are the true Jews, John comforts them in their afflictions and irritations which are caused by the synagogue, and he encourages them to hold tight to the confession to Christ even in testing. Likewise, he clearly recognizes the legality of the Gentile Christians and their participation with the eschatological people of God. By designating them as newcomers he also preserves Israel's priority in salvation history.

This eschatological “Israel” holds the Jewish people and the nations in unexpected unity. It represents a tense unity of Israel and the nations: true Israel is determined by the presence of the nations, and fulfillment for the nations is determined by connection to eschatological Israel. True Israel is determined both by its lasting intimate rootedness in the Jewish people and by having been opened up to include the nations.

Both in theology and in the interpretation of salvation history, the Seer sees the Jewish believers in Jesus *and with them* the Jewish people as a special group. It is noticeable that, however much he does this, he takes no action to differentiate between the way of life of the Jewish believers in Jesus and that of the Gentile Christians. The problem of the Law, which Paul found to be so explosive, seems almost settled. The supposed repeated allusion to the decree of the Apostles (Rev

³⁶ See Jürgen Roloff, “Neuschöpfung in der Offenbarung des Johannes,” *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 5 (1990): 119–38; Hirschberg, *Israel*, 207–16.

³⁷ See Wolfgang Harnisch, *Verhängnis und Verheißung der Geschichte: Untersuchungen zum Zeit- und Geschichteverständnis im 4. Buch Ezra und in der syrischen Baruch-apokalypse* (FRLANT 97; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 134.

2:28; cf. Acts 15:28), which should have found its approval by emphasizing the prohibitions of lewdness and of eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols (Rev 2:14, 20), does not bear closer examination.³⁸ John favors a lifestyle that is principally identical between the Jewish believers in Jesus and the Gentile Christians. This lifestyle contains Jewish heritage that has been transformed—and because of this transformation, it is valid for everybody. As one looks further into the future, one notices that John is promoting tendencies that are against his own self-understanding. A Jewish believer in Jesus who hardly distinguishes himself from a Gentile Christian—except by his Jewish origin and by bringing in certain Jewish *theologoumena*—will, in the long run, only with difficulty be able to maintain the necessary Israel-consciousness within the community. What will happen, when there are no more Jewish believers in Jesus in the communities, if such a thing could be possible? The great danger, which John refers to explicitly, will be that everything will be unscrupulously metaphorized and a purely Gentile Christian church will appoint itself as Israel. Indeed, the tragedy might in one respect simply consist in the fact that John could not imagine that the Jewish believers in Jesus would one day be such a minority vis-à-vis the Gentile Christians. John did not conceive that their importance would be only marginal. Of course, on the other hand, one also has to ask what sense observance of the Torah makes when the idea of chosenness has definitely passed over to the Israel believing in Christ.

2. The Gospel of John

In what follows, the Gospel of John is understood as a literary unity, except for the text-critically unmistakable secondary passages (John 5:3b, 4; 7:53–8:11) and John 21.³⁹ John 21 goes back to the final editor(s). The Gospel itself (1–20) was composed by a person (or a group) which I will call the Evangelist. The Disciple whom Jesus loved and who frequently appears in the Gospel of John could be the guarantor for the tradition standing behind the Gospel, possibly even as an eyewitness of Jesus. The Evangelist has intentionally introduced him as the guarantor for the tradition. But for readers who do not know the Johannine circle, this fact is not easily perceptible. Thus, in 21:24,

³⁸The eating of meat that had been sacrificed to idols and the lewdness which the Seer severely criticizes in the teachings of the Nicolaitans certainly stands in an anti-pagan, anti-Roman and, in a certain way, an anti-gnostic context. But they may be explained metaphorically, even without relation to the decree of the Apostles. Primarily the fact that the prohibition against eating “strangled” meat and blood has never been mentioned speaks against a relation to the decree of the Apostles. An interest in ritual laws, which regulate the coexistence between Gentiles and Jewish believers in Jesus could be applied especially to these commandments, which can hardly be developed further whether in their contents or metaphorically.

³⁹For arguments in support see Hengel, *Frage*, 224–64.

the editor has explicitly emphasized that the Disciple whom Jesus loved is the witness standing behind the Gospel.⁴⁰ The level on which the Gospel is interpreted in this paper is primarily the level of the Evangelist. It is clear that the substance of the tradition which has been transmitted to the Evangelist has a rather long history behind it, but this history cannot be reconstructed in detail here. The date when the Evangelist edited the final draft of the Gospel is probably near the end of the first century.⁴¹ The editorial final version might not have been redacted until much later. The location of the editing might have been somewhere in Asia Minor;⁴² this is supported by ancient church testimonies and the situation of the communities, as represented in the Gospel.

2.1. Jewish Believers in Jesus as the Basis of Conflict in the Gospel of John

Many of the newer interpretations show that the Gospel of John must be read in a manner that clearly reflects the reality of a community in which the Jewish believers in Jesus have a central significance.⁴³ Also, the problems caused by the Jewish believers in Jesus in the Johannine community can be detected relatively easily from the text. It becomes more difficult the moment one wants to use these texts to reconstruct exactly the history of the Johannine community(ies). In

⁴⁰ Such a way of clarifying the text is congruent with the editor's aim of bringing the Johannine circle positively into the central church.

⁴¹ So, among others, C. K. Barrett, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (KEK Sonderband; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 143; Brown, *John*, 2:LXXXIII; H. Thyen, "Johannesevangelium," TRE 17:215.

⁴² The conflict between Jews and Johannine Christians, which is a central theme of the Gospel, might best be understood by taking into consideration Asia Minor as the location of the edition. The proposed localization in the southern part of the kingdom of Agrippa II (Gaulanitis, Batanaea, Trachonitis) by Wengst, *Gemeinde*, 157–79, is not convincing. Yet it is possible that Jews were living there with official political power due to their relationship to Agrippa II. But this can hardly be proven, since we do not know enough about the Jewish communities residing there. By comparison to the Jewish communities of Asia Minor and their political power, there exists much epigraphical, literary, and increasing archaeological material. Yet it is more likely that a quick diffusion of the Birkat Haminim, formulated in Yavneh, was in Syria rather than in Asia Minor. But, as we will see, the Birkat Haminim is not necessary to explain the expulsion of the *Jewish believers in Jesus* from the synagogues. Nevertheless, Wengst takes it as a main argument. He was right to note many topographical elements in the Gospel indicating this region, but these can best be explained by taking into consideration that this region was the place of origin of Johannine Christianity, which later on, shortly before or after 70, has been transferred to Asia Minor. Cf. also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium* (4 vols.; HTKNT 4; Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 1:101–34.

⁴³ So Brown, *Community*; Martyn, *Gospel*; Wengst, *Gemeinde*, etc. These reconstructions, oriented at the Jewish thematic of the Jewish believers in Jesus, largely agree that the origin of the Johannine circle has to be found within Jewish believers in Jesus who came, initially, from Judea, had close relationship with the movement of the Baptist, and, in the beginning, represented a relatively basic "low-level" Christology. See esp. Brown, *Community*, 25–31; and Martyn, *Gospel*, 93–102.

the sections below we will concentrate on these points which show in all probability the significant role played by the Jewish believers in Jesus.

That excommunication of the Jewish believers in Jesus from the synagogues was a burning problem in the Johannine community(ies) can hardly be denied. Three texts speak explicitly of excommunication from the synagogues. All three of these texts make sense only when they are interpreted as addressing the problems of the Johannine community, not when attributed directly to Jesus:

(1) The first text (9:22) refers to the parents of a man born blind, who had been healed by Jesus. The parents are submitted by “the Jews” to a detailed interrogation. Their answers become evasive the moment the questions exceed a pure description of their son’s state of personality and affect directly Jesus’ performed healing (9:18–22). The explanation given by the Evangelist for this maneuver is unmistakable: “His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue” (9:22).⁴⁴ The healed man will suffer exactly what his parents had feared for themselves. He gives the Jews the possibility of creating a connection between himself and Jesus by assuming that Jesus is “from God” (9:33), and he is thereupon excommunicated from the synagogue. This hasn’t been expressed explicitly, but the phrase “so they threw him out [expelled him from the synagogue]” (9:34) is formulated intentionally in an ambiguous manner, which unfailingly raises the image of an excommunication from the synagogue.⁴⁵

(2) John 12:42 says that many of the leading men believed in Jesus, but they did not officially confess it for fear that they would be excommunicated from the synagogue. Here one has to consider clandestine groups of influential Jewish sympathizers, which are continually mentioned in the Gospel on a narrative level. For example, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night (3:2), evidently because he did not want to be seen doing so. Further, Joseph of Arimathea came secretly—“because he feared the Jews”—asking Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus from the cross (19:38).

(3) Finally, in 16:2, the major theme is again excommunication from the synagogue. Here it is completely clear that the question is not coming from the time of Jesus but relates instead to the Post-Easter-community, since the farewell speeches deal with problems that only arise after the resurrection. A period of affliction is prophesied, whereby excommunication from the synagogues is accompanied by the announcement of a deadly peril: “A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.” If excommunication from the synagogue refers to the Jewish believers in Jesus, then we must presume that the announcement of the future deadly peril is also directed first of all to the Jewish believers in Jesus as potential victims. It is not clear whether the Jews are the direct actors—which in most regions could have been possible only in the form

⁴⁴ Quotations throughout are from the New International Version (NIV).

⁴⁵ So also Wengst, *Gemeinde*, 79.

of mob rule—or whether they should be seen as helping in the state's actions of persecution. Should the latter be the case, then the simple fact of the excommunication from the synagogues would imply a death sentence, because in certain situations membership in the synagogue was the only real protection against actions of the state.⁴⁶

Do the Gospel texts also tell us something about reasons for excommunication from the synagogue? In 9:22 a commonly acknowledged and formulated opinion indicates that publicly confessing Christ was ground enough for excommunication. In fact, many passages in the Gospel make it clear that the fervently disputed question between Jews and Christians was whether Jesus was truly the Messiah. The arguments postulated from the Jewish side against Jesus' messiahship are: (1) his undignified death on the cross (12:34); (2) his origins from Galilee (instead of Bethlehem) (1:46; 7:42, 52); (3) the awareness of his ancestry (7:27; cf. 6:4); (4) Jesus' failure to prevent the betrayal of Judas; (5) his lack of scholarly education (7:15); and (6) his non-observance of the Torah (5:18; 9:16).⁴⁷ But as much as the question of the Messiah was controversial, on this level it appears that the difference of opinion moved within particular limits and had not yet reached its peak. The tones in the Gospel of John become extraordinarily shrill only where the concept of the Messiah is filled with the meaning of Johannine high Christology in which, according to John, the concept of Messiah finds its true sense. When John says in 20:31 that the Gospel was written to bring the reader to believe that Jesus is the Christ, that faith is to be understood in the sense of this highly developed Johannine Christology. For the Johannine Christians, the factually decisive question is not whether Jesus is the "Messiah," but whether he is "from God"; if God himself dwells in him then he is, in the Johannine sense, the "Messiah." Thus from the Jewish perspective it is no longer about a divergent, barely tolerable concept of faith that is internal to Judaism, but about a new, radical change of paradigm. If the Divine splendor has taken up its dwelling eschatologically in Jesus from Nazareth (1:14), then he solely defines the new and true identity of the people of God. Against this Christology, the Jews advanced their arguments by presuming that Jesus audaciously put himself on a level with God (5:18; 10:33; 19:7) or that his followers made him out to be God. The Gospel replies to these accusations by emphasizing that Jesus comes from above, that he is nothing of himself, and that he only speaks what he has heard from the Father. The Jewish reproach that the Christians introduced a second power beside God, later specified as "*shituf*" (= association), is answered by the Gospel of John: God is clearly the being and acting power in Jesus. Specifically, the Jewish argument would not allow the Johannine Christians to consider Jesus to be an interim human-Godly being.⁴⁸ This Jewish rejection of "association"

⁴⁶ Hirschberg, *Israel*, 96–117.

⁴⁷ Wengst, *Gemeinde*, 105–22.

⁴⁸ It may be that the incarnation theology of the Gospel is also a consequence of this polemic. It is altogether too difficult to decide whether the Johannine high Christology

always stems from the idea that something interposes between God and humans. But Johannine formulas like “whoever sees me, sees the Father” in particular make it clear that here is nothing interposing between humanity and God, because Jesus is in the deepest sense God’s dwelling place. Jesus is where we see God.⁴⁹

If it is understood that the Gospel was written at the end of the first century in Asia Minor, then the sociopolitical constellation referred to in Revelation is also significant for the situation of the Johannine Christians. The Jewish communities would have felt threatened not only from within by the Jewish believers in Jesus, but also from without, because Jewish loyalty towards the Roman-Hellenistic society could be jeopardized by the Judeo-Christian cross connections. Yet one has to admit that in John it is the religious questions that are emphasized and less the sociopolitical intertwinnings of the “Jews” into the pagan environment which are accentuated in Revelation. All the same, there are definite indications in the Gospel of John, especially in his portrayal of Jews enjoying a higher social status, that some did not want to be publicly connected with Jesus. This may best be visualized when sketched against the sociopolitical background of Asia Minor. Being influential and well integrated Jews in the polis, they could actually lose the most if brought into contact with Christians. Especially interesting is the fact that in the Johannine passion story “the Jews” emphasize, vis-à-vis Pilate, their allegiance to the emperor. As Jews (!) they accuse Pilate, the Roman, of not being sufficiently loyal to the emperor and force him to act against Jesus according to their point of view (19:15–16). Even on the historical level, the sociopolitical motives at the crucifixion may have played an important role. It is more probable that in the passion of Jesus the Johannine (Jewish) believers in Jesus foresaw their conflict and their martyrdom, and they interpreted the relevant scenes according to their own situation. Thus, Pilate became the general representative of Roman might and Jesus the archetype of Christian martyrdom.

A consequence of this conflict may have been that many (Jewish) believers in Jesus left the Johannine congregation, as can be deduced from the Johannine texts. Thus, it is repeatedly underlined in the Gospel of John that one should abide in or by Christ (8:31, 35; 6:56; 15: 4, 5, 6, 7, 9–11; 12:46). Especially infor-

provoked this quarrel with the synagogue or whether it was simply an outcome of this quarrel. Martyn, *Gospel*, 104, comes close to the latter. According to him, the schism from the synagogue was leading to “dualistic patterns of thought,” having consequences for the Christology as well as intensifying the gap with the synagogue. So also Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 44–72; David E. Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity* (NovTSup 28; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 73–84. So also Thyen, “Johannesevangelium,” 17:221.

⁴⁹ Obviously this particular form of monotheism has to be differentiated from a monotheism based on an abstract principle of unity, but it is not more or less Jewish than the philosophical concept of unity, which has been derived from non-biblical sources and infiltrated into Judaism. Thus the Evangelist strengthens the faith of his community by explaining the belief in Jesus as a legitimate internal Jewish possibility.

mative is 6:60–71, when—after the sermon of the bread, which for Jews is offensive and difficult to digest—many of Jesus' disciples turn away from him (6:66). Brown surmises that the straying disciples were surely Jewish believers in Jesus whose faith was considered by the Johannine Christians to be apostasy and unbelief, based on christological and eucharistic differences.⁵⁰ But it is also possible that this alludes to a complete breakaway from Christianity.⁵¹ However it may be, the construction of this scene shows a clear connection between the Jewish criticism and the consequent apostasy. The whole first scene of the polemic between Jews and Jesus' disciples is set in the synagogue (6:59). Only subsequently, after a definitely marked change of scene, does it become an internal Christian conflict. The logic is evident: harsh Jewish criticism leads to a desertion of disciples. Related to the community's status, there was a divergence within Johannine Christianity which, above all, concerned Jewish believers in Jesus who, because of Jewish criticism, faltered in their new faith.⁵² They either turned back to Judaism entirely—with or without faith in Christ in their hearts—or, as Brown assumes, they turned to a more Jewish variant of Christianity, which from the perspective of Johannine Christianity was also classified as desertion. John 8:30ff could also be considered as divergence or desertion. However, the interpretation of this text is highly controversial, and one should not base the argument on it.⁵³

2.2. The “Ecclesiological” Significance of the Jewish Believers in Jesus in John

The question whether the Jewish people and the Jewish believers in Jesus in the Gospel of John still have a prominent significance, at least in the theology of salvation history, is controversial. Because early Jewish themes in the Gospel are often not perceived as having intrinsic value, but only testimonial value for the revelation of Christ, it has often been presumed that Israel's prerogative as the

⁵⁰ Brown, *Community*, 74.

⁵¹ The text itself does not differentiate between a more or less strong belief, nor between heresy and orthodoxy, but establishes that certain disciples henceforth no longer followed him.

⁵² In addition we also have the Godfearers who valued Christianity because it brought about an absolute participation with God's people. Now these Godfearers too began to feel doubtful due to critical Jewish questions.

⁵³ The main problem is that in 8:31 those addressed in Jesus' speech are unmistakably the Jews who believed in Him, while the harshness of the following discussion does not indicate any kind of a mutuality, but rather the growing impression that a purely Jewish-Christian controversy is being fought out. The theme of the controversy is the question, “Who is the real offspring of Abraham?” Related to this question is Jesus' claim of sovereignty. Wengst's thesis (*Gemeinde*, 128–31) that the reference is to apostates who have returned to the synagogue cannot be verified. Neither can Brown's speculation (*Community*, 76–78) that the reference is to extremely conservative Jewish believers in Jesus. It is easy to imagine that the text originally referred to a pure Judeo-Christian conflict. Only on an editorial level, by inserting 8:30 and πεπιστευκότας αὐτῷ (“those who had believed in him”) in 8:31, does it refer to Jewish believers in Jesus. Probably one saw in the increasing importance of Abraham's offspring a theme with significance.

people of God was invalidated.⁵⁴ There are, however, many structural-analogical references in which Old Testament/Early-Jewish thinking is intrinsic to the revelation of Christ.⁵⁵ One has to judge, therefore, carefully and critically. But what about the question of God's chosen people? In John 4:22b it is said: "for salvation is from the Jews." Is this phrase only a historical reminiscence, in the sense that the Gospel begins from within the Jewish people, but this people—in relation to the revelation of Christ—now equates entirely with the nations? Or is there more here? According to the direct context, the answer must remain ambivalent. For on the one hand, in contrast to the Samaritans—who "do not know what they are worshiping" (4:22)—Jews understood whom they worshiped. On the other hand, a time will come when one will worship neither in Jerusalem nor on Mount Gerizim, but will worship in Spirit (4:23–24).

But there is another text which has been discussed many times and may eventually be helpful: the mysterious death-prophecy from the high priest Caiaphas: "You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (11:50; cf. also 18:14). The Evangelist's explanation is that Jesus must die "for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation, but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one" (11:51b, 52). One direction of interpretation shows a tendency to see complete equality. These interpretations can refer to the fact that λαός is used only the first time for "people," hinting at the dimension of salvation history, while in what follows, the author uses the word ἔθνος exclusively, giving the impression of an equal standing between God's people Israel and the nations (Gentiles).⁵⁶ Granted, the text makes it clear that Jesus' death is meant first for his people. For that reason, therefore, the Evangelist must emphasize that Jesus' death is also meant for the Gentiles. In addition, 11:52b hints at the pilgrimage of the peoples.⁵⁷ Similarly to 10:16, the Gentiles, i.e., the scattered children of God, are valued as the joined ones. Israel's priority in salvation history is acknowledged also in that Jesus is titled as Israel's King (1:49; 12:13; 19:19). The last text is especially revealing. Jesus is crucified as Israel's King, but the inscription is written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. In the evangelist's schema, this means: Jesus is, first of all, the King of Israel and, as such, he has significance for the Gentile nations as well. According to the Gospel of John, the new Israel consists of the Jews who be-

⁵⁴ So Jürgen Roloff, *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 305.

⁵⁵ This is the case, for example, in the field of temple theology, regarding the theology of the *Shekhina*. See M. L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2001). Since Christ is understood as the true eschatological temple (John 2:18–22), the conception of a necessary godly inhabitation, established in the cultic theology, is picked up positively and extended.

⁵⁶ See Roloff, *Kirche*, 306: "Yet, Jesus dies also for the Jewish nation, but his death is likewise 'for the scattered children of God,' i.e., for the Gentiles."

⁵⁷ So O. Hofius, "Die Sammlung der Heiden zur Herde Israels (Joh 10:16; 11:51f)," ZNW 78 (1967): 289–91; against Roloff, *Kirche*, 306.

lieve in Christ together with the joined Gentiles. Between these two groups there is, soteriologically, no longer any difference. The differences in lifestyle, too, are set aside: the new commandment is for both of them. What counts now is: “and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16; Ezek 34:23). But for the Johannine Christians it seems to be a matter of fact that the Jewish believers in Jesus form the heart of their community and as such guarantee salvation history and continuity for Israel. Therefore, one should not too quickly impute to the Johannine Christians a forgetting of Israel nor presume a metaphorization of the concept of the people of God. It is certainly not the case that one can say that the “idea of salvation history” has been fundamentally given up.⁵⁸

2.3. The Identity of the Jewish Believers in Jesus according to the Gospel of John

The concept of salvation history is not presented as strongly in the Gospel of John as in Revelation, but it nevertheless exists. The “Christians” are understood as being the legitimate continuation and completion of Israel. That salvation comes from among the Jews (4:22b) does not mean that Israel had only a meaning in the past. Rather, Israel is, according to John 10:13, permanently present, in the form of the Jewish believers in Jesus, within the one flock gathered by Christ. But this flock has been completed by sheep (the Gentile Christians) that are not from the original sheepfold. Also the generally Judeo-Christian character of Johannine theology gives an idea of the importance of the Jewish believers in Jesus within Johannine circles. Like Revelation, the quarrel between the Christian communities and the synagogues might have had the result that the Jewish believers in Jesus tried to overcome their identity-crisis by considering themselves to be the representatives of the true Israel.

3. Revelation and the Gospel of John in Comparison

If one makes a comparison between Revelation and the Gospel of John, then one has to talk about a reduction in the Judeo-Christian structure of thinking and believing. This can be seen in the following points:

3.1. The Question of God’s People and Christology

The concept of the Revelation of John is determined by the topic of the directional movement of the people of God. The direction leads from the Old Testament/Early-Jewish Israel through the eschatologically renewed Israel to the universal new creation (Rev 21–22).⁵⁹ At the same time, in all these phases, Christ is the real actor. He effectively is already in Israel’s history, and by his victorious exaltation he initiates the eschatological ingathering of Israel, and fights for the

⁵⁸ Roloff, *Kirche*, 306.

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion see Hirschberg, *Israel*, 223–43, 282–89.

liberation of the creation from all evil (a theme of Exodus) until the completely liberated people of God has reached its promised goal in the new Jerusalem. The concept of the Gospel of John is, in contrast, much more determined by Christology, and the subject of God's people appears only in passing. Christ is the central point of reference. He gathers around him (first of all) Jews and (then) Gentiles, unites them into one flock (10:16) and finally takes them with him into his Divine home (John 14:1–3; 17:24).

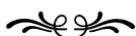
3.2. The Question of Salvation History

If Revelation moves on a horizontal timeline (past–future), then the theology of the Gospel is arranged vertically (above–below). Many passages may be explained by the differences in the type of literature. As a piece of historical-theological literature, one expects more material about salvation history in Revelation than in narrative literature such as the Gospel. Nevertheless, even within the Gospel literary type, one might have—as is shown by the Synoptics—an insertion of an apocalyptic chapter. So it might be considered that the above-mentioned difference in structure is not only specific to the type of literature, but more especially reflects the character of its theological thinking. In the context of our theme this means that specific salvation-historical *theologoumena*, which are still relevant in Revelation, have definitely lost or, at the very least, declined in their significance in the Gospel. Therefore, there is no longer any framework of messianic-chiliastic expectation in the Gospel. Neither can we discover signs of an eschatological hope for the Israel which does not believe in Christ. Finally, the theology of the creation in the Gospel is not so well-defined as it is in Revelation—despite the promise in the Gospel's prologue.

The Gospel and Revelation are framed by the Christian-Jewish quarrel, in which Jewish believers in Jesus play a deciding role. Both groups have a common Judeo-Christian basis of tradition, which is of use for them as they seek to overcome the corresponding conflicts in a theological-pastoral way. However, one has the strong impression that Revelation has kept these traditions in a more original form, while in the Gospel they present themselves in a more developed form. This has been demonstrated especially in the texts about God's people.

P A R T T H R E E

The Literary Heritage of Jewish Believers



The Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition

Craig A. Evans

1. Introduction

The attempt to infer the theological and practical concerns of the believing communities that produced, read, and studied the so-called Jewish Gospels is frustrated by several difficulties. First, none of these Gospels has survived; all that remains are quotations in various early Christian writers or scribal glosses in a few New Testament MSS. There is confusion on the part of these writers in the identification of these sources. This means that we cannot be sure which fragments belong together and how many distinct Jewish Gospels we actually have. More will be said on this below. Secondly, the quotations that are multiply attested sometimes do not agree in wording, thus raising concerns about how faithfully these Gospels have been quoted. Thirdly, many times the quotations are themselves translations, either from Greek to Latin, or from Aramaic (or Hebrew) to Greek and/or to Latin. Fourthly, sometimes the patristic quotations are in polemical contexts, whose point is to criticize or fault the form of the tradition found in the Jewish Gospel under discussion. Fifthly, the quotations and scribal glosses that are extant represent only a small fraction of the original documents. All of these factors impress upon us the need for great care in assessing the theology and emphases of these documents. Moreover, the mere fact that what we have is a selection of quotations chosen by the patristic writers, often because they differ from the New Testament Gospels, stands as a warning against too quickly assuming that we may infer from these quotations the principal emphases of the Jewish communities of faith as they themselves would have seen them. All that we have is what outsiders either disagree with or find different, and that hardly provides a sufficient foundation on which we may build weighty inferences.¹

¹ Imagine Matthean scholars attempting to formulate Matthean theology solely on the basis of a dozen or so quotations of Matthew, chosen because they differ from Mark or Luke. These quotations, let us further imagine, are frequently out of context, are not

The goal of this chapter is to examine the theological and practical emphases, as they may be detected, in the extant fragments of materials widely recognized as Jewish Gospels, and in closely related materials. I leave to others the attempts to distinguish Nazoraeans from Ebionites, and these groups from more or less “mainstream” early Jewish belief in Jesus. The conclusions that have been reached here are modest but should make useful contributions to the work of others.

2. Matthew: A New Testament Jewish Gospel

The Gospel of Matthew has been traditionally viewed as the most Jewish of the four New Testament Gospels. Whereas the Jewish authorship of Mark and John is disputed, almost everyone agrees that the Matthean Gospel was composed by a Jew.² How this Jewish author viewed Jews who did not believe in Jesus is an item that continues to be debated.³ The evangelist’s polemical stance is obvious, but it should not be taken as anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic. It is, rather, polemic directed against Jewish religious leaders and a Jewish people that have rejected Jesus the Messiah and, in the view of the author of Matthew, have brought upon themselves God’s wrath.⁴ After all, as one of our colleagues has written, it “is perfectly possible . . . for a Jewish Christian community to be open to Gentiles, to be hostile to some non-Christian Jews, and to have an elevated view of Jesus which sees him as an altogether greater figure than Moses, without that community abandoning the observance of Jewish prescriptions which make them Jewish Christian.”⁵

Scholarship for the last 50 years has persistently—but not uniformly—moved in this direction. The earliest redaction-critical work on the Gospel of Matthew suggested that the author was Jewish and interpreted the dominical tradition from a Jewish perspective.⁶ Comparison of Matthean interpretation of Scripture with the *pesher* exegesis of Qumran has been explored,⁷ while it has

always quoted the same way by those who cite them, and half the time they are not in the original language of Matthew (and perhaps we are not sure what that original language was). To be sure, aspects of Matthean theology could be inferred, but our conclusions would have to be quite tentative.

²On this, see Dale C. Allison Jr. and W. D. Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 1:7–58; Scot McKnight, “A Loyal Critic: Matthew’s Polemic with Judaism in Theological Perspective,” in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (ed. C. A. Evans and D. A. Hagner; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 55–79 (75 n. 71).

³See Douglas R. A. Hare, “How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 264–77.

⁴McKnight, “A Loyal Critic.”

⁵James Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” in *CHJ* 3:731–75 (754).

⁶Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

⁷Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Almqvist, 1954; 2d ed. Lund: Gleerup, 1967; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).

been observed that the evangelist Matthew possessed the ability to work with Scripture in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, the three principal languages of Jewish Palestine,⁸ which are also represented in the Scrolls found in the region of the Dead Sea. Matthean exegesis has been shown to be consistent with Jewish practices; indeed, Matthean redaction at points reveals a skillful weaving together of dominical tradition and select passages of Scripture.⁹ Matthean editing and expansion of its Markan and Q sources reflect “not the work of a Christian prophet, but of an ‘exegete,’”¹⁰ whose editing, embellishment, enrichment, and expansion of his sources correspond quite closely to the paraphrasing and interpretive practices observed at work in the Aramaic paraphrases of Old Testament Scripture.¹¹

Sociological analyses have led to supporting conclusions. For example, Andrew Overman believes that the Matthean community was in essence a sect within Judaism whose home was Galilee (and not Antioch).¹² Anthony Saldařini believes that the evangelist was himself a Jewish teacher competing for the minds of the Jewish people in the aftermath of the calamity of 70.¹³ His harsh criticisms were not directed against the people as a whole,¹⁴ but against the religious leadership that opposed and persecuted the messianic movement. Finally, in recent work David Sim agrees in large measure with these studies, describing the Matthean community as a “Jewish group of believers in Jesus.”¹⁵ Though they may believe in Jesus as the Christ, their community, Sim thinks, is best not labeled “Christianity.”¹⁶

⁸ Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (NovTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1967).

⁹ O. Lamar Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (CBQMS 5; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1976).

¹⁰ Graham N. Stanton, “Matthew as Creative Interpreter of the Sayings of Jesus,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels* (ed. P. Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 271.

¹¹ On this feature, see my essay, “Targumizing Tendencies in Matthean Redaction,” in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldařini* (ed. A. J. Avery-Peck, D. J. Harrington, and J. Neusner; 2 vols.; JSJSup 85; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:93–116.

¹² J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

¹³ Anthony J. Saldařini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Pace Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), esp. 113–68. Stanton appreciates the intensity of Matthean polemic, which he rightly notes is not always fully appreciated by interpreters of this Gospel. But in the opinion of several other interpreters, with whom the present writer agrees, the Matthean perspective is still best understood in terms of intramural Jewish controversy.

¹⁵ David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

¹⁶ Aspects of the theses of Overman, Saldařini, and Sim have been criticized. The principal objection alleges that these studies tend to minimize elements of discontinuity between the Matthean community and the larger Jewish community. For example, Overman does not provide sufficient evidence for situating the Matthean community in the

The Jewishness of the Gospel of Matthew is profound and systemic. In its opening verse it describes itself as “the book of the lineage (lit. *genesis*) of Jesus Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” The biblical tone of this terminology would be immediately evident to a synagogue-attending, Torah-observant Jew of the first century. This language recalls the genealogical reference to the first human being: “This is the book of the lineage (lit. *genesis*) of Adam” (Gen 5:1). Matthew declares Jesus Messiah to be the “son of David,” thus drawing attention to his Davidic and royal heritage, and the “son of Abraham,” thus linking Jesus to Israel’s great founding patriarch and, by looking back to the very beginning of God’s people, reminding Jewish readers of the whole of Israel’s history—from Abraham to the Messiah (cf. Matt 1:17).

The arrangement of the genealogy into three periods of fourteen generations, the Moses typology (in the infancy narrative and in the presentation of Jesus’ teaching in five major blocks of material—each concluding with the Pentateuchal phrase “and when he finished” [e.g., Deut 31:24; 32:45]), the appeal to five prophecies in the infancy narrative as fulfilled, the five antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount, the mountain motif, the haggadic embellishments, the familiarity with the diversity of text types available in Palestine (now attested much more fully thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls), the familiarity with Jewish customs

social setting of post-70 formative Judaism, in which eschatology and apocalyptic are deemphasized. Overman’s thesis struggles against Matthew 13 and 24–25 (see F. W. Burnett, review of J. A. Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*, *JBL* 110 [1991]: 725–26; B. E. Bowe, review of J. A. Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*, *CBQ* 54 [1992]: 361–63), while his location of the Matthean community in Sepphoris (*Matthew’s Gospel*, 159) seems no longer tenable in light of recent archaeological work, which reveals a dramatic decline in Jewish presence after the war (see M. Chancey and E. M. Meyers, “How Jewish Was Sepphoris in Jesus’ Time?” *BAR* 26, no. 4 [2000]: 18–33, 61; M. Chancey, “The Cultural Milieu of Ancient Sepphoris,” *NTS* 47 [2001]: 127–45). Jewish resurgence, which accommodated emerging rabbinic Judaism, dates to a later period. Saldarini’s approach (*Matthew’s Jewish-Christian Community*, 2) struggles to order coherently the rejection and expulsion of the Matthean community, on the one hand, and its continuation within the Jewish social world, on the other (see A.-J. Levine, review of A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, *JBL* 114 [1995]: 732–34; B. T. Viviano, review of A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, *CBQ* 57 [1995]: 607–9; and esp. G. N. Stanton, “Revisiting Matthew’s Communities,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* [SBLSP 33; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994], 9–23). Finally, Sim’s approach relies heavily upon, and with much speculation, Matthew’s relation to Paul and the struggle with James. He exaggerates Matthew’s unsympathetic attitude toward Gentiles and Paul’s unsympathetic attitude toward Torah (see S. McKnight, review of David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community*, *CBQ* 62 [2000]: 375–77; James Carleton Paget, review of David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community, Reviews in Religion and Theology* 7 [2000]: 48–51). For criticism of the tendency to downplay indications of discontinuity, see Hare, “How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?” esp. 273–75.

and interpretive traditions, the emphasis on fulfilling Torah so that one's righteousness exceeds even that of the Pharisees, and, finally, the references to the "house of Israel," to whom the good news of the kingdom is to be proclaimed, testify to the utter Jewishness of the Gospel of Matthew.

Given the Jewish character of this Gospel it is not surprising that it was influential in the early Jewish church.¹⁷ Not only did a form of this Gospel circulate in Hebrew (see below), but it seems to have served as the foundational text out of which emerged the Aramaic Jewish Gospel (usually identified as the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*) and the Greek Jewish Gospel (usually identified as the *Gospel of the Ebionites*). Thus, two of the three best known and most often mentioned Jewish Gospels are heavily dependent upon Matthew, and indeed, may in fact be recensions of it. (However, more will be said about this below.) These Gospels, a few papyrus fragments, a few variants found in Greek MSS, and the recently published Hebrew and Coptic versions of Matthew will be considered in the balance of this study. Our goal is to learn from these Gospels and Gospel sources what we can of the Jewish communities that believed in Jesus.

3. The Jewish Gospels outside the New Testament

With one or two notable dissenters, most scholars in the last century or so have followed Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker (in Hennecke-Schneemelcher) and more recently A. F. J. Klijn in extrapolating from the church fathers three distinct extra-canonical Jewish Gospels: the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*, the *Gospel of Ebionites*, and the *Gospel of the Hebrews*.¹⁸

A recent study by Peter Lebrecht Schmidt has called this near-consensus into question.¹⁹ Critically assessing the discussion from Schmidtke to Klijn, Schmidt thinks that originally there was only one Jewish Gospel, probably written in Aramaic circa 100 C.E., called the "Gospel according to the Hebrews," which was subsequently translated into Greek and Latin.

In an even more recent article, Jörg Frey finds Schmidt's thesis problematic.²⁰ Frey identifies four documents: (1) a Greek Gospel used by the Ebionites,

¹⁷ Édouard Massaux, *The Later Christian Writings* (vol. 2 of *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus*; New Gospel Studies 5.2; ed. A. J. Bellinzoni; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ A critical assessment of this complicated question is offered by A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (VCSup 17; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 27–30. However, the recent studies by Peter Lebrecht Schmidt ("Und es war geschrieben auf Hebräisch, Griechisch und Lateinisch": Hieronymus, das Hebräer-Evangelium und seine mittelalterliche Rezeption," *Filologia mediolatina* 5 [1998]: 49–93) and Jörg Frey ("Die Scholien nach dem 'jüdischen Evangelium' und das sogenannte Nazoräerevangelium," *ZNW* 94 [2003]: 122–37) have reopened the question.

¹⁹ Schmidt, "Und es war."

²⁰ Frey, "Die Scholien," esp. 130 n. 38.

which survives as quotations in Epiphanius; (2) a Greek Gospel used by the “Hebrews,” which survives as quotations in the Alexandrian Fathers Clement, Origen, and Didymus; (3) an Aramaic Gospel that survives in Jerome, which is later called the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*; and (4) the readings to the Gospel of Matthew that are taken from the so-called *Judaicon* (which, contra Schmidtke, are not part of the hypothetical Gospel of the Nazoreans). Frey underscores the fluidity, if not plurality, of the texts and versions of the Gospels, within Jewish Christian circles and without.

Obviously, the state of the scholarly question has been thrown into the air; there simply is no consensus. How, then, shall we proceed? Perhaps Frey has put us on the right track. If we have little confidence in the traditional identification of the three Jewish Gospels (i.e., *Nazoreans*, *Ebionites*, and *Hebrews*), then perhaps we should work with the sources we actually have: (1) the Jewish Gospel known to Origen, (2) the Jewish Gospel known to Epiphanius, and (3) the Jewish Gospel known to Jerome. By taking this approach we do not have to decide the question of how many Jewish Gospels there were and, if more than one, how they related to one another and which one(s) the church fathers were citing. As it so happens, there is some correspondence with the traditionally identified three Gospels. The quotations and traditions provided by Origen roughly correspond to what has been called the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the quotations and traditions provided by Epiphanius correspond to what has been called the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and the quotations and traditions provided by Jerome roughly correspond to what has been called the *Gospel of the Nazoreans*. Our analysis will proceed in the order of our patristic sources. The approach recommended here will result in a few of the quotations changing locations.

Before proceeding further, a word needs to be said about the *Gospel of Thomas*. This document is probably not Jewish, whatever one’s opinion of the extent of its gnostic character. However, there is an interesting unit of tradition within it that may very well derive from Jewish Christianity. We find in saying 12:

The disciples said to Jesus, “We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be great over us?” Jesus said to them, “Wherever you shall have come, you are to go to James the Righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.”

The emphasis on James, rather than Thomas (as in the prologue and saying 13), is in tension with this writing’s gnosticizing preference for the disciple Thomas. Rather, the Jacobian orientation of this saying points to an early, Jewish tradition, not to later gnostic legend. Also, the concluding language, “for whose sake heaven and earth came into being,” parallels language found in rabbinic literature.²¹ Accordingly, saying 12 of *Thomas* is in all probability a piece

²¹ See *b. Ta'an.* 24b: “Each day a heavenly voice came [from Mount Horeb] and said: ‘The whole universe is sustained on account of my son Hanina’” (cf. *b. Ber.* 17b, 61b; *b. Hul.* 86a; *b. B. Bat.* 74b).

of Jewish Christian tradition that may reach back to the latter part of the first century.²² However, because *Thomas* is not itself a Jewish Christian work, it will not be considered further.

And finally, there are some papyri that may represent fragments of other Jewish Gospels. A few of these will also be considered.

3.1. The Jewish Gospel Known to Origen

The Jewish Gospel known to Origen of Alexandria²³ (which in the older understanding was usually called the *Gospel of the Hebrews*) may well have been

²² See further discussion in chapter 3 of this book.

²³ See W. F. Adeney, "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," *Hibbert Journal* 3 (1904–1905): 139–59; G. Bardy, "Saint Jérôme et l'Évangile selon les Hébreux," *MScRel* 3 (1946): 5–36; A. S. Barnes, "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," *JTS* 6 (1905): 356–71; S. P. Brock, "A New Testimonium to the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews,'" *NTS* 18 (1971): 220–22; V. Burch, "The Gospel according to the Hebrews: Some New Matters Chiefly from Coptic Sources," *JTS* 21 (1920): 310–15 [see reply by M. R. James, "Notes on Mr Burch's Article 'The Gospel according to the Hebrews,'" *JTS* 22 (1921): 160–61]; J. T. Dodd, *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*. (London: Search, 1933); R. Dunkerley, "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," *ExpTim* 39 (1927–28): 437–42; Jack Finegan, *Hidden Records of the Life of Jesus: An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha and to Some of the Areas through which They Were Transmitted, Namely, Jewish, Egyptian, and Gnostic Christianity, Together with the Earlier Gospel-type Records in the Apocrypha, in Greek and Latin Texts [with] Translations and Explanations* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1969), 147–54; R. Handmann, *Das Hebräerevangelium: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Kritik des Hebräischen Matthäus* (TU 5.3; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1888); Otfried Hofius, "'Unknown Sayings of Jesus,'" in *The Gospel and the Gospels* (ed. P. Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 356–57; A. F. J. Klijn, "Das Hebräer-und das Nazoräerevangelium," *ANRW* 25.5:3997–4033; Klijn, "Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian and Aramaic Gospel Tradition," in *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black* (ed. E. Best and R. McL. Wilson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 169–77; E. Klostermann, "Hebräerevangelium (Nazoräerevangelium)," in *Apocrypha II: Evangelien* (ed. H. Lietzmann; KIT 8; 3d ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1929), 5–12; M.-J. Lagrange, "L'Évangile selon les Hébreux," *RB* 31 (1922): 161–81, 321–49; Dieter Lührmann, "Das Bruchstück aus dem Hebräerevangelium bei Didymos von Alexandrien," *NovT* 29 (1987): 265–79; Massaux, *Later Christian Writings*, 183–91; E. B. Nicholson, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews: Its Fragments Translated and Annotated* (London: C. K. Paul, 1879); P. Parker, "A Proto-Lukan Basis for the Gospel according to the Hebrews," *JBL* 59 (1940): 471–78; Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (StPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988; repr., Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 83–94; G. Quispel, "The 'Gospel of Thomas' and the 'Gospel of the Hebrews,'" *NTS* 12 (1966): 371–82; J. A. Robinson, "Three Notes on the Gospel to the Hebrews," *Expositor*, Fifth Series 5 (1897): 194–200; Schmidt, "Und es war"; Alfred Schmidtkne, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den jüden-christlichen Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Literatur und Geschichte der Judenchristen* (TU 37.1; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911), 126–66; Schmidtkne, "Zum Hebräerevangelium," *ZNW* 35 (1936): 24–44; Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, "Jewish-Christian Gospels," in *Gospels and Related Writings* (vol. 1 of *New Testament Apocrypha*; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; rev. ed.; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 172–78; Ron Cameron, ed., *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 83–86; J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A*

known to Clement of Alexandria and probably also to Didymus the Blind. Because quotations of this Gospel are preserved primarily by Christian writers who lived in Alexandria, the original provenance was probably Egypt. Its mystical features are somewhat reminiscent of the *Gospel of Thomas* and other writings that circulated among gnostic groups, as at least one excerpt suggests (*Gos. Heb.* §4 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §1 in Elliott, p. 9]: “He that marvels shall reign, and he that has reigned shall rest” (attributed to Clement, *Stromata* 2.9.45 and 5.14.96). This saying is very similar to *Gos. Thom.* §2.

The Jewish Gospel known to Origen may be the earliest of the Jewish Gospels (or Gospel recensions), dating perhaps to the end of the first century or, more probably, to the beginning of the second. The Jewish Gospel known to Origen shows no evidence of being dependent upon Matthew or the other Synoptic Gospels. What tradition is preserved appears to have developed from other sources and to reflect a different set of concerns and beliefs.²⁴

One excerpt (*Gos. Heb.* §3 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §2 in Elliott, p. 9)²⁵ reflects wisdom ideas, when we have Jesus describing how the Spirit led him into the arena of temptation: “Even so did my mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of my hairs and carry me away to the great mountain Tabor” (Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.12; *Hom. Jer.* 15.4; See also Jerome, *Comm. Mich.* 7.7; *Comm. Isa.* 40.9 [*Sed et in evangelio quod iuxta Hebraeos scriptum, Nazarei lectitant, Dominus loquitur: modo me tulit mater mea, Spiritus sanctus.* “But in that Gospel written according to the Hebrews, which is read by the Nazoreans, the Lord says: ‘A moment ago my mother, the Holy Spirit, took me up.’”]; Jerome, *Comm. Ezech.* 16.13). The identification of the Spirit (whose verbal gender in Hebrew—but not Greek—is feminine) as “Mother” coheres with wisdom tradition (though it also coheres with gnostic ideas). The tradition of transport by one’s hair probably originates with Ezek 8:3: “. . . took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem . . .” It is echoed in Bel and the Dragon 36 (“then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head, and lifted him by his hair and set him down in Babylon”) and later traditions (cf. 2 Bar. 6:3: “suddenly a strong spirit lifted me and carried me above the wall of Jerusalem”; Cologne Mani Codex 55.16–23: “suddenly the living Spirit seized me and brought me up mightily and stood me at the top of a very high mountain”). Early forms of these traditions may have contributed to *Gos. Heb.* §3. Tabor as the scene of the temptation lacks all verisimilitude and may reflect an eschatological orientation (cf. Jer 46:18).²⁶

Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation based on M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 5–10.

²⁴ Nicholson (*Gospel according to the Hebrews*) early on recognized the antiquity and independence of this Gospel. It should be noted that some of what Nicholson regards as belonging to the *Gospel of the Hebrews* (as he called this Gospel) is now assigned to the *Gospel of the Nazoreans* (as most today call this Gospel).

²⁵ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 52–55.

²⁶ Adeney, “Gospel according to the Hebrews,” 152. According to 1424 Matt 28:16, the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples on Mount Tabor.

Another excerpt (*Gos. Naz.* §16 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §1 in Elliott, pp. 10–11) provides us with an interesting version of the story of the rich man who asked Jesus what he must do to inherit life. We find it in Origen's Commentary on Matthew, but preserved in Latin and not in Greek (*Comm. Matt.* 15.14 on 19:16–22):

“Master, what good thing must I do that I may live?” He said to him: “Man, do the Law and the Prophets.” He answered him: “I have done (them).” He said to him: “Go and sell all that you possess and distribute it among the poor, and then come and follow me.” But the rich man then began to scratch his head, for it did not please him. And the Lord said to him: “How can you say, ‘I have done the Law and Prophets?’ For it is written in the Law: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’; and behold, many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are covered with filth and die of hunger; and your house is full of many good things and nothing at all comes forth from it to them!” And he turned and said to Simon, his disciple, who was sitting by him: “Simon, son of Jonah, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.”²⁷

According to Mark 10:19, Jesus only says, “You know the commandments.” In Matt 19:17, Jesus says, “Keep the commandments.” This excerpt follows Matthew, but has Jesus say, “Do the Law and the Prophets.” The intent is to expand Jesus' requirements, lest one think that Jesus only expects adherence to the Ten Commandments themselves, which in the Synoptic version of the story are mentioned in part (cf. Matt 19:18–19 = Mark 10:19 = Luke 18:20). The Jewish Gospel omits the partial list of the Commandments, instead having Jesus require doing the “Law and the Prophets.” Not only is the version in the Jewish Gospel more stringent in what is required, it is more severe in its criticism of the man, who in this version of the story is said at the outset of the narrative to be “rich” (*dives*), thus preparing for the stinging rebuke that will follow. Jesus appeals to Lev 19:18 (cf. Matt 19:19b). The rich man is faulted for sharing none of his wealth with his starving, impoverished, dirty brothers, who are “sons of Abraham” and as such share in Israel's covenants and blessings. The version of the story in the Jewish Gospel seems to have been influenced by the Lukan Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–30).²⁸

Contrary to the opinion of Schmidtke and others, Jeremias does not think this story from Origen's Jewish Gospel (which Jeremias assumes is part of the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*) is simply a reworking of the Matthean version, which itself is clearly a reworking of the Markan story. Rather, he thinks the tradition derives from an independent Jewish Gospel.²⁹ Perhaps. More recently Klijn has

²⁷ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 56–60.

²⁸ In the Latin version of this parable the rich man is also called *dives*, which in later traditions is mistakenly thought to be the rich man's name.

²⁹ Joachim Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1964), 47. Schmidtke (*Neue Fragmente*, 90–94) believes this version of the story originated among Aramaic-speaking Christians in Beroea.

argued that this form of the story and that found in Tatian are probably dependent on Matthew.³⁰ Nevertheless, the form of the story in Origen's Jewish Gospel may contain independent elements—elements that are distinctly Jewish. The reference to the rich man's fellows as “your brothers” and as “sons of Abraham” reflects a Jewish perspective. The statement that “nothing at all comes forth from it to them” has a Semitic ring, while the mention in passing that Jesus is sitting portrays Jesus as a teacher in Jewish style.

3.2. *The Jewish Gospel Known to Epiphanius*³¹

The Jewish Gospel known to Epiphanius has been traditionally called the *Gospel of the Ebionites*. Some have wondered if it is the Gospel called by Origen, Ambrose, and Jerome the “Gospel of the Twelve.”³² Irenaeus may have known of it. Omission of the virgin birth is consistent with Ebionite Christianity’s denial of it. Elimination of mention of John the Baptist’s consumption of locusts is in keeping with Ebionite vegetarianism. This Gospel may have circulated in Greek and seems related to Matthew, though it made harmonizing use of the other two Synoptic Gospels.³³ It probably dates to some time near the middle of the second century.

According to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 30.13.4–5):

And “it came to pass that John was baptizing, and Pharisees and all Jerusalem went out to him and were baptized. And John had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather girdle about his waist, and his food, it is said, was wild honey, the taste of which was that of manna, as a cake dipped in oil.” (*Gos. Eb.* §2 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher [= §3 in Elliott, p. 15])³⁴

³⁰A. F. J. Klijn, “The Question of the Rich Young Man in a Jewish-Christian Gospel,” *NovT* 8 (1966): 149–66 (153–54).

³¹See D. A. Bertrand, “L’Évangile des Ébionites: Une harmonie évangélique antérieure au Diatessaron,” *NTS* 26 (1980): 548–63; M.-É. Boismard, “Évangile des Ébionites et problème synoptique (Mc 1.2–6 et par),” *RB* 73 (1964): 321–52; Finegan, *Hidden Records*, 165–73; G. Howard, “The Gospel of the Ebionites,” in *ANRW* 25.5:4034–53; Massaux, *Later Christian Writings*, 191–200; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites and Their Literature,” in *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (ed. K. Stendahl; New York: Harper, 1957; repr., New York: Crossroad, 1992), 208–31; E. Klostermann, “Ebionitenevangelium (Evangelium der Zwölf?),” in *Apocrypha II: Evangelien* (ed. H. Lietzmann; KIT 8; 3d ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1929), 13–14; G. A. Koch, “A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites” (PhD diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1976), esp. 316–58; Frans Neirynck, “The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark,” in *The New Testament in Early Christianity* (ed. J.-M. Sevrin; BETL 86; Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1989), 123–75 (157–60); Schmidtko, *Neue Fragmente*, 166–246; H. Waitz, “Das Evangelium der zwölf Apostel (Ebionitenevangelium),” *ZNW* 13 (1912): 338–48; 14 (1913): 38–64, 117–32; Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 166–71; Cameron, *The Other Gospels*, 103–6; Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 5–6, 8–9.

³²Cf. Jerome, *Pelag.* 3.2; Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 1. Howard (“Gospel of the Ebionites,” 4035) doubts this identification.

³³Bertrand, “L’Évangile des Ébionites”; Howard, “Gospel of the Ebionites,” 4037–44.

³⁴For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 67–68. Klijn comments that the quotation reflects LXX style and that the change from locust (ἀκρίς) to cake (ἐγκρίς)

Epiphanius is annoyed by the variant, complaining that the Ebionites “were resolved to make the word of truth into a lie and to put a cake in the place of locusts.” This is not quite what the text says, however. All that is said is that the wild honey had the taste of manna, “as a cake dipped in oil.”³⁵ This interesting elaboration of the honey, which alludes to Exod 16:31, does in effect take the place of the locusts and may allude to Jewish traditions concerned with the nature and taste of manna (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 3.1.6 §26–32; *Mekilta* on Exod 16:31 [Vayassa’ §6]; *Sipre Numbers* §89 [on Num 11:1–23]; *t. Sotah* 4:3; *b. Yoma* 75a). If it does, the Jewish character of this variant tradition is further attested.³⁶ Linking John’s wilderness food with the food that the Israelites ate while crossing the wilderness and preparing for entry into the promised land may lend an additional element of restoration theology to the ministry and activity of John. Such an interpretive orientation once again underscores the Jewish character of the tradition. Omission of the locusts is also consistent with Ebionite vegetarianism.³⁷

Epiphanius also reports a remarkable expansion of the story of Jesus’ baptism (*Pan.* 30.13.7–8):

When the people were baptized, Jesus came and was baptized by John. And as he came up from the water, the heavens opened and he saw the Holy Spirit in the form of the dove, descending and entering into him. And a voice from heaven (was) saying: “You are my beloved son, in whom I have taken pleasure”; and again, “Today I have begotten you.” And immediately a great light shone round about the place. Seeing this, it says, John says to him, “Who are you, Lord?” And again a voice from heaven (sounded forth) to him: “This is my beloved son, in whom I have taken pleasure.” And then it says: John, falling on his face, was saying, “I beg you, Lord, baptize me!” But he forbade him, saying, “Permit, for thus it is proper that all things be fulfilled.” (*Gos. Eb.* §3 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher [= §5 in Elliott, p. 15])³⁸

Although this tradition reflects Synoptic material throughout, several variants should be noted. The Holy Spirit descends and enters (εἰσελθούσης) Jesus. According to Matt 3:16 (and Luke 3:22) the Spirit descends upon Jesus; it does not enter him. Mark 1:10 says the Spirit descended to (possibly into) Jesus, while John 1:32 says the Spirit remained on Jesus. This Gospel’s statement that the Spirit “entered into” Jesus is an important addition to the story. This Gospel also adds a quotation of part of Ps 2:7 (“Today I have begotten you”). Then, drawing inspiration from the

reflects a word play in the Greek, thus supporting the conclusion that the *Gospel of the Ebionites* originated in that language.

³⁵ See 1 Kgs 19:6, where Elijah eats cakes and oil; cf. Koch, “Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” 328.

³⁶ Koch (“Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” 329) plausibly suggests that John the Baptist may have been understood as the new prophet like Moses promised in Deut 18:15–18.

³⁷ On this point, see Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Die Theologie und Geschichte des Judentumchristentums* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), 193–96; as well as the English version in H. J. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 99–101.

³⁸ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 70–73.

story of Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, we are told that "a great light shone round about the place" and that John asks, "Who are you, Lord?" The allusion to Acts 9:3–6 is obvious.³⁹ The baptism of Jesus is upgraded from Jesus' personal vision to a public epiphany—indeed, one could almost say a conversion experience for the Baptist. Returning to the Matthean exemplar, but once again embellishing the story, the Jewish Gospel known to Epiphanius says that John begged Jesus, whom he addresses as "Lord," to baptize him.

Finally, Klijn wonders if the absence of "righteousness," which is thematic and distinctive in Matthew (cf. 5:6, 10, 20, 48; 6:1, 33), is evidence that the author of the Jewish Gospel known to Epiphanius had access to an older version of Matthew.⁴⁰ Perhaps, but the omission of "all righteousness" here in the baptism story may be due to a shift away from ethics to that of prophecy, as the quotation of Ps 2:7 may imply. If Jesus is God's Son, declared to be such by God himself, he hardly needs to be baptized to fulfill righteousness. But his baptism and the entry of the Spirit may be said to fulfill prophecy.

Another excerpt (*Gos. Eb.* §4 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §2 in Elliott, pp. 14–15)⁴¹ describes the call of the disciples, conflating phrases from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It concludes with an interesting addition: "Therefore I wish you to be twelve apostles, for testimony to Israel" (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.3). Scholars have long understood the appointment of the twelve apostles as a symbol testifying to Jesus' witness to the whole of Israel, probably illustrating the hope of national restoration. But nowhere in the Gospels is this made explicit. This Jewish Gospel, however, makes it quite clear. Indeed, the phrase "for testimony to Israel" ($\varepsilonἰς μαρτύριον τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ$) is drawn from the Old Testament (cf. Deut 31:9; Ruth 4:7; Ps 121[122]:4). The Jewish Gospel known to Epiphanius has thus underscored this important aspect of Jesus' aims: to testify to the whole of Israel. Once again, restoration ideas underlie this tradition.

Another excerpt (*Gos. Eb.* §6 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §7 in Elliott, p. 15)⁴² appears to capitalize on the destruction of the Jewish temple and the cessation of sacrifices. Our source is again Epiphanius (*Pan.* 30.16.5): "I have come to abolish sacrifices, and if you do not cease to sacrifice, wrath will not cease from you." The first clause alludes to Matt 5:17–18 ("Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the law . . . I have come to fulfill . . ."), while the second clause seems to allude to John 3:36b ("the wrath of God remains on him").⁴³ It is almost unthinkable that such a saying could have circulated in a Jewish document prior to

³⁹ Koch ("Epiphanius' Knowledge of the Ebionites," 339), however, wonders if the "great light" that "shone round about the place" may have something to do with Justin Martyr's mention of fire in the Jordan when Jesus stepped into the river (cf. *Dial.* 88), or perhaps is an element imported from the story of the Transfiguration (cf. Matt 17:2). Both of these alternatives are doubtful.

⁴⁰ Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 73.

⁴¹ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 65–67.

⁴² For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 75–76.

⁴³ Curiously, Klijn (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 76) recognizes no scriptural parallels.

70; it is in all probability a post-70 gloss, perhaps reflecting opposition to second-century Jewish hopes to rebuild the temple (cf. *Barn.* 16; *Recognitions* 1.39, 64).⁴⁴

In another excerpt (*Gos. Eb.* §7 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §8 in Elliott, pp. 15–16)⁴⁵ Epiphanius complains about the altered version presented in his Jewish Gospel (*Pan.* 30.22.4):

But they, on their own having erased the order of truth, altered the saying, as is plain to all from the attached readings, and have made the disciples say, “Where do you wish that we prepare for you to eat the Passover?” and him answer, “I have not desired with desire to eat flesh this Passover with you, have I?”

The disciples’ question, “Where do you wish that we prepare for you to eat the Passover?” is taken from Matt 26:17. Jesus’ reply, however, is drawn from Luke 22:15, but is presented in the form of a question that expects a negative answer: “I have not desired with desire to eat flesh this Passover with you, have I?”⁴⁶ The Jewish Gospel known to Epiphanius has added the negative particle and “flesh,” but has omitted the final words “before I suffer.” The point of the redaction is to provide a rationale for vegetarianism and is consistent with excerpt §2, in which the locusts were omitted from John’s diet.⁴⁷ Of course, this stance flies in the face of Passover observance, in which a roasted lamb is consumed. If Christ is “our Passover” (cf. 1 Cor 5:7), then a Passover lamb need never again be eaten and a vegetarian kashrut may be observed. Evidently the weight of Christology, aided by the events of 70, has prevailed over the weight of Jewish Passover tradition.

3.3. The Jewish Gospel Known to Jerome

Jerome frequently refers to a Gospel⁴⁸ that the Nazoraeans and/or Ebionites use (e.g., *Comm. Matt.* on 12.13; *ibid.*, on 23.35) or the “Gospel of the Hebrews” (*Comm. Matt.* on 6.11; *Tract. Ps.* 135). Some, following Schmidke, link Jerome’s Gospel (which is usually called the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*) with the source called the *Judaicon* (i.e., the Jewish Gospel) in the margin of the Greek text of some MSS of Matthew.⁴⁹ Frey rejects this identification.⁵⁰ The Jewish Gospel known to

⁴⁴ See Koch, “Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” 344.

⁴⁵ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 76–77.

⁴⁶ Elliott (*Apocryphal New Testament*, 16) and Klijn (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 76) translate Jesus’ reply in the indicative: “I have no desire to eat the flesh of this Paschal Lamb with you.” This is possible, but the negative particle μή recommends the interrogative.

⁴⁷ See Koch, “Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” 346.

⁴⁸ See Schmidke, *Neue Fragmente*, 41–126; Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 44–47; Finegan, *Hidden Records*, 155–63; Klijn, “Nazorärevangelium”; Klijn, “The Question of the Rich Young Man”; Massaux, *Later Christian Writings*, 183–91; Nicholson, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*; Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 154–65; Cameron, *The Other Gospels*, 97–102; Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 5–8.

⁴⁹ The most important of these MSS are 566 (9th cent.), 899 (11th cent.), and 1424 (9th–10th cent.). The last has more of these marginal references than the others. MSS 4 (13th cent.) and 273 (13th cent.) only have one reference each.

⁵⁰ Frey, “Die Scholien nach dem ‘jüdischen Evangelium,’” 126–29.

Jerome may have circulated in Aramaic or Syriac and was closely related to Matthew. Klijn has recently suggested that this Gospel (which he identifies as *Nazoreans*) originated in the same community that produced Matthew.⁵¹ In my view this hypothesis outruns the available evidence. More cautiously, we may suppose that the community in which Jerome's Jewish Gospel circulated had much in common with the community in which Matthew circulated. But Greek Matthew probably originated in one community, and the Aramaic Gospel known to Jerome in another.⁵² It is also probable that this Gospel originated a generation or two after Matthew, sometime in the first half of the second century.⁵³

Space permits examination of only a select number of the distinctive sayings found in the Jewish Gospel known to Jerome. Our first excerpt (*Gos. Naz.* §2 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §13 in Elliott, p. 13)⁵⁴ is taken from Jerome's *Pelag.* 3.2 and is a variant of Matt 3:13–14, with a few words and phrases drawn from elsewhere (e.g., Matt 12:46; Mark 1:4; Lev 4:2; 5:18b).

Behold, the mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him: “John the Baptist baptizes for the forgiveness of sins; let us go and be baptized by him.” But he said to them: “In what have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless what I have said is in ignorance.”

The version we have here more directly speaks to the embarrassment with which early Christians regarded the story of Jesus' baptism “for the forgiveness of sins.” The implication is that Jesus, like everyone else, was a sinner in need of repentance. The Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John mitigate the awkwardness of the baptism tradition in their own respective ways. In Matthew, the Baptist pro-

⁵¹ Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 42.

⁵² Schmidtko (*Neue Fragmente*, 65) long ago concluded that the *Gospel of the Nazoreans* (or what I am calling the “Jewish Gospel known to Jerome”), “an Aramaic translation of Matthew,” originated in Jewish Christianity in Syrian Beroea. And more recently, according to Vielhauer and Strecker (“Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 157), *Nazoreans* “was no accurate translation, but a targumistic rendering of the canonical Gospel of Matthew” (see also Schmidtko, *Neue Fragmente*, 41, who speaks of the *Gospel of the Nazoreans* as “a targumic translation of the Gospel of Matthew in Aramaic”). Similarly, Cameron (*The Other Gospels*, 97) asserts that *Nazoreans* is a “translation into Aramaic or Syriac of the original Greek of Matthew. There is no evidence that this gospel preserves traditions that derive from an independent Aramaic source.” These views may be correct, but given the limited evidence, we must be very cautious.

⁵³ Hegesippus (ca. 180 C.E.) may be the earliest writer known to refer to the Jewish Gospel known to Jerome.

⁵⁴ Although a matter far from settled, the assignation of fragments suggested by Vielhauer and Strecker (“Jewish-Christian Gospels”), followed by Klijn (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*), is followed here. The different assignations in Elliott (*Apocryphal New Testament*) are noted in parentheses. On the need to revisit this question of the assignation of the fragments, see W. L. Petersen's review of A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel* in *JBL* 113 (1994): 538–41, esp. 541. For comment on this excerpt, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 102–4.

tests, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” and Jesus replies, “Let it be so for now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” It is only then that John consents (Matt 3:13–17). Luke says John was imprisoned (Luke 3:20) and then narrates the baptism of Jesus (3:21–22), leaving his readers with the impression that Jesus may not have been baptized by John. The Gospel of John records no baptism at all. Indeed, the Baptist hails Jesus as the “lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; cf. v. 36) and later says that Jesus’ disciples baptized more people than did John and his disciples (3:22; 4:1–2). Building on the Matthean version, the Jewish Gospel known to Jerome has Jesus explicitly question his need of John’s baptism: In what has Jesus sinned? Evidently not in anything; therefore, he has no need of baptism.⁵⁵ This is all the more remarkable, when one compares this to the saying below (= *Gos. Naz.* §15), in which it is admitted that even among the great prophets of old is sin found.

Our second excerpt (*Gos. Heb.* §2 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §6 in Elliott, p. 10)⁵⁶ offers a distinctive version of the baptism of Jesus:

And it came to pass when the Lord came up out of the water that the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended upon him and rested on him and said to him: “My Son, in all the prophets was I waiting for you that you should come and I might rest in you. For you are my rest; you are my first-born Son that reigns forever.” (Jerome, *Comm. Isa. 4* [on Isa 11:2])

Several features of this version of the baptism point to christological developments that in all probability post-date the Synoptic tradition.⁵⁷ (1) Jesus is called “the Lord” (*dominus*), which smacks of later usage. (2) The simpler Spirit (as in Mark), Spirit of God (as in Matthew), or Holy Spirit (as in Luke) becomes in Jerome’s Jewish Gospel “the whole fount of the Holy Spirit.” (3) It is the Spirit, not (as the Synoptics imply) the Father, who addresses Jesus. Presenting the story this way avoids the type of anthropomorphism that is typically avoided in rabbinic and targumic literature. That is, it is not God himself who speaks to people; it is his Spirit, or Word, or Wisdom. (4) The reference to “all the prophets” enhances the heavenly declaration and once again points to the later emphasis on proof-texting. (5) The reference to Jesus as God’s “first-born” also reflects later usage (cf. Col 1:15, 18; Heb 1:6). (6) The declaration that Jesus is the Spirit’s “rest” alludes not to the messianism of Isa 11:2,⁵⁸ but to wisdom ideas, in which dame

⁵⁵ Klijn (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 104) rightly understands that the import of the concessive “unless what I have said is in ignorance [*in ignorantia est*]” does not imply that Jesus has committed *sin*: “The present passage says that Jesus is certainly free of voluntary sins but the presence of involuntary sins cannot be entirely excluded.” If Jesus has sinned, the sins would be classified as involuntary sins (cf. Lev 4:2; 5:18), for which pardon is readily available (in contrast to sins committed “with a high hand”; cf. Num 15:30).

⁵⁶ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 98–101.

⁵⁷ Adeney, “Gospel according to the Hebrews,” 150.

⁵⁸ Pace Jerome, who appeals to *Hebrews* as support for his idea that Isa 11:2 was fulfilled at Jesus’ baptism; cf. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 99.

Wisdom finds her rest in Israel or among the righteous and wise (cf. Sir 24:7 “Among all these I sought a resting place”; Wis 7:27),⁵⁹ ideas which in turn constitute a poetic development of finding rest in the promised land (cf. Pss 95:11; 125:3; 132:14).⁶⁰

The next excerpt (*Gos. Heb.* §6 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §3 in Elliott, p. 9) is indicative of a high ethical orientation in this Gospel: “He who has grieved the spirit of his brother” commits one of the greatest crimes (Jerome, *Comm. Ezech.* 18.7).⁶¹ This excerpt coheres with excerpt §5 (= §3 in Elliott, p. 9): “And never be joyful, except when you behold your brother with love” (Jerome, *Comm. Eph.* 5.4).⁶² Attainment of high ethical standards is, of course, a fundamental concern in Jewish wisdom tradition.

Another excerpt (*Gos. Heb.* §7 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §4 in Elliott, pp. 9–10)⁶³ offers one of the most intriguing of the traditions found in the Jewish Gospel(s). We not only learn more about the appearance of Jesus to his brother James, we also learn that James was present at the Last Supper:

And when the Lord had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, he went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him risen from among them that sleep. And shortly thereafter the Lord said: “Bring table and bread!” And immediately it is added: “He took the bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: ‘My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep.’” (Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2)

The first clause is tantalizing. What is the significance of the “linen cloth”? Who is the “servant of the priest”? We may have overlap with Johannine tradition. If so, then perhaps the priest’s servant is Malchus (cf. John 18:10) and perhaps the linen cloth is either the cloth that covered Jesus’ face or part of the other grave clothes with which he had been wrapped for burial (cf. John 20:5–7). Of greater importance is the prominence given James. We are told that he “had sworn” to refrain from bread until Jesus was risen and that he had made this oath when “he had drunk the cup of the Lord.” This surely alludes to the Last Supper and runs parallel to Jesus’ vow not to drink wine (cf. Mark 14:25; Matt 26:29; Luke 22:18), or eat the Passover (cf. Luke 22:16), until he may do so in

⁵⁹ Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 174.

⁶⁰ Robinson, “Three Notes,” 194. Robinson also draws attention to the fact that all three elements—rest, first-born, and son—appear in significant passages in the Psalter (cf. 132:14; 89:27; 2:7).

⁶¹ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 101–2. Grieving either the human spirit or the Holy Spirit finds expression in early Jewish and Christian traditions. For the former, see Pss 42:6, 12; 43:5; Mark 14:34; Rom 14:15; for the latter, see 1 Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30. Klijn (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 102) prefers the latter option.

⁶² For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 78–79. The saying is reminiscent of Mark 10:21, where Jesus looks upon the young man and loves him. Klijn rightly comments on the Semitic character of the language.

⁶³ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 79–86.

the kingdom of God.⁶⁴ But in Jerome's Jewish Gospel it is James who makes a vow. It is James who observes the first post-easter Eucharist, in the very presence of the risen Christ. The status of James is clearly enhanced in this version, as we might expect in a Gospel cherished, if not generated by, a Jewish community of believers.⁶⁵

In another excerpt (*Gos. Naz.* §8 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher =§8 in Elliott, p. 12]) Jerome's Jewish Gospel expands the story of the healing of the man with the withered hand by having the afflicted man explain: "I was a mason and earned (my) living with (my) hands; I beseech you, Jesus, to restore to me my health that I may not with shame [*turpiter*] have to beg for my bread" (*Comm. Matt.* on 12.13).⁶⁶ This embellishment explains that the man with the withered hand had in fact been at one time gainfully employed (and had not been a beggar all of his life, as perhaps some would have supposed). Because of his affliction, he can no longer support himself and has had to resort to begging, which he regards as shameful. He would like his hand restored so that he might return to work. The addition thus heightens the element of honor-shame, probably reflecting Jewish cultural and social sensitivities (cf. Ps 37:25; 109:10; Sir 40:28 "it is better to die than to beg"; 40:30; Luke 16:3 "I am ashamed to beg").

According to Jerome's Jewish Gospel (*Gos. Naz.* §15 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §13 in Elliott, p. 13) and according to the *Judaicon* (cf. MSS 566, 899), after the phrase "seventy times seven times" appears "'If your brother has sinned with a word [*in verbo*] and made for you satisfaction [*satis tibi fecerit*], receive him seven times in a day.' Said Simon his disciple to him: 'Seven times in a day?' The Lord answered and said to him: 'Yes, I say to you, until seventy times seven. For in the prophets also, after they were anointed with the Holy Spirit, the word of sin was found'" (*Pelag.* 3.2).⁶⁷ The saying is based on Matthean (Matt 18:21–22) and Lukan (Luke 17:3–4) elements. Although the precise meaning of "the word of sin" (λόγος ἀμαρτίας = *sermo peccati*) is uncertain, the context is clear enough. We have here a teaching relating to the importance of not sinning with one's tongue, which is an important theme in Jewish wisdom and ethics (cf. Sir 19:16; 25:8; Jas 3:1–2; m. *Abot* 1:17). The addition extends Matt 18:15 ("if he listens to you"), thus qualifying the stringency of Jesus' ethical demands. One's errant brother must make satisfaction; if he does, then he is to be forgiven every time.

According to Jerome's Jewish Gospel (*Epist.* 120.8; *Comm. Matt.* on 27.51): "But in the Gospel, which is written in Hebrew letters, we do not read that 'the

⁶⁴ For another Jewish example of vowing not to eat until one carries out a mission, in this case a deadly one, see Acts 23:12.

⁶⁵ In 1 Cor 15:7 Paul simply says, "then he appeared to James." Nowhere else is there tradition of James making a vow or fulfilling it in eucharistic fashion in the presence of the risen Jesus. See Adeney, "Gospel according to the Hebrews," 156; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 86.

⁶⁶ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 88–90. Klijn limits his discussion to the parallel traditions and their relation to one another.

⁶⁷ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 105–7.

veil of the Temple' was torn, but 'the lintel of the Temple of wondrous size collapsed'" (*Gos. Naz.* §21 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher = §11 in Elliott, p. 12; cf. *Gos. Naz.* §36 "Also in the Gospel of the Nazoraeans we read that at the time of Christ's death the lintel of the Temple, of immense size, had split").⁶⁸ One might compare the omens described by Josephus (*J.W.* 6.293–300; to which Jerome alludes in his commentary on Matt 27:51). This intersection of Jerome's Jewish Gospel with the Jewish historian is intriguing. But does Josephus say the same thing?—and did it occur in 33 C.E.? What we have here is probably early Jewish Christian legend, intended to exaggerate the impact that Jesus' death had on the temple, i.e., not only did the veil tear, the building was significantly damaged.⁶⁹

4. Fragments of Jewish Gospels

There are several fragments, mostly papyrus, that could be remains of long lost Jewish Gospels. The most promising candidates will be considered.

4.1. *POxy* 840

Document 840⁷⁰ from Oxyrhynchus comprises a single page of parchment (not papyrus), with 22 lines of text on one side and 23 lines on the

⁶⁸ For commentary, see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 93–97.

⁶⁹ On possible Old Testament allusions in the reference to the lintel of the temple, see Robinson, "Three Notes," 198–200. Klijn (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 97) judges the tradition to be old and widespread.

⁷⁰ See F. Bovon, "Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840, Fragment of a Lost Gospel, Witness of an Early Christian Controversy over Purity," *JBL* 119 (2000): 705–28; A. Büchler, "The New 'Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel,'" *JQR* 20 (1907–8): 330–46; R. Dunkerley, "The Oxyrhynchus Gospel Fragments," *HTR* 23 (1930): 19–37 (30–35); C. A. Evans, "Jewish Versions of the Gospel of Matthew," *Mishkan* 38 (2003): 70–79 (esp. 75–79); Edgar J. Goodspeed, "The New Gospel Fragment from Oxyrhynchus," *The Biblical World* 31 (1908): 142–46; B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel from Oxyrhynchus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1908); Grenfell and Hunt, "Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel," in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 5; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1908), 1–10 + pl. I; A. Harnack, "Ein neues Evangelienbruchstück," *Preussische Jahrbücher* 131 (1908): 201–10; Hofius, "Unknown Sayings of Jesus," 351–52; Joachim Jeremias, "Der Zusammenstoss Jesu mit dem pharisäischen Oberpriester auf dem Tempelplatz: Zu Pap. Ox. V, 840," in *Coniectanea Neotestamentica XI in honorem Antonii Friedrichsen* (ed. Seminarium Neotestamenticum Upsaliense; Lund: Gleerup, 1947), 97–108; Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 47–60, 104–5; M.-J. Lagrange, "Nouveau fragment non canonique relatif à l'évangile," *RB* 5 (1908): 538–53; E. Preuschen, "Das neue Evangelienfragment von Oxyrhynchos," *ZNW* 9 (1908): 1–11; H. Riggenbach, "Das Wort Jesu im Gespräch mit dem pharisäischen Hohenpriester nach dem Oxyrhynchus Fragment V n. 840," *ZNW* 25 (1926): 140–44; E. Schürer, review of B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel*, *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 33 (1908): cols. 170–72; D. R. Schwartz, "'Viewing the Holy Utensils' (P. Ox. V, 840)," *NTS* 32 (1986): 153–59; T. Zahn, "Neue Bruchstücke nichtkanonischer Evangelien," *Neue kirchliche*

other.⁷¹ Its small size could suggest that it was an amulet.⁷² The fact that we have two stories, the conclusion of one in lines 1–7, and most of a second in lines 7–45, encourages us to view this parchment as a leaf from a codex, albeit a small one, whether or not it was used as an amulet.⁷³

Grenfell and Hunt dated the leaf to the fourth century and argued that it was part of an extracanonical Gospel (probably composed in Egypt) and that the story itself probably originated before the end of the second century. They further concluded that although this fragment seems to be Jewish, it probably is not part of one of the other Jewish Gospels (such as the putative *Nazoraeans* or *Ebionites*)⁷⁴ nor is it a fragment of a gnostic gospel.

Beginning at line 7 of the verso and continuing to the end of the story, which breaks off with the poorly preserved final lines of the recto, we read:

And he took them and brought them into the very place of purification, and was walking in the Temple.

And approaching, a certain Pharisee, a ruling priest, whose name was Lev[i], met them and s[aid] to the Savior, “Who permitted you to wa[lk] in this place of purification and to see [the]se holy vessels, when you have not wash[ed] nor yet have your disciples [ba]thed their f[eet]? But defil[ed] you have walked in this Temple, which is a pure pl[ace], in which no o[ther person] walks [unless] he has washed himself and cha[nged his cloth]es, neither does he [dare view these] holy vessels.”

And [the Savior immediately stood (still) w[ith hi]s disciples and answered him, “Are you then, being here in the Temple, clean?”

He says to him, “I am clean, for I washed in the pool of D[avi]d, and having descended by one set of steps I ascended by another. And I put on white and clean clothes, and then I came and looked upon these holy vessels.”

An[swer]ing, the Savior said to him, “Woe you blind who do not see. You have washed in these running waters in which dogs and swine have [been] cast night and day, and have cleaned and wiped the outside skin which also the harlots and flute-girls ano[nt] and wash and wipe [and b]eauteify for the lus[t o]f men; but with [in

Zeitschrift 19 (1908): 371–86; Joachim Jeremias and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, “Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840,” in *Gospels and Related Writings* (ed. W. Schneemelcher; vol. 1 of *New Testament Apocrypha*; rev. ed.; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 94–95; Cameron, *The Other Gospels*, 53–54; Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 31–34.

⁷¹ Grenfell and Hunt (and others) speak of a “verso” (with 22 lines) and a “recto” (with 23 lines). Strictly speaking, of course, vellum, or parchment, has no verso or recto (as does papyrus); it has instead a hair side and a flesh side.

⁷² As Bovon (“Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840,” 706 n. 5) suggests.

⁷³ Soon after the publication of POxy 840 Preuschen (“Das neue Evangelienfragment von Oxyrhynchos,” 1–2), citing a passage from Chrysostom, wondered if the fragment was part of a tiny book worn around the neck in place of an amulet.

⁷⁴ In the early discussion, many scholars (e.g., Harnack, James, Lagrange, Preuschen, and Waitz) thought POxy 840 was either part of or closely related to these Gospels or to others. There is not enough evidence, however, to make a judgment on this question.

they are f]ull of scorpions and [all wic]kedness. But I and [my disciples], who you say have not ba[thed, have been dip]ped in the waters [of eternal] li[fe whi]ch come from . . . [. . . B]ut woe to the . . .

The publication of this fragment in 1908 generated a great deal of discussion, with scholars weighing in, either on the side of authenticity or on the side of inauthenticity. The editors of the *editio princeps*, Grenfell and Hunt, concluded that the story recounted in POxy 840 “has no claim to be accepted as authentic.”⁷⁵ However, Harnack, impressed by the story’s “fire” and “power,” accepted its authenticity.⁷⁶ Büchler tried to answer various objections, concluding that the writer “was accurately informed” and that “tradition fully confirms the details.”⁷⁷ That same year, Lagrange came to the opposite conclusion.⁷⁸ He was followed by others, including Goodspeed, who thought the story lacked verisimilitude at various points.⁷⁹

After the initial flush of enthusiasm, interest in the fragment waned. In 1930 Dunkerley assessed the Oxyrhynchus fragments, contending that there are several points in favor of POxy 840’s authenticity.⁸⁰ Jeremias in 1947 and 1948 offered a spirited defense of the antiquity, even authenticity of the story, answering several of the objections that had been raised against it. However, Hofius admits to some reservations,⁸¹ while quite recently Bovon regards the priest’s description of ablution inauthentic of Jewish practice, but reflective instead of Christian baptism and controversy.⁸²

Nevertheless, recent investigation of POxy 840 and advances in archaeology in the land of Israel may be tipping the balance in favor of viewing the story as true to first-century Jewish practices, though not necessarily as deriving from the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*. The alleged inaccuracies can in most instances be satisfactorily explained, while other details, never viewed as problematic, lend support to viewing the text as Jewish. The pertinent issues include the following:

⁷⁵ Grenfell and Hunt, “Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel,” 4.

⁷⁶ Harnack, “Ein neues Evangelienbruchstück,” 250.

⁷⁷ Büchler, “The New ‘Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel,’” 331. A. Marmorstein (“Einige Bemerkungen zum Evangelienfragment in Oxyrhynchus Papyri, vol. V. n. 840, 1907,” ZNW 15 [1914]: 336–38) agrees, adding that rabbinic traditions support the verisimilitude of the story: “das Fragment [weist] eine genaue Bekanntschaft mit den Reinigungsvorschriften” (p. 336). How genuine POxy 840’s purification requirements are continues to be the principal point of debate.

⁷⁸ Lagrange, “Nouveau fragment non canonique relatif à l’évangile,” 553.

⁷⁹ Goodspeed, “The New Gospel Fragment from Oxyrhynchus,” 144–45; Schürer, review of Grenfell and Hunt, cols. 170–72. A. Sulzbach (“Zum Oxyrhynchus-Fragment,” ZNW 9 [1908]: 175–76; p. 175), referring to *m. Middot* 4:5, thinks the author of POxy 840 confused the temple precincts with the Holy of Holies.

⁸⁰ Dunkerley, “The Oxyrhynchus Gospel Fragments,” 34.

⁸¹ Hofius, “‘Unknown Sayings of Jesus,’” 351–52. Hofius thinks POxy 840 may be dependent on the woe of Matt 23:27–28 and the theme of living water in the fourth Gospel (e.g., John 4:10–15; 7:37).

⁸² Bovon, “Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840,” 716–21.

First, the excavation of several *miqvaoth* in the vicinity of the temple precincts provides more than sufficient documentation of the general verisimilitude of the story itself.

Secondly, the issue surrounding the viewing of holy vessels has been clarified in a recent study by Schwartz,⁸³ who cites incidents related in Josephus (cf. *J.W.* 1.152, where Pompey views the holy place; *Ant.* 14.71–72, where Pompey sees the golden table, sacred lampstand, libation vessels; *J.W.* 1.354 = *Ant.* 14.482–483, where Herod expresses fear that foreigners would gaze upon sacred objects), in rabbinic traditions (cf. *t. Hag.* 3:35; *y. Hag.* 3:8, where Israelites are invited to see the Temple's menorah), and in Scripture itself (cf. 1 Sam 6:19, where people die for looking into the ark of the covenant; Num 4:20, which warns that looking upon holy utensils will result in death). Schwartz concludes that POxy 840 may contain a genuine polemic directed against priestly arrogance and elitism.

Thirdly, ritual immersion was required for entry into the Court of the Israelites (cf. *m. Yoma* 3:3: “None may enter the Temple Court for service, even though he is clean, until he has immersed himself. On this day [i.e., the Day of Atonement] the High Priest five times immerses himself . . .”; see also *b. Yoma* 30b, which presupposes that priests immersed themselves before entering the Sanctuary; according to *b. Yoma* 30a, moving from a common place to a holy place “requires immersion”; and see Josephus, *J.W.* 5.227: “Men not thoroughly clean were debarred from admission into the inner court”; cf. *m. Kelim* 1:8). When immersed, Israelite men would have been permitted to enter the inner court, where sacred vessels, sometimes on display, could be viewed. It must be admitted that there is no evidence apart from POxy 840 that the laity were expected to change clothes as well as immerse themselves. But caution is required here, for “changed clothes” in lines 19 and 20 has to be restored; the original may have read differently. In any event, we do not know that it was not required of the laity to immerse themselves and change their clothes on special occasions when sacred vessels were put on display.

Fourthly, the priest⁸⁴ claims that he has descended by one set of steps and ascended by another. Grenfell and Hunt think “the two stairways leading down” to the pool “seem to be details invented for the sake of rhetorical effect.”⁸⁵ Rhetoric or not, divided steps that go down into and back up from the water are now attested in Jewish *miqvaoth*, including some of the *miqvaoth* in the vicinity of the Temple Mount itself.⁸⁶ Qumran offers a clear and interesting example, where the

⁸³ Schwartz, “Viewing the Holy Utensils.”

⁸⁴ Some have objected that there was no High Priest named Levi. This may be true, but the text probably means “a certain ruling priest,” not “a certain High Priest.” The use of τις implies one of the several ruling priests. We know of a captain of the priests who may have been a Pharisee (cf. *m. ’Abot* 3:2; *m. ’Eduyyot* 2:1–2). In any case, “Pharisee” in POxy 840 may very well be a gloss. The original text probably read “a certain ruling priest named Levi.”

⁸⁵ Grenfell and Hunt, “Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel,” 3.

⁸⁶ For discussion and photographs, see W. S. LaSor, “Discovering What Jewish Miqva’ot Can Tell Us,” *BAR* 13/1 (1987): 52–59; R. Reich, “The Great Mikveh Debate,”

center divider is quite wide, perhaps reflecting Qumran's great concern over matters of purity. That Qumran, a priestly sect, used *miqvaoth* with divided steps could be especially pertinent. The excavated mansion in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, which may have belonged to a high priest, also has a *mikveh* with divided steps. Grenfell and Hunt, who wrote before the aforementioned sites had been discovered and excavated, may be forgiven for thinking *miqvaoth* with divided steps are unattested in Judaism, but Bovon should know better. He says he is unable to find evidence of divided steps. He cites *Letter of Aristeas* 106⁸⁷ and *m. Seqal.* 8:2,⁸⁸ but is not satisfied, because divided steps are not explicitly mentioned. But the discovery of *miqvaoth*, with divided steps, in the vicinity of the Temple Mount itself, surely clarifies the meaning of these texts.⁸⁹ To claim, as Bovon does, that POxy 840's *mikveh* and divided steps relate in some way to Christian baptismal ceremonies seems farfetched and unnecessary.⁹⁰

Fifthly, the rhetoric, "dogs and swine . . . harlots and flute-girls," is metaphorical and hyperbolic,⁹¹ not careless misunderstanding of the pragmata of the

BAR 19, no. 2 (1993): 52–53; Reich, "Miqva'ot," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* 1:560–63 (562). H. Eshel ("The Pools of Sepphoris: Ritual Baths or Bathtubs?" BAR 26, no. 4 [2000]: 42–45; 44) remarks: "Another telltale sign of a mikveh often appears in excavations: a low partition that divides the stairs into two staircases, one for going into the bath, one for coming out."

⁸⁷"For the ground ascends, since the city is built upon a mountain. There are steps too which lead up to the cross roads, and some people are always going up, and others down and they keep as far apart from each other as possible on the road because of those who are bound by the rules of purity, lest they should touch anything which is unlawful."

⁸⁸"All utensils found in Jerusalem, on the path down to an immersion pool, are assumed to be unclean. [If they are found] on the path up from the immersion pool, they are assumed to be clean, For the way down is different from the way up,' the words of R. Meir" (mid-second cent. C.E.).

⁸⁹According to *m. Seqal.* 8:2 (cited in preceding note), unclean vessels are to descend on one side of the steps, while clean vessels are to ascend on the other (see R. Reich, "Mishnah, Sheqalim 8:2, and the Archaeological Evidence," in *Jerusalem in the Second Temple* [ed. A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport and M. Stern; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Svi, 1980], 225–56). The recently excavated *miqvaoth* with divided steps strongly encourage seeing POxy 840 as describing authentic Jewish practice, whereby people also descended on one side and ascended on the other. Furthermore, *m. Tam.* 1:1 tells of the priests' use of the Chamber of Immersion and how the priests did not sleep in their priestly vestments, but slept in their own clothes, with the priestly garments beneath their heads. This is entirely consistent with POxy 840's portrait of a priest who bathes, descending on one side and ascending on the other, and then changes his clothes. One should also note *T. Levi* 9:11, where the patriarch Levi, father of the Israel's priestly tribe, enjoins his sons: "Before you enter the sanctuary, bathe; while you are sacrificing, wash; and again when the sacrifice is concluded, wash."

⁹⁰Bovon, "Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840," 717, 719, 721. Bovon views the story recounted in POxy 840 as essentially an allegory.

⁹¹As seen in 2 Pet 2:22, where the "dog turns back to his own vomit [alluding to Prov 26:11], and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire"; Matt 7:6, where Jesus warns his followers: "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine"; or Matt 23:25–28, where we read of polished cups "full of extortion and rapacity," or white

Temple Mount.⁹² Jesus' point is that all sorts of people have washed in the waters fed by the various channels of running water (not "stagnant waters," as Funk and others have mistranslated⁹³). They may technically meet the requirements for entry into the area where ritually pure Israelites may view the sacred vessels, but inwardly they are as corrupt as ever. Moreover, the idea that impurity flows upstream may be presupposed here (e.g., *m. Makširin* 5:10; *m. 'Ohalot* 9:16; *m. Tehar.* 8:9; *m. Yad.* 2:3). Accordingly, Jesus is suggesting that the water itself is contaminated and cannot convey purity, which is consistent with his teaching elsewhere (cf. Mark 7:14–23). Jesus' criticism of the ruling priest, which almost has a Qumranian ring to it, may allude to 1 Kgs 22:38, where the dogs licked up the blood of Ahab, and the harlots washed themselves in the bloodied water.⁹⁴

There are therefore no grounds for saying that the author of this story does not understand either Judaism or temple topography and customs.⁹⁵ Without deciding the question of authenticity, I think it is fair to conclude that POxy 840 in fact does relate a story from a reasonably well informed Jewish perspective. Finally, there are two important points of coherence with the three Jewish Gospels already considered. POxy 840 refers to Jesus as the "Savior," which is somewhat atypical in early Christian literature. This epithet occurs in reference to three sayings drawn from the Jewish Gospels (cf. *Gos. Heb.* §3, §7; *Gos. Eb.* §5). Also, reference to "harlots and flute-girls," nowhere attested in the New Testament Gospels or in other Christian literature, is found in *Gos. Naz.* §18. These parallels do not in themselves justify assigning POxy 840 to one of the three Jewish Gospels, but they do lend further support to classifying this single piece of parchment as in all probability a part of yet another lost Jewish Gospel.

If the conclusion that has been reached is justified, POxy 840 offers important documentation of ongoing controversy between Jewish believers in Jesus and Jews who viewed with misgivings Jesus' teaching concerning purity in general and perhaps ritual bathing in particular. In a Jewish context, this story would provide clarification and rationale for embracing a faith that no longer regarded

washed tombs "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." The hyperbolic nature of POxy 840 is rightly recognized by Bovon, "Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840," 717.

⁹²This point is missed by Grenfell and Hunt, "Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel," 3, who comment that Jesus' language is "incredible," indicating that the author of the fragment "was not really well acquainted with the Temple."

⁹³Cf. Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1992), 415, esp. the note on 2:7, which provides pointless commentary on the "stagnant waters" (as opposed to flowing waters!). The annotator is unaware of what the Greek (*Χεόμενα*) actually means.

⁹⁴First observed by M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924; corr. ed., 1953), 29.

⁹⁵Admittedly, the "Pool of David" remains unattested, but other pools and *miqvaoth* in which ritual immersion took place in the vicinity of the Temple Mount have been uncovered. Excavation on the Temple Mount itself, which is not possible in today's political climate, may someday uncover such a pool.

the pragmata of the temple cultus as sacred or normative (in sharp contrast with emerging rabbinic Judaism).⁹⁶

4.2. POxy 1224

POxy 1224⁹⁷ consists of two papyrus fragments of a small book, dating to sometime in the fourth century and possessing perhaps as many as six distinct pericopes. Two of them are sufficiently preserved to allow for comment. According to Fragment 2 verso col. 2:

But the scribes an[d Pharisee]s and priests behold[ing hi]m were indignant [because with sinn]ers in the mid[st he reclined]. But Jesus hearing it [said, "No need ha]ve the w[ell for a physician . . ."]

The passage closely parallels Matt 9:10–12, Mark 2:15–17, and especially Luke 5:29–31. There is nothing in POxy 1224's version that is distinctive, though the preservation of the story itself suggests interest in purity issues and issues relating to association with non-Torah observant Jews.

According to Fragment 2 recto col. 1:

" . . . a]nd pray for your [enem]ies; for he who is not [against y]ou is for you. [He who today i]s far away will tomorrow be [near you,] and in . . . of the adversa[ry . . .]"

The first part of the saying parallels Matt 5:44 ("Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"; cf. *Did.* 1:3: "pray for your enemies"; *Pol. Phil.* 12:3) and Luke 9:50 ("for he who is not against you is for you"). The second part of the saying ("He who today is far away will tomorrow be near you"), possibly known to the author of *Liber Graduum* (cf. *Serm.* 20.13),⁹⁸ may originally have been an allusion to Isa 57:19, "Peace, peace, to the far and to the near, says the LORD; and I will heal him," an expression of the hope of the gathering of the Jewish exiles. The Aramaic paraphrase of this passage underscores the restoration of Israel, but on the condition of repentance: "Peace will be done for the righteous, who have kept my law from the beginning, and peace will be done for the penitent, who have repented to my law recently, says the LORD; and I will forgive them" (*Targum Isaiah* 57:19). One should also take into account the evangelistic interpretation of

⁹⁶On aspects of this tension, see Ray A. Pritz, "The Jewish Christian Sect of the Nazarenes and the Mishnah," in *The Period of the Bible* (division A of *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*; ed. D. Assaf; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 125–30.

⁹⁷See Grenfell and Hunt, "Uncanonical Gospel"; Dunkerley, "The Oxyrhynchus Gospel Fragments," 35–37; Hofius, "Unknown Sayings of Jesus," 356–57; Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 96–97; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 35–36; Miller, *Complete Gospels*, 416–18.

⁹⁸Hofius, "Unknown Sayings of Jesus," 356–57, including n. 123. The saying may also be related in some way to *Gos. Thom.* §82: "Whoever is close to me is close to the fire, and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom."

this Old Testament passage in Ephesians (cf. 2:13, 17). Thus, P.Oxy 1224 may preserve an early Christian teaching rooted in the Targum, thus once again attesting the Judaic nature of this fragment.

4.3. *PBerlin 11710*

*PBerlin 11710*⁹⁹ is a small fragment of papyrus that may have been part of a small book that may also have been an amulet. The story is based on John 1:49 and could be Jewish in origin (Jesus is addressed twice as “Rabbi” and is referred to as such two more times). J. K. Elliott translates:

... Nathanael] confessed and said, “Rabbi, Lord, you are the Son of God.” The Rabbi [answered him] and said, “Nathanael, walk in the sun.” Nathanael replied and said to him, “Rabbi, Lord, you are the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” The Rabbi answered him and said . . .

The repeated reference to Jesus as “Rabbi” may reflect a Jewish orientation. It is hard to explain why a non-Jewish Christian would refer to Jesus as “the Rabbi.” We should assume that a non-Jewish Christian would have made use of loftier epithets for Jesus, such as “Savior” or, in the third person, “the Lord.” It is also interesting to note that words that in the Gospel of John are credited to John the Baptist (cf. John 1:29) are here given to Nathanael (“you are the lamb of God,” etc.).

4.4. *Luke 6:4–5 (Codex D)*

Between vv. 4 and 5 of Luke 6 (the story of plucking grain on the Sabbath; cf. Matt 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5) the fifth-century Codex D (= Codex Bezae)¹⁰⁰ contains the following in Greek and Latin:

On the same day, observing a certain man working on the Sabbath, he said to him: “Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed; but if you do not know, you are cursed and a transgressor of the Law.”

Hofius doubts the authenticity of this saying,¹⁰¹ and he is probably justified. Where the scribe who produced this portion of D derived this curious tradition is not known. But it is probable that its origin is Jewish, for it is difficult to understand why a non-Jewish Christian would view work on the Sabbath, regardless of one’s

⁹⁹ See H. Lietzmann, “Ein apokryphes Evangelien-fragment,” *ZNW* 22 (1923): 153–54; Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 42–43.

¹⁰⁰ See E. Bammel, “The Cambridge Pericope: The Addition to Luke 6.4 in Codex Bezae,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 404–26; J. Delobel, “Luke 6,5 in Codex Bezae: The Man Who Worked on Sabbath,” in *À cause de l’évangile* (Lectio divina 123; Paris: Cerf, 1985), 453–77; Hofius, “Unknown Sayings of Jesus,” 355; Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 61–65; W. Käser, “Exegetische Erwägungen zur Seligpreisung des Sabbatarbeiters Lk 6,5D,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 65 (1968): 414–30.

¹⁰¹ Hofius, “Unknown Sayings of Jesus,” 357: the authenticity of the scene is “quite improbable.”

insight, as transgression. This saying seems to reflect the tension that many Jewish believers in Jesus had, tension between the sense of duty to observe the Law, on the one hand, and the growing teaching among Christians (strongly advanced by the letters of Paul), on the other, that in his death Jesus liberated believers from the Law.¹⁰²

4.5. Luke 9:54–56 (*Codex D and other MSS*)

Codex D and several other authorities preserve expanded readings in Luke 9:54–56¹⁰³ (italics indicate the expansions):

54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them, *as Elijah did?*” 55 But he turned and rebuked them. *And he said, “Do you not know what kind of spirit you are? 56 For the son of man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save (them).*” And they went on to another village.

The expansion in v. 54 is supported by A C D K W 23 and several other uncials and minuscules. The expansion that falls between vv. 55 and 56 is supported by D (in part) and three other uncials and several minuscules. Ross has defended the originality of the longer form of these verses. However, they probably represent an interpretive embellishment of a Jewish scribe who rightly recognized the allusion to 2 Kgs 1:10–12. Underlying the second expansion, which is in part inspired by Luke 19:10, may be an apologetic thrust designed to highlight Jesus’ beneficial and salvific role, over against the more punitive figure of Elijah. The comparison with Elijah would have been more readily appreciated by Jews than by non-Jews.

Before concluding this section, two other candidates may be briefly mentioned. Some think the Coptic Strasbourg Fragment (4th–5th century) is from a Jewish Gospel, principally because the disciples speak in the first person (as in the Jewish Gospel known to Epiphanius). But alone this feature provides an insufficient basis, and there is nothing else that suggests that the story preserved in this fragment derives from a Jewish Gospel. It gives the impression of a mystical reworking of words and phrases from all four New Testament Gospels and even Paul (cf. page 5 recto and 1 Cor 15:25–26, 55). The second candidate is

¹⁰² Jeremias (*Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 61–62) makes a good case for the Palestinian provenance of the saying. Matthew Black (*An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* [3d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967], 172 n. 3) has shown how the saying retroverts to Aramaic, demonstrating semitic parallelism. Bammel (“The Cambridge Pericope,” 417), however, draws the opposite conclusion: because some Jewish Christian groups continued to observed the Sabbath, it is improbable that they would create or transmit a saying in which working on the Sabbath, from any point of view, would be acceptable. Bammel’s point is well taken. Nevertheless, there were Jewish Christians—foremost among them Paul himself (cf. Rom 14:5–6; Gal 4:10; Col 2:16)—who saw the Sabbath in a wholly new light after the event of Easter. Bammel (“The Cambridge Pericope,” 424) plausibly suggests that the saying may have grown out of the Christian idea of laboring daily for the Gospel (cf. John 9:4; 1 Cor 15:58).

¹⁰³ Hofius, “‘Unknown Sayings of Jesus,’” 350; J. M. Ross, “The Rejected Words in Luke 9:54–56,” *ExpTim* 84 (1973–74): 85–88.

PMerton 51, which may be nothing more than a homily on Luke 6:7. In any event, the fragment contains words and phrases from Luke 7:29–30 and 6:45 (or Matt 12:35). The Pharisees (presumably, and in contrast to the “people and the taxgatherers”) “rejected God’s purpose” and so God “rejected them.” There is nothing un-Jewish about the text, but there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the tradition was created by or preserved by Jewish believers in Jesus.¹⁰⁴

4.6. Hebrew Matthew

The complete text of Matthew in Hebrew¹⁰⁵ is preserved in a lengthy, polemical treatise composed in the fourteenth century by Shem Tob ben Isaac (sometimes called Ibn Shaprut). Shem Tob’s purpose was to refute the Gospel story, point by point. Although disputed, Shem Tob may actually preserve an independent textual tradition of Matthew, possibly related to the “Gospel in Hebrew letters” (in Papias). If so, what does it tell us about the Jewish believers who preserved it? Many readings cohere with early Greek witnesses, many are independent, and it has been shown that Shem Tob’s Hebrew Matthew is based upon

¹⁰⁴ For translations of the Strasbourg Fragment and PMerton 51, see Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 41–42, 45. If the *Gospel of Peter* (in its earliest form) and the Egerton Papyrus are to be dated to the middle of the first century, then they are almost certainly Jewish. However, this early dating (recommended by a few members of the Jesus Seminar) is very problematic. The *Gospel of Peter* evinces traces of anti-Semitism and reckless ignorance of Jewish custom and sensitivities (such as elders and ruling priests spending the night in a graveyard). The Egerton Papyrus, like the *Gospel of Peter*, contains elements of the fantastic (esp. the last story, which is badly preserved) that point to the second century, not to the first. Manns (*Essais and Bibliographie*) includes certain New Testament fragments, e.g., the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, the *Protevangelium of James*, and the *Passing of Mary*. But it is doubtful these are the products of Jewish believers in Jesus. See M. Mach, “Are there Jewish Elements in the Protoevangelium Jacobi?” in *Proceedings, 9th World Congress of Jewish Studies, August 1985* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 215–22.

¹⁰⁵ George Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987); rev. ed. *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1995); Howard, “A Note on the Short Ending of Matthew,” *HTR* 81 (1988): 117–20; Howard, “The Pseudo-Clementine Writings and Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 622–28; Howard, “Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew,” in *The Period of the Bible* (division A of *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*; ed. D. Assaf; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 223–30; Howard, “The Textual Nature of Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 239–57; R. F. Sheddinger, “A Further Consideration of the Textual Nature of Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 686–94; Sheddinger, “The Textual Relationship between P45 and Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 58–71. Sheddinger mounts a persuasive defense of Howard’s thesis that Hebrew Matthew is an ancient witness. See also Harrington’s favorable review of Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text*, in *CBQ* 50 (1988): 717–18. For more skeptical assessment, see the reviews by W. Horbury, in *JTS* 43 (1992): 166–69 (on the first edition), in *JJS* 47 (1996): 382–84 (on the 2d edition), and W. L. Petersen, in *JBL* 108 (1989): 722–26. See also W. Horbury, “The Hebrew Text of Matthew in Shem Tob Ibn Shaprut’s Eben Bohan,” in Allison and Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3:729–38; Evans, “Jewish Versions,” 71–73.

neither the Vulgate nor Byzantine Greek, which, if it had been translated in the fourteenth century, it would have been. It is an important witness to a much earlier tradition, possibly one that is in some way related to a Hebrew version of Matthew that early church fathers discuss.

The point here is not to become entangled in the question of whether Hebrew Matthew is related to the Hebrew logia mentioned by Papias, but to recognize that this work may very well represent an authentic Jewish version of the Gospel of Matthew, perhaps deriving from a setting as early as the second century. Several theological tendencies in this Hebrew version may be reviewed.

Avoidance of Reference to God. It is commonly observed that the Matthean evangelist customarily alters “kingdom of God” to “kingdom of Heaven” in his Markan (e.g., 4:17 [cf. Mark 1:15]; 13:11 [cf. Mark 4:11]) and Q (5:3 [cf. Luke 13:28]; 8:11 [cf. Luke 13:28]) sources. This tendency, along with employment of the so-called “divine passive,” is a circumlocution by which the evangelist avoids reference to God.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, four examples of “kingdom of God” remain in the Greek Matthean text (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). In Hebrew Matthew, however, three of these are changed to “kingdom of Heaven” (19:24; 21:31, 43) and the fourth is shortened to “the kingdom” (12:28). Sensitivity to the Divine Name is also seen in Hebrew Matthew’s frequent employment of the epithet “the Name” (*ha-Shem*), usually in place of κύριος or Θεός. It is usually abbreviated as *h*’ (e.g., 2:13, 19; 21:12; 22:31; 28:2), though sometimes it is spelled out fully (as in 28:9). Howard wonders why a hostile Jewish polemicist would add the ineffable name to a text he regarded as heretical.¹⁰⁷ (We should expect him to add *adonai*.) It is better to suppose that *ha-Shem* was already in the text and that Shem Tob, in keeping with Jewish custom, was reluctant to delete it (cf. *t. Šabb.* 13.5).

The Law. Another important Matthean feature is its positive assessment of the Law (esp. 5:17–20). The so-called antitheses (5:21–48) provide several examples of how Jesus expects the Law to be fulfilled. For example, it is not enough simply to refrain from murder (“You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill . . .’”; 5:21), one must not be angry with one’s brother (“But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment . . .”; 5:22). It is not enough to refrain from physical adultery (“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’”; 5:27), one must not lust (“But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart”; 5:28).

Two of the antitheses in Hebrew Matthew differ somewhat from their counterparts in Greek Matthew. According to the Greek, “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that

¹⁰⁶ This is a feature of Jewish piety, in which references to God, especially the Divine Name, are avoided. By using the passive voice, one is able to avoid reference to God, e.g., “He will be judged,” instead of “God will judge him.”

¹⁰⁷ Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text*, 201–3.

every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress . . ." (5:31–32). But according to Hebrew Matthew, "... But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife *is to give her a certificate of divorce. But concerning adultery, he is the one who commits adultery . . .*" (emphasis added). Hebrew Matthew makes it clear that the law of Moses (in this case Deut 24:1–4) is to be followed. Moreover, the absence of the exception clause (cf. Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10), which scholars suspect may have been a later gloss, may support the antiquity of Hebrew Matthew.

The second example involves the antithesis concerned with swearing. According to Greek Matthew, "Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all . . ." (5:33–34). But according to Hebrew Matthew, "Again you have heard that it was said to those of long ago, 'You shall not swear *by my name* falsely, but you shall perform to the Lord your oath. But I say to you, Do not swear *in vain* by anything . . .' (emphasis added). Hebrew Matthew's different reading is quite significant. Swearing is permissible (as it certainly is in the Law of Moses), but it is not to be done falsely, "by my name" (cf. Lev 19:12), or "in vain" (cf. Exod 20:7). In Hebrew Matthew there is no hint that laws pertaining to taking oaths have been abrogated.

John the Baptist. In Greek Matthew the importance of John the Baptist is qualified, if not diminished. This is not the case in Hebrew Matthew. This is seen in three examples. First, according to Greek Matthew, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; *yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*" (11:11, emphasis added). The last part of this verse is lacking in Hebrew Matthew. Secondly, two verses later, Greek Matthew says, "For all the prophets and the law *prophesied until John*" (11:13, emphasis added), while according to Hebrew Matthew, "For all the prophets and the law *spoke concerning John*" (emphasis added). Thirdly, in Greek Matthew, we have "Elijah does come, and he is to *restore all things*" (17:11, emphasis added; Elijah is understood to refer to John; cf. 17:13). But according to Hebrew Matthew, "Indeed Elijah will come and will *save all the world*" (emphasis added). This exalted view of Elijah is consistent with Jewish tradition, but applied to John would eventually prove unacceptable to a developing Christianity that eventually found itself at odds with groups loyal to the baptizer (cf. Acts 18:5–19:7; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 80; *Rec.* 1.54.60).

Exorcism. Perhaps one of the most intriguing variants in Hebrew Matthew is found in an important saying held in common with Luke. According to Greek Matthew, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (12:28 = Luke 11:20, except the latter reads "by the finger of God"). According to Hebrew Matthew, Jesus says, "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, truly the end of (his) kingdom has come." Not only does this form of the saying fit its context more naturally, and not only is the

ambiguous phrase “upon you” missing, the clause “the end of (Satan’s) kingdom has come” coheres dictioanarily and thematically with Jewish eschatology. This aspect is expressed clearly in the *Testament of Moses*, a book composed sometime in the first third of the first century C.E., that is, during Jesus’ lifetime and probably during his ministry. According to the eschatological vision of this pseudepigraphon, “then his (God’s) kingdom will appear in his whole creation, and then the Devil will have an end” (*T. Mos.* 10:1). Hebrew Matthew seems to be saying the same thing: if Jesus is able by the Spirit of God to cast out demons, then indeed the kingdom of Satan is coming to an end (cf. Mark 3:26: “If Satan . . . is divided . . . he has an end”). We need not argue that Hebrew Matthew preserves a form of the saying that is older, or more authentic, than that found in Q. But its form is consistent with Jewish eschatology of late antiquity and does not appear to represent a confused, medieval reading.

Israel and the nations. Perhaps the most interesting feature of Hebrew Matthew is its stance with respect to Israel and its relationship to the nations. The declarations that Jesus and his disciples are sent only to the lost sheep of Israel and not to the Gentiles or Samaritans (10:5–6; 15:24) are not qualified in Hebrew Matthew by a concluding commission to “make disciples of all nations”; we find only: “Go and teach them to carry out all the things that I have commanded you forever.” We should observe also the different form of the tradition in 10:17–18. According to Greek Matthew, “Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles.” But according to Hebrew Matthew, “Beware of men. They will not deliver you up in their congregations and houses of assembly, but to governors and kings. You will be able to bear witness on my behalf to them and to the Gentiles.” Hebrew Matthew may be suggesting that contrary to proper Jewish discipline, the disciples will not be reviewed in synagogues by their own people; they will instead be handed over—probably in the sense of betrayal—to Gentile rulers. Nevertheless, the disciples will be able to bear witness (i.e., defend) themselves effectively. Understood in this light, Matt 10:5–6 is not part of a Gentile mission. With the absence of the Gentile commission in 28:19–20, it seems that Hebrew Matthew did not envision the evangelization of the nations, baptizing them and making them disciples of the Jesus community.

4.7. *Coptic Matthew*

In 2001 Schenke published the Coptic text of the Gospel of Matthew, one of the MSS of the Schøyen Collection (catalogue number MS 2650).¹⁰⁸ This papyrus

¹⁰⁸ Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium im mittelägyptischen Dialekt des Koptischen (Codex Schøyen)* (Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection 2: Coptic Papyri 1; Oslo: Hermes, 2001). Also see U.-K. Plisch, “Die Perikopen über Johannes den Täufer in der neuentdeckten mittelägyptischen Version des Matthäus-Evangeliums (Codex Schøyen),” *NovT* 43 (2001): 368–92.

codex dates to the first half of the fourth century, preserving most of Matt 5:38–28:20. It is written in the northern style of the Middle Egyptian dialect of Coptic.¹⁰⁹ Schenke has provided a description of the codex, including its paleography, orthography, language, and textform.¹¹⁰ He offers a transcription of the Coptic text and a German translation.¹¹¹

At many points this Coptic version of Matthew differs from Greek Matthew, even when allowing for discrepancies due to translation from Greek to Coptic. What are we to make of this divergence? Schenke thinks it unlikely “we have here an extremely free, careless, indeed at times chaotic, translation of a variety of the canonical Gospel of Matthew.” On the contrary, he believes that the “sole plausible explanation is rather that in reality we have before us the corrected translation of a completely different Gospel of Matthew.”¹¹² Perhaps; but the phenomena are complex. Much further textual study is required before this question can be resolved.

Is there any evidence that this variant version of Matthew derives from a Jewish Christian context? We think of Epiphanius, who complains of a mutilated and falsified form of the Gospel of Matthew that circulated among the Ebionites (cf. *Pan.* 30.13.2).¹¹³ But none of the material Epiphanius cites by way of illustration agrees with the Coptic Gospel of Matthew in the Schøyen Collection. We also think of the Hebrew text of Matthew preserved in Shem Tob’s treatise, but again no significant coherence is detected. Comparison with the excerpts of the Gospels known to Origen and to Jerome offers us no significant coherence. Indeed, only one promising agreement suggests itself.

At 6:11 Coptic Matthew may agree with the Jewish Gospel known to Jerome (*Gos. Naz.* §5 in Hennecke-Schneemelcher). According to Jerome, “In the so-called Gospel ‘according to the Hebrews,’ instead of ‘essential to existence’ I found ‘mahar,’ which means ‘of tomorrow,’ so that the sense is: ‘Our bread of tomorrow—that is, of the future—give us this day’” (*Comm. Matt.* on 6:11).¹¹⁴ In Greek

¹⁰⁹ Schenke, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, 17.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17–34.

¹¹¹ Schenke, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, 35–191. Schenke provides several indexes, including lists of Coptic and Greek words, as well as discussion of various grammatical features of interest. The work then concludes with an appendix (pp. 279–311), in which Schenke retroverts the Coptic into the Greek he thinks underlies the Coptic translation. This is followed by beautiful color plates (pp. 315–92), which are remarkably legible.

¹¹² Schenke, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, 31. Describing the Schøyen Coptic Matthew as *ganz anderen* (“completely different”) seems to me to be an exaggeration. There are many differences to be sure, but the agreements are far more numerous (see Evans, “Jewish Versions,” 74–75). Nevertheless, it must be admitted that at first blush the underlying Greek text of Coptic Matthew seems more primitive, often lacking secondary glosses and stylistic embellishments.

¹¹³ Schenke (*Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, 31) refers to this complaint of Epiphanius, implying that perhaps Coptic Matthew is such an edited version.

¹¹⁴ On *mahar*, see Gen 30:33, where we find *beyom mahar*, “on the day of tomorrow,” or “the day to come.”

Matthew we have the much debated word ἐπιούσιος (understood by Jerome as *supersubstantiali*, or “essential to existence”), but in underlying Coptic Matthew we may have ἐπαυριόν (“of tomorrow”). If this is correct, then we have agreement with Jerome’s Jewish Gospel. But this one agreement does not provide sufficient grounds for associating Coptic Matthew with any of the Jewish Gospels considered above.

However, there are features in Coptic Matthew that suggest that the underlying Greek text may reach back to a form of text that predates the “received” Greek text of Matthew. These features include the frequent non-appearance of the name Jesus (e.g., at 9:27, 28; 11:1; 12:15; 14:16; 17:8, 18; 26:36),¹¹⁵ the non-appearance of “teacher” in 12:38, an address which a scribe may have added out of respect for Jesus (i.e., even the scribes and Pharisees addressed Jesus as “teacher”), as well as a host of simpler and shorter readings (e.g., 8:30; 9:25, 32; 10:1, 42; 12:13, 18, 26, 43, 50; 13:33; 14:12, 13, 24, 32, 36; 15:7, 13; 17:1; 18:6,¹¹⁶ 24;¹¹⁷ 19:10;¹¹⁸ 21:2, 5, 6, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 28–30,¹¹⁹ 41, 45; 22:22, 46; 23:1, 3; 24:3, 6, 21,¹²⁰ 48; 24:51; 25:6, 18, 39; 26:4, 5, 7, 13, 34, 44, 49, 63, 72; 27:1, 3, 27, 41, 50, 52, 53, 61, 64; 28:5, 7, 10, 15¹²¹). Perhaps even more important is the non-appearance of words and phrases that redaction critics sometimes identify as Mattheanisms (e.g., 10:34, where “Do not suppose” is omitted [cf. 5:17]; 11:2, where “works of the Messiah” is omitted;

¹¹⁵ It is assumed here, of course, that it is much easier to explain the frequent insertion of Jesus’ name as later scribal activity than its frequent omission (though at 14:25 Coptic Matthew adds “Jesus”). Similarly, at 14:26 Coptic Matthew omits “the disciples.”

¹¹⁶ In the received Greek 18:6b reads: “it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” Coptic Matthew reads: “it would be better for him to fasten a millstone to his belly and cast it into the depth of the sea.” This curious variant seems more direct and more primitive; in any case it appears to be an independent reading.

¹¹⁷ At 18:24 Coptic Matthew reads “many” talents, not “thousands.” Coptic Matthew may be more original, in that it seems to be less exaggerated; but we could only have a vagary of translation from Greek to our Coptic text.

¹¹⁸ At 19:10 Coptic Matthew reads somewhat differently: “If it is so, (it is) good for a man if he not be joined to a woman.” Greek Matthew reads: “If the case of a man with his wife is so, it is not expedient to marry.” Coptic Matthew seems more primitive.

¹¹⁹ At 21:28–30 Coptic Matthew reads differently. Greek Matthew reads: “What do you think? A man had two sons; and he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ 29 And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he repented and went. 30 And he went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go.” Coptic Matthew reads: “What do you think? A man had two sons; going to the first he said, ‘Go and work in my vineyard today.’ 29 He said, ‘Yes,’ and did not go out. 30 After this he went to the second and said the same. He said, ‘No,’ but afterward he repented and went.” The order is reversed in Coptic Matthew and seems more original.

¹²⁰ At 24:21 Coptic Matthew reads a shortened “not happened until today, nor ever happen,” instead of “not happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever happen.” The form in Coptic Matthew seems more primitive.

¹²¹ At 28:15 Coptic Matthew reads “in all Judea,” instead of “by the Jews.” The reading of the received Greek tradition seems secondary, reflecting Christianity’s Diaspora mission more than its experience in the land of Israel.

11:13, where Coptic Matthew reads “the law and the prophets,” instead of “all the prophets and the law,” which again is likely Matthean; 12:42, where Coptic Matthew reads “teaching of Solomon,” instead of “wisdom of Solomon”; 14:27, where “fear not” is omitted; 18:12a, where Coptic Matthew omits the Matthean opening rhetorical question, “What does it seem to you?” [cf. Luke 15:4]; 18:13, where Coptic Matthew omits “amen I say to you” [cf. Luke 15:5]; 19:28, where Coptic Matthew omits “regeneration”¹²² [cf. Luke 22:28]; 21:20, where Coptic Matthew presents the comment of the disciples as narrative, not as direct speech;¹²³ 27:3b, where Coptic Matthew omits “and elders”¹²⁴). Consistent with these findings is the observation that Coptic Matthew has many readings that agree with our oldest witnesses and disagree with the majority tradition.¹²⁵

¹²² Matthew’s *palingenesia* (*παλιγγένεσία*) is Greek; no form of Hebrew or Aramaic underlies it.

¹²³ Matthew frequently converts Mark’s narrative into direct speech (e.g., Matt 8:5–7 [cf. Luke 7:1–3]; Matt 8:32 [cf. Mark 5:13]; Matt 12:38 [cf. Mark 8:11]; Matt 13:10 [cf. Mark 4:10]; Matt 14:26 [cf. Mark 6:49]; Matt 15:22 [cf. Mark 7:25–26]; Matt 16:22 [cf. Mark 8:32]; Matt 17:9 [cf. Mark 9:9]; Matt 18:1 [cf. Mark 9:34]; Matt 22:42 [cf. Mark 12:35]; Matt 26:2 [cf. Mark 14:1]; Matt 26:15 [cf. Mark 14:10]; Matt 26:24–25 [cf. Mark 14:21]; Matt 26:42 [cf. Mark 14:39]; Matt 26:50 [cf. Mark 14:46]; Matt 26:66 [cf. Mark 14:64]).

¹²⁴ To be sure, Mark frequently mentions the elders, which the Matthean evangelist routinely takes over. However, the evangelist sometimes adds “elders,” as seen in Matt 26:3 (cf. Mark 14:1).

¹²⁵ At 6:25 Coptic Matthew agrees with Ι in omitting “or drink”; at 6:33 Coptic Matthew agrees with B in reading “his kingdom,” instead of the expanded “kingdom of God”; at 10:37 Coptic Matthew agrees with Papyrus 19 by omitting the second half of the verse; at 14:27 Coptic Matthew omits “Jesus,” in agreement with uncorrected Ι; Coptic Matthew omits the dubious 16:2b–3, in agreement with Ι and B; Coptic Matthew omits 18:11, in agreement with Ι and B; at 19:3 Coptic Matthew omits “for a man,” in agreement with uncorrected Ι, B, and other MSS; at 19:9 Coptic Matthew omits the textually uncertain conclusion “and should marry another”; Coptic Matthew omits 23:14 (as do Ι, B, D, and other authorities); at the end of 23:38 Coptic Matthew omits “desolate” (as do B and others); at 28:6 Coptic Matthew omits, along with the best MSS (such as Ι, B, 33), “the body of the Lord,” or “Jesus,” or “the Lord.”

Coptic Matthew does not always follow Ι and B, but reflects an interesting degree of independence. For example, Coptic Matthew omits 21:44 (as do D, 33, and other authorities), even though some of the earliest and best MSS (e.g., Ι, B, C, and W [Freer Gospels]) include it. At 27:4 Coptic Matthew reads “blood of a righteous one,” in agreement with part of the Syrian tradition and the *Diatessaron*, instead of “innocent blood” (as do Ι, B, A, and C). Similarly, at 27:24 Coptic Matthew reads “blood of this righteous one” (as do Ι, A, and others), instead of “blood of this one” (as is read by B and D). At 20:30 Coptic Matthew’s “pity us, Jesus, son of David” agrees with Ι and others, not with B (“Lord, pity us”) or Ρ⁴⁵, C, and others (“Pity us, Lord”). At 26:31 Coptic Matthew presents the verb in the quotation of Zech 13:7 in the third person plural: “They will strike the shepherd,” instead of “I shall strike the shepherd.” This variant agrees neither with the LXX (“I shall strike the shepherd”), which is what Greek Matthew has, or with the MT and Shem Tob’s Hebrew Matthew (“Strike [2d sing.] the shepherd!”) Finally, Coptic Matthew omits 14:18–19a, verses that appear in a variety of forms in MSS. The absence of this material may be original, while the diverse assortment of variants may reflect secondary embellishment and glosses.

There are also variant readings that may point to a Semitic/Jewish context, either in theme or diction, including Aramaizing style (e.g., 8:31; 9:30 [to “speak before” someone; cf. 15:23; 16:20; 17:20; 23:27, 28; 26:74], 34¹²⁶; 10:10¹²⁷; 11:1 [where we have “synagogues” instead of “cities”]; 14:25 [where Coptic Matthew reads “upon the waters of the sea,” instead of “upon the sea”]¹²⁸; 15:2 [where Coptic Matthew omits “transgress the tradition of the elders,” possibly reflecting Jewish sensitivities]; 15:9 [where Coptic Matthew omits “in vain they honor me,” once again possibly reflecting Jewish concerns]; 19:29 [addition of “wife” agrees with Shem Tob’s Hebrew Matthew]; 21:9 [where Coptic Matthew reads “in the house of David,” instead of “to the son of David”; cf. 21:15]¹²⁹; 23:15 [where Coptic Matthew’s “should find” may reflect Aramaic idiom]; 25:27b [where Coptic Matthew omits “with interest,” which again possibly reflects Jewish sensitivity—because collecting interesting is contrary to the Law]; 27:3 [where Coptic Matthew reads “that he sinned,” instead of “that he was condemned”]).

However, there is significant evidence that the underlying Greek text of Coptic Matthew is secondary. At 7:6 the fragmentary wording of Coptic Matthew seems to agree more with *Gos. Thom.* §93 (“Give not what is holy to the dogs, lest they throw it on the dungheap. Cast not the pearls to the swine, lest they cause it to become . . .”) and may reflect regional influence. We may have regional influence again at 25:43, where Coptic Matthew agrees with Ethiopic authorities. At 9:10 Coptic Matthew tells us it was the house “of Simon,” which is probably a gloss. At 13:13 Coptic Matthew reads simply “For this reason in parables I speak with them,” with no allusion to Isa 6:9. This simplification in Coptic Matthew is surely secondary, for Matt 13:13 and its allusion to Isaiah are drawn from Mark 4:11–12. At 22:18 Coptic Matthew adds “and their trickery.” At 24:5 Coptic Matthew reads “We are the Christ,” thus providing grammatical agreement. At 24:7 Coptic Matthew omits “earthquakes” but adds “persecutions” and “pestilences.” At 24:15 Coptic Matthew omits the Markan insertion “Let the reader understand” (cf. Mark 13:14). But this is probably a deliberate omission on the part of Coptic Matthew or the Greek text that underlies it. At 27:18 Coptic Matthew curiously and confusedly reads “for he knew that without [envy(?)] they handed him over to him.” We probably have an embellishment at 27:20, where Coptic Matthew reads “the ruling priests and the whole Sanhedrin . . .,” instead of “the ruling priests and the elders.” The same is probably the case at 27:23, where

¹²⁶At 9:34 Coptic Matthew reads “by Belseboul.” The addition of the name of the prince of demons coheres with Shem Tob’s Hebrew Matthew that reads “by the name of the prince of demons.” Greek Matthew simply reads “by the prince of the demons.”

¹²⁷The idiom “one by one” is Semitic style (cf. Mark 14:19).

¹²⁸The phrase “upon the waters of the sea” is Semitic, occurring some half dozen times in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Exod 15:19 “the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea”; Ps 33:7 “He gathered the waters of the sea”).

¹²⁹Coptic Matthew’s reading “in the house of David” may reflect the influence of Ps 122:5 and/or *Targum of the Writings* Ps 132:17.

Coptic Matthew reads “crucify him, crucify him,” instead of “crucify.” At 27:30 Coptic Matthew reads “spitting into the face,” instead of “spitting on him,” in order to clarify and perhaps to intensify the insult. At 27:39b Coptic Matthew omits “wagging their heads” (which ultimately derives from Mark 15:29). We may have another instance where Coptic Matthew has abbreviated the text. We probably have a secondary reading at 27:44, where Coptic Matthew reads more expansively: “[And reproached him] also the robbers who were crucified with him. Likewise also the robbers who were crucified with him, rejecting him, were saying.” Greek Matthew, in a woodenly literal fashion, reads: “But the same also the robbers who were crucified with him were reproaching him.” There is a host of minor additions and glosses (e.g., 9:7, 35; 11:23–24; 13:3; 17:15; 18:19, 31, 32; 23:5, 27; 24:8, 10, 44; 26:16a, 20; 27:13b, 40, 55; 28:12).

Even more significant is the appearance of Markan, Lukan, and Johannine glosses. At 19:20 Coptic Matthew adds “from my youth,” which agrees with Mark 10:20. It is possible that Coptic Matthew is dependent upon a primitive version of Matthew, in which this phrase was retained (and which later would be omitted by a Matthean scribe in an attempt to lessen the piety of the young man), but it is more likely that Coptic Matthew has brought the phrase back into the story under the influence of the Markan parallel. At 21:35 Coptic Matthew reads differently and somewhat oddly: “some of them they killed, some they beat, some they struck on the head with a stone.” Here again we probably have some influence from Mark’s version of the parable. At 22:2 Coptic Matthew reads “kingdom of God” instead of “kingdom of heaven,” once again probably reflecting Markan diction.

We also find Lukanism and Johannism in Coptic Matthew. At 9:2 Coptic Matthew adds “who was eighteen years in his sickness.” This detail probably derives from Luke 13:11, 16, even though there a different story is being narrated. At 27:60 Coptic Matthew omits “which he cut out of rock” and adds “in which he had not yet buried [a man].” This detail is taken from Luke 23:53. In many places we find the familiar Johannine asseverative “Amen amen” (e.g., 19:23, 28; 21:21, 31; 23:36; 24:34; 25:40; 26:21). At 26:51 Coptic Matthew adds “Malchus was the name of that servant,” clearly an embellishment drawn from John 18:10. At 27:49 Coptic Matthew adds the Johannine detail: “Another, taking a spear, pierced his side; blood and water come forth” (cf. John 19:34).

There are different readings in Coptic Matthew that may even be described as Mattheanisms. At 21:31 Coptic Matthew reads “of heaven,” instead of the non-Matthean “of God.” In this case the Coptic tradition has been influenced by the Matthean preference for “kingdom of heaven.” At 22:30 Coptic Matthew reads “as angels in the kingdom of heaven,” instead of “as angels in heaven.” Here the influence of Matthew’s ubiquitous “kingdom of heaven” has led Coptic Matthew to add “kingdom of,” which in this context is wholly inappropriate. At 24:2 Coptic Matthew reads “not a stone here will be left upon a stone until all these things be fulfilled” instead of “not one stone here will be left upon a stone that will not be thrown down.” Coptic Matthew’s “be fulfilled” is probably a Mattheanism (cf.

2:17, 23; 4:14; 13:14; 26:54; 27:9). And finally, at 24:44 Coptic Matthew adds “I say to you,” which again reflects Matthean diction (5:18, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6:2, 5, 16; 8:10; 10:15; *passim*), and perhaps Johannine as well (cf. 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24; *passim*).

Scholarly assessment of Coptic Matthew is in its infancy, with but one study appearing alongside the work of Schenke. Plisch detects what he thinks is a greater acceptance of the Baptist movement by the Jesus movement as perhaps reflected by those who preserved and transmitted the Greek text underlying the Coptic translation.¹³⁰ Plisch notes, for example, that in the exchange between John and Jesus (11:1–6) the phrase “works of the Messiah” is omitted (cf. 11:2). In other words, the tradition reflected in Coptic Matthew felt no need to elevate Jesus above John. An enhanced assessment of John may underlie Coptic Matthew’s addition “the powers obey him” at the end of 14:2. These texts and a few others lead Plisch to suppose that John enjoyed greater prestige in the Jesus community of the Matthean version that underlies Coptic Matthew. Plisch’s basic point seems to have merit, although he may exaggerate the significance of some of the different readings.

Our complex, at times contradictory evidence suggests that underlying Coptic Matthew may be a primitive Greek somewhat independent of the received Greek tradition. The character of this text does seem to bear the marks of a Jewish provenance and therefore at points may stand closer to the Jewish community that produced the original Matthew than does the community that gave Matthew its final, canonical shape. Nevertheless, the text of Coptic Matthew is hardly pristine, for there are many secondary features, including abridgement, simplification, glossing (often with words and phrases from the other Gospels).

Therefore, even if we conclude that underlying Coptic Matthew is a primitive form of the Greek text of Matthew, possibly affiliated in some way with a Semitic form of Matthew, the Coptic text that we have has been corrupted at various points, due to the usual vicissitudes in scribal transmission and translation, as well as to harmonizing and paraphrasing tendencies akin to what we see in the Jewish Targums.

5. Results

There are several items of interest, which we may classify into two categories, one made up of items of relatively minor significance and the other made up of items of potentially major significance. Some of the minor tendencies that have been observed include the following: (1) The Jewish Gospels give evidence of enrichment of the scriptural witness. Usually this is achieved through formal quotation, paraphrase, allusion, or weaving in words and phrases from the Bible. The

¹³⁰ Plisch, “Die Perikopen über Johannes den Täufer.”

two most Jewish Gospels in the New Testament—Matthew and John—present highly developed scriptural defenses of the ministry and message of Jesus. This tendency is witnessed in some of the Jewish Gospels, albeit in fragmentary and disjointed form. (2) The Jewish Gospels also give evidence of enrichment of their narratives with Jewish halakic traditions, traditions which they may or may not endorse. The glossing and paraphrasing seen in these Gospels may be viewed as cognate to what we see in the targums. (3) The Jewish Gospels sometimes prune narratives of elements that do not fit comfortably with Jewish beliefs and sensitivities. However, sometimes this pruning results not from general Jewish beliefs, but from narrower, sectarian beliefs (such as may be exemplified in vegetarianism). (4) The Jewish Gospels also add elements that reflect Jewish piety and customs. (5) The Jewish Gospels in places reflect Jewish wisdom ideas.

There have also been observed several tendencies of greater importance: (1) wrestling with the validity and interpretation of the Law, both written and oral; (2) the restoration of Israel; (3) enhancement of the status of James the brother of Jesus; and (4) Christology. In the case of the latter, adoptionism appears to be the basic understanding. But from a Judaic perspective, this is not low Christology; it is true Christology. The Christology of the Jewish Gospels is sometimes enhanced through the witness of Scripture, whether explicit or implicit.

Some of the distinctive elements of the Jewish Gospels are clearly secondary and reactive to the New Testament Gospels and in some cases to ideas and practices from other sources. However, some of these distinctive elements may in fact reflect early tradition that has not yet been modified or abandoned by the emerging Gentile and gentilizing church. The Jewish Gospel traditions, therefore, are well worth careful study, if we wish not to overlook important primitive elements in the early church.

Jewish Christian Editing of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

Torleif Elgvin

1. Introduction

Most so-called Old Testament pseudepigrapha are Jewish writings from the Second Temple period or the early centuries C.E.—writings that were later transmitted through the Christian church. A number of these were at some stage redacted or interpolated by Christian hands, so that they would better fit the Christian message.¹ Other pseudepigrapha were authored by Christians, who learned from Jewish writings this way of elaborating traditions of the Old Testament sages. The accurate transmission of Scripture in both faith traditions is different from their freer attitude to other writings, even when the latter claimed biblical sages as authors. Christological and Trinitarian allusions were inserted. Prophetic sayings were polished so they better pointed to Jesus and the Jewish people's lack of faith in him. Passages were inserted that related the devastation during the two Jewish revolts to the people's rejection of Jesus, allowing salvation to pass to the Gentiles. While some interpolators left anti-Jewish notes, others kept their additions well tuned to their *Vorlage*. This fact may reflect a pro-Jewish

¹ According to Charlesworth, interpolations are characterized by the following features: “The word or words under examination contain ideas or images extraneous to the general context. The passage is grammatically free of its context; when the passage is a word or a few words, it is often genitively linked to what proceeds. This factor indicates that the passage can be easily removed and may conceivably have been easily inserted. Finally, when the passage is removed, the flow of thought is often clarified or improved.” So James H. Charlesworth, “Christian and Jewish Self-Definition in Light of the Christian Additions to the Apocryphal Writings,” in *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (vol. 2 of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*; ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten, A. Mendelson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 30. When we talk about Christian interpolations in Jewish writings, the (dogmatic) content is also relevant.

attitude among Gentile editors from the second century onwards, which could in turn indicate that there was contact with Jewish believers in Jesus. The books we call pseudepigrapha experienced different levels of reception in the church, from disdain and skepticism to openness and reverence. From the time the canon(s) and orthodoxy were defined in the fourth century, skepticism became the most regular attitude in Latin and classical Greek churches to extra-scriptural writings claiming biblical sages as authors. In the eastern churches, however, these writings still found faithful transmitters.²

The main question that occupies us in this chapter is whether or not we can trace not only Christian, but also specifically Jewish Christian involvement in this process. Who was responsible for giving Christian circles their first access to early Jewish writings? The first transmitters may have been (1) non-Christian Jews who were in touch with Christians or were teaching them Scripture³; (2) Jewish believers who brought their literary heritage with them into congregations of Jews and Gentiles; or (3) Godfearing Gentiles well acquainted with Jewish literature, who joined the church. The first category is possible, but not very probable. The third category cannot be excluded, but one may ask how well these God-fearers would have known Jewish writings apart from their Scriptures. The most plausible transmitters remain Jewish believers of the first two centuries.⁴ The Gentile church would be more open to receive Jewish books from Jewish believers in Jesus in the period before the latter were viewed with skepticism by the church majority, i.e., before ca. 200.

A number of the pseudepigrapha were translated from a Hebrew or Aramaic original into Greek. In most cases this translation was done while the writing was still being transmitted within Jewish circles, but the process of translation may also reflect the actual stage of transition into the church. While Christians from the Syrian and Persian realms presumably could handle translation from Aramaic, it would not be easy to find non-Jews capable of translating from Hebrew. It therefore remains probable that Jewish believers were involved in the translation process of some pseudepigrapha.

Thus, Jewish believers probably played an active role in the transmission of pseudepigraphal writings into the early churches. They were a bridge between Jewish tradition and the early church, and to a large extent functioned as resource

² Robert A. Kraft, "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. C. Reeves; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994), 55–86; William Adler, "Jewish Apocalypses in Christian Settings," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (ed. J. C. VanderKam; CRINT 3.4; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 1–31, esp. 25–29.

³ Cf. the Jewish Bible teachers of Clement, Origen, Eusebius and Jerome: Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah* 23.15, 39.3; Jerome, *Ruf.* 1.13.

⁴ Harlow sees Jewish believers in Jesus as important transmitters and suggests that Christian looting of synagogues in the late fourth century also could have brought Jewish books into Christian hands. See Daniel C. Harlow, *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch)* in *Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (SVTP 12; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 210.

persons for Gentile theologians. We will try to see whether these transmitters (as well as later Jewish Christian interpreters) left literary traces in these books.

Because the early church grew from Jewish roots, it is not easy to distinguish Jewish Christian additions from Gentile additions.⁵ Judaizing Christians could express themselves in very Jewish ways. The following criteria may be suggested for distinguishing the hands of Jewish believers in the editorial process:

(1) *Theology*. This would include at least the following viewpoints: (a) a positive view of the people of Israel, (b) an ecclesiology in which Jews are an integral and necessary part of the church (i.e., no ultimate division between the church and Israel is envisioned), (c) an eschatology with a significant role for Israel, and (d) a positive view of the Torah, which portrays Jesus as obedient to the Torah and sees Jewish Torah observance as positive both in the present and the eschaton.⁶

Early Gentile Christian writers such as Justin could share some of these views, but a heavy presence of such theology in (part of) a book could be a sign of involvement by Jewish believers. A primitive Christology and lack of Trinitarian thinking might be added to this list, but could just as well derive from Gentile circles. A Jewish believer could have a developed Christology. Nevertheless, a primitive Christology with Jewish flavor may be a useful hint, as in, for example, the phrase “the Most High will send forth his salvation in the visitation of an only-begotten prophet” (*T. Benj.* 9:2) and “the sacrifice and suffering of the righteous prophet, . . . through him he would renew the creation to salvation” (addition to *Liv. Pro.* 8:2).

(2) *Jewish terminology in Christianized passages*. The use of Old Testament terms is not a useful criterion, as the Old Testament was also the Bible of the Gentiles. But Jewish terms from the post-biblical period used in a Christian framework certainly point to contact with Jewish circles, and perhaps to active involvement by Jewish believers (cf. the use of terms such as “Beliar,” “Malkira,” “Michael, the chief of the holy angels,” “the One who is not named and is unique,” and “plant” (= the church) in the *Ascension of Isaiah*). Christological titles with

⁵Recent scholars have stressed the ambiguity in determining whether a work is Christian or Jewish; see Robert A. Kraft, “Setting the Stage and Framing some Central Questions,” *JSJ* 32 (2001): 371–95; Kraft, “The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity,” 55–86; Marinus de Jonge, “The so-called Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament and Early Christianity,” in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (ed. P. Borgen and S. Giverson; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 59–71; Michael A. Knibb, “Christian Adoption and Transmission of Jewish Pseudepigrapha: The Case of *1 Enoch*,” *JSJ* 32 (2001): 396–415; Daniel C. Harlow, “The Christianization of Early Jewish Pseudepigrapha: The Case of *3 Baruch*,” *JSJ* 32 (2001): 416–44.

⁶But also Judaizing Christians could combine adherence to Jesus and Torah observance. See Reuven Kimelman, “Identifying Jews and Christian in Roman Syria–Palestine,” in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (ed. E. M. Meyers; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 301–33. Even discerning between Jewish and Christian texts and additions can be difficult. See Kraft, “The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity”; Adler, “Jewish Apocalypses in Christian Settings,” 25–29.

Jewish flavor should be given particular weight, such as “Star of Jacob,” “the Shoot (of God Most High)” (*T. Jud.* 24:1–6).

(3) *Literary similarity and use of traditions.* Closeness to certain Jewish writings may be an indication of Jewish Christian provenance, albeit not a decisive one. In time many Jewish writings became known and used by Gentile members of the church. An example of common traditions is the removal of the capitals of the temple pillars, signalling the end of the temple (*Liv. Pro.* 12:11–13), to be compared with the breaking of a temple lintel at Jesus’ death in the Gospel of the Nazarenes.

2. Lives of the Prophets

Some interpreters have discerned the hand of the same (Jewish) Christian interpolator in both the *Lives of the Prophets*⁷ and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. We will therefore start our investigation with these two books. The *Lives of the Prophets* is a collection of traditions about biblical prophets in which attention is given to their birthplaces, death, and burial places. The book refers to biblical prophecies and contains new prophecies about Israel’s past and future. End-time prophecies are usually introduced by “He gave them a sign (τέρας).” The prophets foresee signs of the last days, including the judgement of the evil city and the world as a whole.

The *Lives of the Prophets* was originally written in Greek by a Jewish author in the land of Israel, perhaps in the first quarter of the first century C.E.⁸ There are

⁷ References are according to James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985). Unless otherwise indicated, translations given below are those of OTP. For the Greek texts, see Anna Maria Schwemer, *Studien zu den frühjüdischen Prophetenlegenden: Beiheft: Synopse zu den Vitae Prophetarum* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996).

⁸ So Hare, OTP 2:379–99; Anna M. Schwemer, *Vitae Prophetarum (Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* 1.7; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1997), 539, 547–48. This is the main view, following scholars such as Nestle and Schermann. In a number of publications, Satran has argued that the *Lives of the Prophets* is a Christian composition of the fourth to fifth centuries that incorporates Jewish tradition. See David Satran, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets* (SVTP 11; Leiden: Brill, 1995). Against the latter view, Schwemer argues that the stage of traditions found in the *Lives of the Prophets* best fits the first century. Among other things, there is a proximity to Second Temple Jewish prophets, and some of the geographical references and names are difficult to explain if the book was written much later than the first century (Schwemer, *Vitae*, 539, 552–53, 617). Further, some *Lives of the Prophets* traditions are adopted and developed in early Christian and rabbinic literature. See Schwemer, *Vitae*, 539–40; Schwemer, “Elija als Araber: Die haggadischen Motive in der Legende vom Messias Menahem ben Hiskija (yBer 2,4 5a; EkhaR 1,16§51) im Vergleich mit den Elija- und Eliascha-Legenden der Vitae Prophetarum,” in *Die Heiden: Juden, Christen und das Problem des Fremden* (ed. R. Feldmeier and U. Heckel; WUNT 70; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 108–57.

large differences between the various recensions, which represent different degrees of Christian interpolations.⁹ The interpolators had Messianic testimonia as additional source material. With Riessler, Jervell suggests that the second anonymous version (An2) as well as the first of the two versions ascribed to Epiphanius (Ep1) represent the same interpolator as in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.¹⁰ Both contain accusations against Israel for disobeying Torah and persecuting Christ. Salvation has now been given to all the Gentile peoples, but later Israel will return to Christ.

A Jewish Christian interpreter would find this book attractive for transmission and editing. He would note with agreement the expectation of Ezekiel, Daniel and Hosea that the tribes of Israel would be gathered to the land in the last days, and he would rejoice when Ezekiel says (*Liv. Pro.* 3:12) “there is hope for Israel both here and in the coming age.” Ezekiel (*Liv. Pro.* 3:16) pronounces judgment on the tribes of Gad and Dan, who had persecuted “those who kept the Torah”; keeping the Torah is obviously viewed positively. Because of the sins of these two tribes, “the people would not return to its land but would be in Media until the consummation of their error.” Thus there will be an end-time return to the land. Jewish believers would feel at home in the Life of Jeremiah, which concentrates on Sinai, the ark, and the Torah. According to *Liv. Pro.* 2:18, God’s glory is visible above the hidden ark in the desert, for “the glory of God will never turn away from his Torah.” In the resurrection the ark will be the first to be resurrected (*Liv. Pro.* 2:15). Torah-teaching is also positively viewed in the Life of Nathan (*Liv. Pro.* 17:1) where the prophet is portrayed as the one who taught the Torah of the Lord to King David. Further, Nathan is the Torah-keeper who was forced to postpone his warning to David because he had to fulfill the commandment of taking care of a corpse (17:2). In the same vein, Elijah will be the end-time judge of Israel (*Liv. Pro.* 21:3). Thus, a Jewish believer would sympathize with the end-time hope and the view of Torah in the book, and he would only need slight additions to relate the book to Jesus and the new believers.

⁹Schwemer (*Vitae*, 540–41) characterizes the most important recensions as follows: The first anonymous recension (An1) usually represents the earliest textual tradition, with only a few Christian interpolations. The second anonymous (An2) and the second Epiphanian (Ep2) recensions contain a number of Christian interpolations which may be early. The first Epiphanian recension (Ep1) represents a later Christian editorial stage. The Dorothean (D) version has Messianic testimonia from the Old and New Testament preceding each of the prophets represented by separate biblical books.

¹⁰Paul Riessler, *Altjüdisches Schrifttum ausserhalb der Bibel: Übersetzt und erläutert* (Heidelberg, 1928; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 1321; Jacob Jervell, “Ein Interpolator interpretiert: Zu der christlichen Bearbeitung der Testamente der Zwölf Patriarchen,” in *Studien zu den Testamenten der Zwölf Patriarchen* (ed. Walter Eltester; BZNW 36; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969), 59, n. 94. Schermann tends in the same direction. See Theodor Schermann, *Propheten- und Apostellegenden nebst Jüngerkatalogen des Dorotheus und verwandter Texte* (TUGAL 3.1; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1907), 46–47, 96, 120–22. Schwemer (*Vitae*, 610–11) comes to a similar conclusion on interpolations in the Life of Hosea.

We will review those interpolations relevant for our discussion. The Life of Jeremiah reads: “The Lord has gone away from Sinai (or: Zion) into heaven and will come again in power. And this will be for you the sign of his coming, when all the peoples honor the tree” (*Liv. Pro.* 2:12–13). This reference to end-time reverence of the cross (probably replacing an original reverence of the Torah), an interpolation that may be either Jewish Christian or Gentile, may go back to the second century.¹¹ Further, the original Sinai was replaced by Zion in some versions, and *kyrios* is now understood as Christ. While An2 has the Lord returning to Sinai to give the Law, D (+ one further MS) has “the Lord has gone away from Sinai into heaven and will return in power as lawgiver from Zion.” The conflation of Jewish and Christian motifs in these two versions points toward different Jewish Christian interpolators. D combines Isa 2:3 LXX and Rom 11:26, and presents Christ as the end-time teacher of Torah from Zion.¹² The portrayal of Christ as giver of Torah at the *parousia* is remarkably Jewish in flavor and differs from Pauline passages on the *parousia* such as 1 Cor 11, 1 Thess 4, and 2 Thess 1. Anonymous Version 2 keeps the original reference to Sinai, and portrays Christ as a new Moses teaching Torah from the mountain of God (cf. *1 En.* 1:4), remarkably different from the Pauline texts mentioned above, as well as Rom 11:26. The Jewish background of these interpolators seems to overrule any Pauline influence.

Ezekiel “saw the pattern of the temple with its walls” (3:15). D and some An2 MSS add a reference to Ezek 44:1–3: “and the gate where the Lord will go out and go in. This will be the closed gate, to which all peoples would set their hope.” Schwemer dates this and many other interpolations to the fourth century (or later), when the closed gate of Ezek 44:2 was seen as a proof-text for Mary’s lasting virginity.¹³

Daniel foresees the eschatological return to the land, not only the post-exilic return. According to *Liv. Pro.* 4:19–20, the smoke of the mountain of the north signals the end of Babylon (a type of the evil city) and all the earth. But when the mountain of the south pours forth water (cf. Ezek 47; Zech 13:1; 14:8) the people will return to their land where they will be safe, even when the mountain pours out blood and Beliar strikes all the earth with death. Between these signs, D and some An2 MSS add: “When pure water pours out in the East, God will be revealed on earth as a man. He will take upon him all the lawlessness of the world when he is crucified by the priests of the Law.” This is probably a Gentile addition.

¹¹ Schwemer, *Vitae*, 580–81. Cf. the early second century *Ascen. Isa.* 3:18, “those who believe in his cross will be saved”; and 9:26 “believe in his cross.” In the fragmentary Coptic Gospel of the Savior, dated to the second century, Jesus talks to the cross that will be elevated, col. 122; 5F; 5H. See Charles W. Hedrick and Paul A. Mirecki, eds., *Gospel of the Savior: A New Ancient Gospel* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 1999), 53–7; see also Stephen Emmel, “The Recently Published *Gospel of the Savior* (‘Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium’): Righting the Order of Pages and Events,” *HTR* 95 (2002): 45–72.

¹² For Schwemer (*Vitae*, 553), this interpolation would fit primitive Christology of the first half of the second century

¹³ Schwemer, *Vitae*, 594.

Epiphanius 1 has a shorter interpolation that might be of Jewish Christian origin, “The Lord will come to the earth in form of a man.”

According to the short Life of Hosea (*Liv. Pro.* 5:2), the oak of Shiloh would be divided into twelve trees as a sign of the Lord’s end-time coming to the land (not in D).¹⁴ Anonymous Version 2 adds “comes to the earth/land and walks with men” (i.e., pointing to Jesus’ first coming), while Ep1 has “the Lord will come from heaven onto the earth, and this will be the sign of his coming: when the oak. . . .”¹⁵

Anonymous Version 2 adds to the short Life of Joel: “He prophesied about the famine and the cessation of the sacrifice and the suffering of the righteous prophet, that through him he would renew the creation to salvation” (cf. Rom 8:19–21; 12:2). The image of Jesus as a prophet has Jewish flavor.¹⁶ The addition of Ep1 has a Jewish or Jewish Christian flavor: “He prophesied manifold on Jerusalem and the end of the peoples.” One does not add that the prophet announced judgement or chastisement of his people, cf. Joel 1.

The Life of Habakkuk (*Liv. Pro.* 12:11–13) prophesies that the end of the temple will be caused by a people from the West, and that “the curtain of the *Debir* (Holy of Holies) will be torn into small pieces, the capitals of the two pillars will be taken away¹⁷ . . . and will be carried by angels into the desert, where the tent of witness was in the beginning. And through them the Lord will be recognized at the end, for they will illuminate those who are being persecuted by the serpent in darkness as in the beginning.”¹⁸ The tearing of the temple curtain is an addition that reflects Gospel tradition. Within this interpolation the Hebrew

¹⁴ Contra Schwemer and Hare (*OTP*), the original γῆ should here be translated “land” and not “earth,” cf. Hos 2:18–23 (Ep1 has the more secondary version “from heaven to earth”). The reference to the oak of Shiloh may go back to exegesis of the Hebrew text of Gen 49:10 “until Shiloh comes” (interpreted of the Messiah in *b. Sanh.* 98b), but it is not interpreted in a Messianic sense in the Greek of the *Lives of the Prophets*.

¹⁵ These additions in the Life of Hosea and the Life of Daniel are similar to many in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* that may be Jewish Christian (see below). Schwemer (*Vitae*, 610–11) finds these interpolations typical of second century Christology, but adds that they could be later. Cf. Schermann, *Propheten-und Apostellegenden*, 118–21; Jarl H. Ulrichsen, *Die Grundschrift der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen: Eine Untersuchung zu Umfang, Inhalt und Eigenart der ursprünglichen Schrift* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991), 315–19.

¹⁶ Cf. the prophetic Christology of the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* (1.36.2; 1.41.2; 1.43.1; 1.44.5, 1.57.1).

¹⁷ The tearing of the temple curtain is mentioned in *T. Levi* 10:3; *T. Benj.* 9:3; *Rec.* 1.41.3. Previous scholars have not noted that the breaking of the pillars has a close parallel in the Gospel of the Nazarenes, which instead of narrating the tearing of the temple curtain says that “a lintel of an enormous size was broken and split” (Jerome, *Comm. Matt* 27.51; *Epist.* 120.8). This represents an early Jewish-Christian interpretation of Isa 6:2–6; Hab 3:13, and perhaps Amos 9:1; Zeph 2:14; Zech 12:2. Cf. A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (VC Supplements 17; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 93–97.

¹⁸ Ep1 conforms the text with Matt 27:51: “the curtain of the sanctuary will be torn into two pieces” and adds at the end, “and the Lord will save them from the darkness and the shadow of death, and they will dwell in the holy tent.”

term *Debir* for the Holy of Holies is transliterated. Such usage would be more typical for a Jewish believer than a Gentile interpolator. The peculiar tradition of the breaking of the temple pillars is not taken from the Gospels, and its only extant parallel is in the Gospel of the Nazarenes. The conclusion of this interpolation, the end-time salvation in the desert for the remnant, is an Old Testament theme that would be dear to a Jewish believer.

Zechariah prophesied “the end ($\tauέλος$) of the peoples, Israel, the temple, the laziness of prophets and priests, and he set forth the twofold judgement” (*Liv. Pro.* 15:5). Here An2 and Ep1 have a shorter text that omits the end of Israel: “the end of the peoples and of the house of the Jerusalem temple, and the laziness of prophets and priests.” This may be the original text that was kept by Jewish Christian or Judaizing transmitters, while the longer versions of Ep2 and An1 represent a more anti-Jewish trend. Alternatively, if the original text mentioned the end of Israel and the temple, it is remarkable that two recensions omit these two points and keep the end of the Gentiles. All versions criticize the priests, similar to (but shorter than) the interpolation in *T. Levi* 18:1–2.

Epiphanius 1 clarifies that Joel and Zephaniah die during the vision. Here we may trace influence from the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which in chs. 6–11 portrays the end of Isaiah in a similar way (see below on the Jewish Christian provenience of *Ascen. Isa.*). In the Life of Jonah (*Liv. Pro.* 10:2) An2 clarifies that his being cast out of the sea monster made him “a type of the Lord’s resurrection.” The Life of Haggai (*Liv. Pro.* 14:2) prophesies the return of the people, which for Christian and Jewish Christian interpreters would mean both a physical return to the land and a turning to the Lord.

The *Lives of the Prophets*, then, retains its Jewish character even in its Christian recensions. The Christian interpolations probably reflect different stages and milieus and a long process of transmission history. Regarding a number of the interpolations, one cannot deduce much about milieu of origin. A few bear a Gentile stamp, while a number of the additions in the recensions An2 and Ep1 (as well as some in D) have a remarkable Jewish/Jewish Christian flavoring. Seen together, themes such as the future return to the land, the salvation of Israel, Torah-keeping, Jesus as end-time giver of Torah from Sinai or Zion, and the breaking of the temple pillars at Jesus’ death all make it probable that various Jewish Christian interpolators have been at work. The continued interest in the sites in the land also points to Jewish Christian interpolators in the pre-Byzantine period.¹⁹ The less plausible alternative is to see in these three versions Judaizing interpreters who would be indebted to Jewish Christian teachers and traditions.

¹⁹ Christian pilgrimage had its modest beginnings only in the fourth century. “The earliest Christians saw no religious significance in the land of the patriarchs and prophets”; so Robert L. Wilken, “Early Christian Chiliasm, Jewish Messianism, and the Idea of the Holy Land,” in *Christians among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg and G. W. MacRae; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 299.

3. *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*

There is a long tradition history behind the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. It utilizes Levi traditions going back to the third century B.C.E., along with other Jewish material from the second and first centuries B.C.E. In addition, Christian material from the second century onwards is clearly detectable. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* contain patriarchal biographies and messages from Jacob's twelve sons on their deathbeds to their descendants. The farewell speeches contain parenetic material as well as predictions of the future of each tribe and Israel as a whole. Christian material is found in the predictions, which are often designed according to a deuteronomic "Sin-Exile-Return" (SER) scheme. Further, the future glory of Levi and Judah (LJ passages) plays a significant role. Both SER and LJ material were easily utilized in Christian interpretation.

The Greek of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* contains a number of Semitisms. For some scholars this proves a Hebrew or Aramaic original, a Jewish *Grundschrift* which subsequently was translated and interpolated by more than one Christian hand.²⁰

The alternative view is spearheaded by Marinus de Jonge, who for decades has suggested a Christian author (or authorial group) writing directly in a Greek heavily influenced by the Septuagint. According to this view, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* received its present form in the second half of the second century C.E. The book may represent a thorough reworking of an earlier Jewish writing, but it is impossible to know whether there ever existed Jewish testaments in some form.²¹ De Jonge has moderated his view somewhat, and the gap between the camps has narrowed. Some see the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* as Jewish writings that were Christianized in the second and third centuries, others (e.g., de Jonge) as a composite Christian work incorporating Jewish traditions.²²

²⁰ So Jürgen Becker, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen* (AGJU 8; Leiden: Brill, 1970), and more recently Ulrichsen, *Die Grundschrift*. Both see a *Grundschrift* growing from the Maccabean period. "Die christliche Bearbeitung macht die letzte Stufe aus. Sie beginnt möglicherweise am Ende des ersten Jahrhunderts unserer Zeitrechnung . . . Das relative Alter der einzelnen Interpolationen lässt sich kaum mehr feststellen" (Ulrichsen, *Die Grundschrift*, 344).

²¹ H. W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (SVTP 8; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 28, 82–85. They note that the composition of the testaments may be a collective long-time enterprise in a Christian community.

²² Goodman and Vermes see the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* as a Jewish work with only a limited amount of easily recognizable Christian modifications. Many messianic passages should now, in light of parallel material, be viewed as Jewish; cf. Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes et al.; 3 vols.; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 3.2:767–72. For a survey of the debate, see Marinus de Jonge, "The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs and Related Qumran Documents," in *For a Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (ed. R. A. Argall, B. A. Bow and R. A. Wesham; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2000), 63–77.

Milik (like de Jonge) finds it difficult to sort out Christian interpolations on literary grounds. Based on parallels in Qumran literature he suggests a Jewish Christian author in the first or second century who, working with existing Jewish testaments, created the book as we now know it.²³

For our analysis, a choice between the options is neither necessary nor decisive. If the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* was authored by a second century Christian, it is remarkable how much Jewish tradition he incorporates. He is either a Jewish Christian or a Judaizer heavily indebted to Jewish Christian persons or sources. If one chooses the option of a Jewish *Grundschrift* with later Christian editing and interpolations (as I tend to do), both the theology of the interpolations (the Christianized passages) and the message of the remaining *Grundschrift* are of interest to our discussion.

Jacob Jervell subscribes to the *Grundschrift* option.²⁴ He argues that the first layer of interpolations was made by a Jewish Christian editor as early as 70–100 C.E. The main theological issue for this interpolator is the future of Israel. Earlier prophecies by the patriarchs about Israel's disobedience, judgement, and future salvation are reinterpreted by relating them to Christ. Israel's sin and disobedience are now seen to be its lack of faith in Jesus. Its judgement is only temporal. Torah obedience and belief in Christ together will bring Israel future salvation. In the meantime, salvation has been given to the Gentiles. All Israel, the twelve-tribe people, will be saved. There is no exception for the tribe of Dan, whom Christian tradition sees as the tribe of the Antichrist. The church is not seen as "the new Israel." As in Matthew, τὰ ἔθνη designates the Gentiles, while ὁ λαός means the people of Israel. The church as such is no issue, neither are inner church relations. We do not encounter the borders between the church and Israel as we do in third century writings. There is no indication of any *Frühkatalizmus*, nor is there any trace of later sectarian Jewish theology, such as that of the Ebionites.²⁵ *First Enoch* is seen as authoritative, a sign of the early date of the interpolator.²⁶

There is no consistent christological thinking in the *Testaments*.²⁷ According to the additions, which reflect more than one hand, God will appear on earth as a man (*T. Zeb.* 9:8; *T. Sim.* 6:5; 7:2); he takes on a body and eats with men to save

²³ Josef T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (London: SCM, 1959), 34–35.

²⁴ Jervell, "Ein Interpolator." According to Jervell, the earliest interpolations in the pseudepigrapha are short (such as those in *4 Ezra*, *1 En.*, *Pss. Sol.* 17; 18). Later we find longer ones with a more developed Christology. This division is too simplistic. Contra Jervell, I do not see Christian interpolations in *Pss. Sol.* 17 and 18. In 17:27, 36 it is fully conceivable that the phrases "they will all be children of their God" and "he will be free from sin, to rule a great people" came from a Jewish pen.

²⁵ Jervell's view of doctrinal development is too linear.

²⁶ *T. Levi* 10:5; *T. Benj.* 9:1. However, a number of Christian authors of the first three centuries attribute authority to *1 En.* See VanderKam, "1 Enoch."

²⁷ There are words close to patripassianism as well as to adoptionist Christology; see Jervell, "Ein Interpolator," 49–50. This may, for the first layer of interpolations, point to an early time of composition when christological reflection was still *in nuce*. The primitive

them; he is high priest, king, God, and man (*T. Sim.* 6:5–7:2). Through his Son, the Lord will show compassion to the Gentiles (*T. Levi* 4:4). But some additions have a specific Jewish flavor: Christ is Israel's redeemer, the Star of Jacob and the Sun of Righteousness, a man without sin, the Shoot of God Most High (*T. Jud.* 24:1–4),²⁸ and teacher of Torah (close to Matthew's picture and the Life of Jeremiah, see above). A “prophet Christology” (cf. Deut 18:15–19) points toward Jewish circles: “the Most High will send forth his salvation in the visitation of an only-begotten prophet,” *T. Benj.* 9:2.²⁹ Terms such as “savior of the world,” “Lamb of God” (*T. Benj.* 2:8), and “healing and compassion are in his wings” (*T. Zeb.* 9:8) could be phrased by a Gentile pen. But the description of Christ as the eternal (Levite) king of Israel (*T. Reu.* 6:10–12)³⁰ would be strange for a Gentile author. Also *T. Levi* 18 describes him as the messianic end-time priest-king. At his baptism the Father sends his glory and spirit to rest upon him. This priestly Messianism does betray Jewish influence.³¹

Testament of Dan 6:1–5 preaches an anglo-morphic Christology, in a manner similar to the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Christ is the angel of peace, Israel's guardian angel, the angel interceding for Israel, the mediator between God and men for the peace of Israel, but “none of the angels will be equal to him.” Such terminology is easiest understood as early christological thinking among Jewish believers. As background, see other pre-Christian Jewish sources that refer to cultic veneration of angels (probably to be distinguished from worship of God), and polemic New Testament texts that presuppose a conflation or comparison of Christ with angels (Col 1:16; 2:18; Heb 1:3–2:10; Rev 19:9–10; 22:8–9). However, there are also verses in Revelation that reflect an angelo-morphic Christology (Rev 1:12–20; 10:1; 15:6; 14:14–20).³²

Christology plainly stating that “God will appear on earth as a man” is found also in interpolations in the *Lives of the Prophets*; *T. Sim.* 6:5; *T. Naph.* 8:3; *T. Ash.* 7:3; and *T. Benj.* 10:7–9; cf. *T. Zeb.* 9:8; *T. Dan* 5:13; *Liv. Pro.* 5:2 (*Hosea*); *Liv. Pro.* 4:21 (*Daniel*; D, An2).

²⁸“The Shoot (of David)” is a common designation for the Messiah in early Jewish liturgy and tradition. See the 15th prayer of the *Amidah*; 4Q174 Flor 1–2 i 11; 4Q252 CommGen A V 3–4; 4Q285 Sefer ha-Milhamah 7.3. Cf. Isa 4:2; 11:1; Zech 3:8; Rev 5:5.

²⁹Greek recension β. See R. H. Charles, *The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908, repr. 1966), x–xxii, 227.

³⁰“Draw near to Levi . . . For he will bless Israel and Judah, since the Lord has chosen through him to reign in the presence of all the people (some MSS: all the peoples). Prostrate yourselves before his seed, for he will die for you in wars visible and invisible. And he shall be among you an eternal king” (my translation).

³¹Cf. Ps 110; Zech 4:14; *Jub.* 31:15: the sons of Levi shall be “princes, rulers and kings over all the seed of the sons of Jacob” (my translation); and Qumran references to the messiahs of Aaron and Israel (1QS 9.11; CD 12.23; 14.19; 19.10; 20.1).

³²Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2.70; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995); Stuckenbruck, “‘Angels’ and ‘God’: Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (ed. L. T. Stuckenbruck and W. E. S. North; JSNTSup 263; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 45–70. Stuckenbruck concludes: “it is not the

What is the message of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* regarding Israel's past and future, and the relation between Israel and the Gentiles?³³ All the christological passages in the *Testaments* appear as part of the prophecies dealing with Israel's future. Israel has failed in its mission and is dispersed because of its rejection of Jesus (*T. Levi* 14:2; 15:1–2; 16:3–4; *T. Zeb.* 9:9, *T. Ash.* 7:3–7). But there will be salvation for those who repent and follow God's Torah. The descendants of the patriarchs are from Israel and are not Gentiles. The passage most critical in understanding Israel's attitude to Jesus is *T. Levi* 16, in which the people call him a deceiver, plot to kill him, and thus in their wickedness take innocent blood on their heads. For this reason the sanctuary will be desolate and the people dispersed.³⁴ But the passage continues "until he will again visit (you) and in pity receive you through faith and water."³⁵ The same sequence is found in *T. Naph.* 4. The people will be scattered "until the compassion of the Lord comes, a man working righteousness and mercy unto all who are far off and all who are near."

Christ will redeem both Israel and the (righteous among the) Gentiles.³⁶ In most cases Israel is mentioned first, then the Gentiles (*T. Levi* 5:7; *T. Jud.* 22:2; 25:5; *T. Dan* 6:7; *T. Naph.* 8:3; *T. Ash.* 7:3, *T. Benj.* 9:2). In others the sequence is reversed (*T. Sim.* 7:2; *T. Jos.* 19:11; *T. Benj.* 3:8; 11:2). Some passages have only the salvation of Israel in focus. For example, *T. Zeb.* 9:9 notes that "you (tribe of Zebulon) will be cast away until the time of consummation." *T. Gad* 8:1 and *T. Levi* 16:5 claim that the Lord "will raise up a savior to Israel" from Judah and Levi. *T. Dan* 6:4 asserts that "on the day that Israel will believe (i.e., in Christ) the

'worship' of angels itself that left its mark on earliest formulations of Jesus' exalted status. Rather, it is how such honorific language towards angels was accommodated into worship directed ultimately towards God which established a pattern that helped to shape ways Christians extolled Christ during the first century" ("Angels' and 'God,'" 70).

³³ Hollander and de Jonge, *The Testaments*, 64–67.

³⁴ According to 18:9a, the Gentiles will be blessed through Jesus, "but Israel will be diminished through ignorance and will be darkened in grief." This may be a later anti-Jewish gloss (as *T. Dan* 7:3); it is lacking in two of the Greek MSS; so Benedikt Otzen, "De 12 Patriarker Testamente," in *De gammeltestamentlige pseudepigræfer* (ed. E. Hammershaimb et al.; 2 vols.; København: Gad, 1953–1976), 2:723. Further, the continuation of the passage describes the positive fruits of Christ's priesthood, God's rejoicing in his children, and the patriarchs with Levi himself exulting. But even this statement does not assert Israel's lasting rejection. *T. Benj.* 10:8–11 contains tough words on the judgement on Israel and the Gentiles, but the passage includes a promise of salvation for those of Israel who believe in Christ.

³⁵ Translations from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* mainly according to Hollander and de Jonge, *The Testaments*.

³⁶ "Apart from the interweaving of the future salvation of Jews and Gentiles, the most striking characteristic of the *Testaments* is their unrestrained universalism . . . Israel is neither rejected nor replaced by a 'new people' or a 'third race.' This is the closest thing we have to Paul's universalist vision in Romans 11, though there are no signs of direct influence." So Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 107.

kingdom of the enemy will be brought to an end.”³⁷ Due to Israel’s unbelief Christ will be the savior of the Gentiles. But Israel’s unbelief is only temporary; the people will ultimately return to him (*T. Zeb.* 9:8–9; *T. Benj.* 9:3–10:11, cf. Rom 11:11–26). Jervell argues that the salvation of the Gentiles is self-evident for the interpolator, but that the salvation of the Jews is the burning issue.³⁸ He further notes that the interpolator keeps strong warnings not to become involved in the wicked ways of the Gentiles.³⁹ *T. Benj.* 11 is reworked as a prophecy on Paul, stressing his Jewish descent.⁴⁰

Israel’s salvation includes an ingathering to the land: *Testament of Judah* 23:5; *T. Iss.* 6:4; *T. Zeb.* 10:2 (all belonging to the *Grundschrift*). *Testament of Asher* 7 is Christianized. God the Highest comes to the earth as a man to save Israel and the Gentiles. Due to their disobedience and wickedness towards him, Israel will be dispersed, “but the Lord will (again) gather you in faith through the hope on his compassion, for the sake of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob” (7:7). *Testament of Dan* 5 is a SER passage ending with a description of the renewed Jerusalem. The last verse (13) is Christianized: “And no longer will Jerusalem endure desolation nor Israel be led captive, because the Lord will be in the midst of it living together with men, the Holy one of Israel reigning over them in humility and poverty. And he who believes in him will be king in truth in the heavens.” Thus, the Christianized version is millenarian: it expects a blessed end time for Israel in its land, with Christ reigning in their midst.⁴¹ According to *T. Jud.* 23:5 “the Lord will bring you up from captivity among your enemies.” This verse of the *Grundschrift* refers to the end-time ingathering. With the addition of the Chris-

³⁷ Cf. *T. Mos.* 10:1 “the end of Satan’s kingdom has come,” and Shem Tob’s Hebrew Matthew 12:28: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, truly the end of (his) kingdom has come.” (Cf. section 4.6 in chapter 9 of this book.)

³⁸ Jervell, “Ein Interpolator,” 41–43.

³⁹ *T. Levi* 9:10; *T. Jud.* 23:2; *T. Dan* 5:5; *T. Naph.* 4:1. See Jervell, “Ein Interpolator,” 46, n. 58. It is difficult to see how a Gentile author or interpolator would leave these words from a Jewish *Vorlage* unchanged.

⁴⁰ In *T. Benj.* 11:2. OTP 1:828 reads with MS C “the beloved of the Lord, from the seed of Judah and Levi.” The better text reads “from my seed,” relating it to Paul the Benjaminite (MSS β, S¹). The attitude of *T. Benj.* 11 toward Paul is contrasted by *Rec.* 1.70.1–1.71.5, and the Ebionites (cf. section 4.1.2 of chapter 14 of this book).

⁴¹ Similarly *T. Jud.* 24:5, and perhaps *T. Reu.* 6:11–12. On early Christian attitudes to Israel’s land and the millennium, see Wilken, “Early Christian Chiliasm”; David Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in antiquity and Christianity; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 270–78. While Gentile theologians could be millenarian (until Augustine), they had no particular interest in the land before the eschaton. Cf. also Timothy C. G. Thornton, “Jews in Early Christian Eschatological Scenarios,” in *Historica, biblica, theologica et philosophica* (vol. 1 of *Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1999*; ed. M. F. Wiles and E. J. Yarnold; StPatr 34; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 565–71: While some Fathers held that Jews could be converted (Justin, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Chrysostom Victorinus of Pettau, Hilary of Poitiers, and some of the Jewish–Christian dialogues), few expected Israel as a people to return to Christ.

tian ch. 24 (cf. 24:1, 25:1, “and after these things”), the verse refers to the return from the Babylonian exile. The added ch. 24 has an Old Testament–Jewish Christian flavor: Jesus is called “star from Jacob,” “a man arises . . . like the sun of righteousness,” “the branch of God Most High.” Jesus’ kingdom is that of Judah, probably understood in a millenarian way: “Then the sceptre of my kingdom will shine.” From the stem of the root of Judah (*Isa* 11:1) “a rod of righteousness will arise for the nations to judge and save all who call upon the Lord.”

The *Testaments* keep a remarkably Jewish view of Torah. Jesus “renews the Torah in the power of the Most High” (*T. Levi* 16:3). He is “teaching the Torah of God through his works” (*T. Dan* 6:9). He does not abolish the Torah, he renews and confirms it. For Israel, Torah-keeping is a positive issue,⁴² even after Christ.⁴³ Israel will lose the temple and their land due to unfaithfulness to the Torah, which caused their rejection of Jesus (*T. Levi* 16:2–3; *T. Dan* 6:6; 7:3; *T. Ash.* 7:5). In the end time Zebulon will rise and rejoice in the midst of his tribe “as many as have kept the Torah of the Lord and the commandments of Zebulon their father” (*T. Zeb.* 10:2). Dan’s descendants are admonished to “cleave to the righteousness of the Lord’s Torah, so that my race will be saved for ever” (*T. Dan.* 6:10).⁴⁴

It is questionable if the same interpolator is at work in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Lives of the Prophets*. The interpolations in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* are of a different flavor, more extensive and expressly christological. But I do see good reasons for Jervell’s view that the best explanation for the Jewish Christian theology of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is that the main interpolator was a Jewish believer.⁴⁵ To me it is doubtful whether one can date this stage as early as Jervell does, 70–100 C.E. More likely, the main interpolator belongs to the first three quarters of the second century. The dispersion and destiny of Israel described in the predictions may point to the

⁴² *T. Reu.* 6:8; *T. Levi* 9:6; 13:2–4; 19:1–2; *T. Zeb.* 10:2; *T. Dan* 5:1; *T. Ash.* 6:3; *T. Benj.* 10:3. Cf. *Liv. Pro.* 2:12 (see above); *Apostolic Constitutions and Canons* 5:20 (cf. section 5 in chapter 20 of this book); cf. also Charlesworth, “Christian and Jewish Self-Definition,” 34.

⁴³ *T. Jud.* 24 is Christian(ized): when Christ pours out the spirit of grace upon Judah, they will “walk in his commandments from first to last” (24:3). *T. Jud.* 26:1 “Observe, therefore, my children, all the Torah of the Lord, because there is hope for all who make their ways steadfast.” Although this belongs to the *Grundschrift*, it is now located after the Christian ch. 24 and would have been read in conjunction with this.

⁴⁴ Wilson (*Related Strangers*, 105) notes: “Unusual, however, is the repeated claim that the Messiah teaches, renews, and keeps the law. This presents Jesus as a figure entirely congenial to Judaism.” But, “in a number of texts the keeping of God’s law is retained as a Christian ideal. This may be due to Jewish Christian influence, but it may also be because the keeping of the law had . . . come to be understood in terms of broad human ideals.”

⁴⁵ So also Charlesworth: “The scribe (and his community) probably perceived himself as primarily Jewish; the struggle was essentially with other Jews.” This community is “seeking to obtain a self-definition through a dynamic tension with Judaism, from which it has not yet totally broken.” (Charlesworth, “Christian and Jewish Self-Definition,” 38, 40–41).

period after Bar Kokhba rather than to the time between the revolts.⁴⁶ (Apart from the Jerusalem region, which was largely desolate between the revolts,⁴⁷ Judea was much more heavily punished after the second revolt). Moreover, the references to Israel's disbelief in Jesus presuppose the growing rift between Jewish believers and the Tannaim, perhaps also Bar Kokhba's persecution of Jewish believers.⁴⁸

If one chooses to follow de Jonge's view that the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* were written by a Christian author and editor slightly after 150 C.E., the author would be heavily indebted to Jews and probably also to Jewish believers in his theology and editorial guidelines, and was most likely a Jewish Christian himself.⁴⁹ Our interpolator stresses both the inclusion of the Gentiles in the new people of the Messiah as well as the future of Israel. The evidence points to a Jewish Christian interpolator (or author) belonging to a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles, or to a Jewish Christian community with open lines to Gentile brethren,⁵⁰ shortly after the Bar Kokhba revolt. This community probably tried to reach out to Jews and shared a clear hope for the ultimate return of the main body of Israel to the Messiah and of dispersed Israelites to their land.

4. *Ascension of Isaiah*

Since R. H. Charles, it has been commonplace to see the *Ascension of Isaiah* as a composite of three original works: A Jewish "Martyrdom of Isaiah" (1:1–3:12, 5:1–16), a Christian "Testament of Hezekiah" (3:13–4:22, here called the First Vision), and a Christian "Vision of Isaiah" (chs. 6–11, here called the Second Vision).⁵¹ However, recent scholarship tends to see the book as a whole as a Christian compilation from the time around 100 C.E. (Bauckham: 70–80 C.E.),⁵²

⁴⁶ T. Levi 10:4; 13:7; 14:2; 15:1–4; 16:4–5; T. Jud. 23; T. Iss. 6:2; T. Zeb. 9:6; T. Dan 5:8; T. Ash. 7:2; T. Benj. 10:8–10. The authors "casually conflated the consequences of the Jewish War and the Bar Cochba rebellion." (Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 106). The same conflation is found in Rec. 1.39.3.

⁴⁷ Hillel Geva, "Searching for Roman Jerusalem," BAR 23, no. 6 (1997): 35–45, 72–73

⁴⁸ Cf. T. Zeb. 9:8–9, which describes the deeds of the incarnate God, "and again through the wickedness of your words you will provoke him, and you will be cast away until the time of consummation." T. Jos. 19:8–11 and T. Benj. 3:8 ("the Lamb of God") are dependent upon Johannine tradition.

⁴⁹ Cf. the comment of Hollander and de Jonge (*The Testaments*, 84): "It may be difficult to imagine how a Christian may have collected so much variegated Jewish material."

⁵⁰ See H. Dixon Slingerland, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical History of Research* (SBLMS 21; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 113.

⁵¹ *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English with Introduction and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913, repr. 1963), here vol. II, 155–58.

⁵² Indications of an early date include several sorts of parallels: with other early texts about abuse in the church (1 and 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, 1 Clement 3), with resurrection de-

albeit drawing upon Jewish traditions.⁵³ The author(s) belonged to a circle of Christian prophets whose role in the church was controversial.⁵⁴ He wrote in Greek and used the LXX.⁵⁵ The group was probably located in Syria.⁵⁶

In the First Vision Isaiah sees the Beloved (the heavenly Christ) and the church, which will be affected by false teaching and wicked elders, a reflection of the time of the author. In the Second Vision Isaiah ascends through the seven heavens and then follows the Beloved's descent to earth (the incarnation) and subsequent ascent. The Second Vision asserts that the Beloved will defeat Beliar and the demonic powers through his earthly life and death (3:13, 18; 9:26; 10:12–14). The First Vision expects the millennium as a prelude to the final judgement and heavenly immortality for the pious (4:14–18).

The Ascension will give hope to readers who experience Beliar's power through Roman persecution, and advocates the role of the prophets and the means of apocalyptic revelation in a church which develops in a more hierarchic direction. The author knows early oral tradition about the life of Jesus which has not been preserved in the New Testament.⁵⁷ The Beloved is divine, but both he and the angel of the Holy Spirit are subordinate to God (9:40–42). The description of Christ, the angel of the Holy Spirit, and the angelic worship are indebted

scriptions (*Gospel of Peter* 39–40; 4 *Baruch* 9:18; 20:32), with the ascent to heaven in the *Odes of Solomon* and with the role of prophecy in Revelation and Ignatius's letters. See Robert G. Hall, "The Ascension of Isaiah: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity," *JBL* 109 (1990): 289–306.

⁵³ Michael A. Knibb, "Isaianic Traditions in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; Vetus Testamentum Supplements 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 637 (in part changing his previous position in *OTP* 2:143–55); Jonathan Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 21–26 (arguing for a date between 112 and 138 C.E.); Hall, "The Ascension of Isaiah."

⁵⁴ The portrayal of Isaiah's prophetic school reflects that of the author. He is concerned with the declining role of prophecy in the church. See Knibb, "Isaianic Tradition," 637–8; Hall, "The Ascension"; Knight, *The Ascension*, 13, 31–8; Enrico Norelli, *Ascension du prophète Isaïe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 12–29, 66–78; Enrico Norelli, *Ascensio Isaiae: Commentarius* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 8; Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 37–44.

⁵⁵ Knibb (*OTP* 2:146–7) argues that the Martyrdom of Isaiah was composed in Hebrew. Knight (*The Ascension*, 23, 26) rather sees oral traditions, perhaps also in Hebrew, behind the book.

⁵⁶ Cf. the reference to Tyre and Sidon (5:13), similarities with (the opponents of) Ignatius of Antioch, and the Hebrew roots of the Martyrdom. Frankfurter suggests Asia Minor, due to similarities with Revelation. See David Frankfurter, "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (ed. J. C. VanderKam; CRINT 3.4; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 133.

⁵⁷ Contained in the resurrection account in 3:16–17 and the comment that Mary gave birth without midwife, 11:14; cf. Knight, *The Ascension*, 56. There is a parallel in *Odes Sol.* 19:8–9: "she labored and bore the Son without pain . . . and she did not seek a midwife." The Syriac *Odes of Solomon* are usually ascribed to Jewish believers in Syria around 100 C.E., perhaps in the vicinity of Antioch; see Charlesworth, *OTP* 2:727.

to Jewish angelology.⁵⁸ In chs. 6–11, an influence of an early docetic tendency can be traced.⁵⁹

Jewish terminology is abundant,⁶⁰ as is dualistic Jewish thinking.⁶¹ Visionary ascent to heaven, an essential revelatory means in the book, is a familiar theme in Jewish apocalyptic from the early Enochic books onwards, as are the heavenly books that record the deeds of the righteous (9:22 “the deeds of the children of Israel,” cf. *Apoc. Pet.* 17). At the same time, the book criticizes the Jews for their role in the death of Jesus.⁶²

Norelli points to the close proximity of chapter 1–5 with Palestinian tradition (dualism and demonology of Qumran), and that of chapter 6–11 with the Matthean special source, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (see below) and the (possibly

⁵⁸ Knight, *The Ascension*, 64, 68, 79–84. See above on a similar early Jewish angelic Christology in *T. Dan* 6. Cf. also the enthroning of God and the Lamb in Rev 3:21; 5:6; 7:17; 22:3. The seven heavens are described also in *T. Levi* 3. Cf. the disciples’ visions of Jesus’ ascent through the seven heavens (on the Mount of Olives at Jesus’ ascension) in *Apoc. Pet.* 17 and *Gospel of the Savior* 100.36–52 (cf. Hedrick and Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 35).

⁵⁹ Jesus was born after only two months in Mary’s womb and did not really need suckling (11:7–8, 17). “The vision of Isaiah, the central doctrine of the *Ascension*’s prophetic school, is both naïvely docetic *and* intensely Jewish.” Cf. Hall, “The Ascension,” 305, who suggests that Ignatius opposed groups such as the one behind the Ascension. For Knight (*The Ascension*, 85–86) the Ascension “represents a stage of belief in which it was recognized that Jesus’ ministry had begun and ended in heaven, but where the precise relationship between the heavenly and human aspects had yet to be fully defined.” For Mary’s pregnancy of two months’ duration, cf. Pseudo-Cyril’s attribution of a seven-months pregnancy to the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 134–37.

⁶⁰ While it may be difficult to discern Jewish terminology from biblical language, some terms do point to Jewish Christian influence or authorship. “Before the Sabbath he must be crucified on a tree” (3:13), “hang him on a tree” (9:15), and “to hang on the tree” is Jewish terminology, but may be explained by use of Deut 21:23; Acts 5:30; Gal 3:13. In 3:16 we encounter “Michael, the chief of the holy angels,” a dear figure in Jewish apocalyptic tradition from *1 En.* onwards (but cf. also *Dan* 12:1; Rev 12:7). The demonic ruler is given the Hebrew designation Beliar. In ch. 5, the D text calls this demonic ruler Malkira (Hebrew: “my King is evil”) the other texts have Belkira, a conflation of Beliar and Malkira (cf. further the name of the demonic angel Sammael, 7:9). God is designated “the One” (3:28; 7:17, 37 [“the One who is not named and is unique”]; 8:7–8; cf. the Shema, Deut 6:5). In 4:3 the church is designated as “the plant.” For this terminology of the end-time community, see *1 En.* 10:3 (Greek text of Syncellus); 10:16; 84:6; 93:2; 1QS 8.5–6; 11.8; CD 1.7, 1QH^a 14.15; 16.4–26; 4Q418 Instruction^c 81.13. In 4:22 we find a reference to “the words of the righteous Joseph,” probably referring to the lost Jewish writing *Prayer of Joseph*, and 4:21 refers to “the descent of the Beloved into Sheol,” using the Hebrew term Sheol.

⁶¹ History is divided into predetermined periods, including the reign of Beliar (4:1–13). This feature is typical for Jewish apocalyptic works from *1 En.* onwards.

⁶² The Jews were responsible for tormenting and betraying Jesus (3:13; 11:19). 3:9–10 is critical towards the (use of the?) Mosaic tradition, and the Torah is not mentioned among the inspired writings (4:21–22).

Jewish Christian) Syriac *Odes of Solomon*. Norelli argues for two literary stages: (1) The author of chapters 6–11 belongs to a Greek-speaking group of Jewish Christian prophets in Antioch in the 90s, who practiced visionary ascent to heaven. (2) The first five chapters (+ 11.41–43) have another author from the same group, writing in the first years of the second century, slightly before Ignatius's letters (ca. 107). Chapters 6–11 are for this author an authoritative writing which he includes in his apologetic-prophetic book. This group is now marginalized; its authority is attacked by presbyters and bishops (the party of Ignatius). The author uses the special source of Matthew in a way that suggests he did not ascribe authority to Matthew's gospel, another sign of the early date of this material.

In my opinion there are good reasons for following Bauckham, who argues that the *Ascension* is a unified whole.⁶³ The work responds to the question of the problem of evil. While chapters 1–5 relate to evil in the form of persecution and corruption on earth, chapters 6–11 resolve the issue in terms of cosmological rebellion and subjugation. Bauckham's early dating (the 70s) is more controversial. He refers to the myth of Nero's return (4:2–4), which points to the first fifty years after Nero's death in 68 C.E. Further, 4:13 and 11:37–38 indicate that many believers, who had seen the Lord Jesus in flesh, still were alive at the time of composition, which would point to a date before ca. 80.

A prophetic circle in Western Syria in the 70s might have consisted entirely of Jewish believers. If the work comes from the early second century, a purely Jewish Christian background is less plausible. But the heavily Jewish flavor of the work suggests that Jewish believers played an important role in its formation, and that the authors probably were Jewish believers.

5. Fourth Baruch (*Paraleipomena Jeremiou*)

In Greek this writing is called “The Things Omitted from Jeremiah the Prophet,” and in Ethiopic “The Rest of the Words of Baruch.” *Fourth Baruch* is an apocalyptic haggadic story that looks forward to a return of the Jews to Jerusalem and a renewed temple cult. Set after the fall of the First Temple, it actually describes the situation after the fall of the Second. The Jewish *Grundschrift* was written in the land of Israel between the two Jewish revolts, probably between 120 and 130 C.E.,⁶⁴ and was interpolated by a Christian hand shortly thereafter. The

⁶³ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 363–90.

⁶⁴ S. E. Robinson, *OTP* 2:413–25; Jens Herzer, *Die Paralipomena Jeremiae: Studien zu Tradition und Redaktion einer Haggada des frühen Judentums* (TSAJ 43; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 177–98 (preferring a date between 125 and 132 C.E.). Jean Riaud (*Les Paralipomènes du Prophète Jérémie* [Angers: Université Catholique de l'Ouest, 1994]) dates it to the early years of Hadrian, before his visit to Jerusalem in 130 and the decision

ending (9:11–32) is clearly a Christian addition. Scholars disagree on whether Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek was the original language for this work.⁶⁵ An anti-Gentile agenda is clear. The temple vessels must not fall into Gentile hands (3:10–12; 4:4). Chapter 6 stresses Israel's obedience and separation from foreigners as a precondition for its return to Jerusalem. These themes would be meaningful for an editor who is a Jewish believer, and less so for a Gentile (a reinterpretation of Israel as the church, such as in *5 Ezra*, is not found here).

The Christian ending betrays knowledge of the *Ascension of Isaiah*: “the words spoken by Isaiah the son of Amos, saying ‘I saw God and the son of God’” (9:21) refers closely to *Ascen. Isa.* 3:9; 4:13; and 5:15. While the *Grundschrift* had Jeremiah die peacefully, in the addition he is raised on the third day, and the people subsequently decide to kill Jeremiah in a different manner than Isaiah, by stoning him instead of sawing him in two (cf. *4 Bar.* 9:22 with *Ascen. Isa.* 5:1). *Fourth Baruch’s* portrayal of Baruch and Abimelech the Ethiopian alongside Jeremiah as recipients of divine revelation is reminiscent of the prophetic groups one encounters in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. In *4 Baruch* we find a clear hope that Israel will reach the heavenly Jerusalem (5:35; 8:12) as well as its rapid return to the earthly one.⁶⁶

The Christian ending retains much Jewish flavor. The description of Christ (9:14–15, 19–21) has fewer parallels with the New Testament than with the *Ascension of Isaiah* (esp. 3:13–20): he is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the light of all the aeons, the life of faith, God’s anointed, and his twelve apostles will preach to the nations so that the islands bear fruit. In 9:16–18 we find preserved a note critical of the Jewish people. When the tree of life is planted, the proud trees that had sprouted (the Jews) will wither, while the uncultivated trees (the Gentiles) will sprout and bear fruit. Also the body of *4 Baruch* betrays some Christian polish-

to build Aelia Capitolina (according to Herzer, *Les Paralipomènes*, 129–35). Wilson (*Related Strangers*, 97) also dates the work to the time immediately before or the beginning of the revolt. Sections 5:28 and 7:28–29 expect restoration to come 66 years after the destruction of the temple. M. de Jonge questions the consensus of a Jewish *Vorlage*; see M. de Jonge, “Remarks in the Margin of the Paper ‘The Figure of Jeremiah in the *Paralipomena Jeremiae*’ by J. Riaud,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 22 (2000): 45–49.

⁶⁵ For Robinson, Semitisms point to Hebrew or Aramaic as the original language, perhaps also in the Christian ending (*OTP* 2:414); he notes the following examples of Semitisms: “El Zar” for “foreign God” (7:29); “prayed a prayer” (9:3); “in whom all judgement was hidden in him” (9:6); “wept a bitter weeping” (9:10); “the words spoken . . . saying” (9:22); “stone him with stones” (9:22, 28). Delling (Gerhard Delling, *Jüdische Lehre und Frömmigkeit in den Paralipomena Jeremiae* [Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 100; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967], 72) too suggests Hebrew vernacular, while Herzer (*Die Paralipomena*, 192) and Riaud (*Les Paralipomènes*, 129–30) suggest Greek as the original language.

⁶⁶ In 9:4–5 Jeremiah prays for “another fragrant odor of incense” and that Michael will open the gates for the righteous and lead them in, probably referring to the earthly Jerusalem and a renewed temple service; cf. Delling, *Jüdische Lehre*, 61–62. The Christian editor must share this hope of a Jewish return to Jerusalem (after 135).

ing: “You will test them by the water of the Jordan; whoever does not listen will become known; this is the sign of the great seal” (6:25). This is a reference to Jesus’ baptism and Christian baptism, regularly called “the seal” in the Apostolic Fathers and the *Odes of Solomon*.⁶⁷

Herzer dates the Christian editing to shortly after the Bar Kokhba revolt. He traces a missionary appeal to the Jews from the author, both in the fact that he adapts a Jewish book and in the message of the final version. According to that missionary appeal, Israel should learn from its past. Had it heeded the message of this book to trust God alone (the true remnant of all the righteous, 5:32), it would not have rebelled. Redemption comes from God (6:9–24; 8:1–2), not from any zealous endeavor. Jerusalem has become desolate because of the sins of the people (4:7). God still asks his people to return to him, as he did in the days of Baruch (6:24). The people should trust the Messiah Jesus, not a pseudo-Messiah like Bar Kosiba, to enter the gates of the righteous.⁶⁸ In *4 Baruch*, Jeremiah is not only the prophet of doom but also of salvation for the righteous Jews (9:5). Both Jeremiah as type and the original composition thus fitted the editor’s missionary message well. By contrast, Riaud does not see any allusion to the second revolt, and asserts a Jewish Christian editor writing before 132.⁶⁹

If there is one Christian hand behind the final version, he is either a Judaizer or more probably a Jewish believer (cf. the Semitisms also in the Christian ending).⁷⁰ If Herzer and Wilson are right in dating *4 Baruch* to 125–132 and the Christian ending to the first years after the revolt, the time span involved is so short that a Jewish Christian editor is the most plausible solution.⁷¹ The story of

⁶⁷ Second Clement 7.6; 8.6; Herm. Sim. 8.2.2, 4; 9.16.3, 5, 7; 17.4; Odes Sol. 4.6, cf. 2 Cor 1:21–22. Less convincingly are the following phrases asserted to be Christian: “vir-gin faith” (6:7); “O great name which no one can know . . . let knowledge come into our heart” (6:13); “steward of faith” (7:2); cf. Robinson, OTP 2:415. Herzer (*Die Paralipomena*, 171–6) does not see Christian interpolations apart from the ending. According to Riaud, 9:7 is polished by the editor: Jeremiah lies dead “as one who has given over his soul” ($\pi\alpha\rho\delta\iota\delta\sigma\tau\omega$ $\tau\eta\psi\chi\eta\sigma\tau\omega$, cf. John 19:30). The Christian flavor here is not self-evident. The saying that the earth shall hide the temple vessels until the coming of the Beloved (3:11) may be a Jewish messianic reference, original in the *Grundschrift*. But the choice of the term “Beloved” here may betray influence from the *Ascension of Isaiah*.

⁶⁸ Herzer, *Die Paralipomena*, 186–92.

⁶⁹ Riaud, *Les Paralipomènes*, 57–58, 131, 201. Section 9:20 expects Jesus’ return on the Mount of Olives. As this is a central spot in Jewish eschatological thinking (cf. Zech 14:4) it is tempting to suggest a Jewish Christian hand here. In the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Gospel of the Savior* 100.33–52, the Mount of Olives is a place of revelation.

⁷⁰ Herzer (*Die Paralipomena*, 192) leaves open the question of a Jewish or Gentile Christian editor, which he finds unimportant.

⁷¹ Wilson (*Related Strangers*, 97) suggests as one option that Gentile Christians immediately after 135 interpreted the *Grundschrift* according to the new reality in which the Jews had been expelled, and Gentiles had been allowed to return to Jerusalem as those who have inherited the promises. Wilson seems not to be updated on the archaeology of Jerusalem between the two Jewish revolts: Apart from a Roman legion, greater Jerusalem was desolate and *judenrein* between the revolts. See Geva, “Searching for Roman Jerusalem,” 72–73.

Jeremiah's martyrdom at the hands of his fellow Jews may reflect the martyrdom of James the Just and Bar Kokhba's persecution of Jewish believers in Jesus.⁷² In my opinion the major Christian editorial hand was probably that of a Jewish believer just after the Bar Kokhba war. *Fourth Baruch* 9:16–18 is most likely a final Gentile addition that interprets vv. 19–20. Without these lines the text runs more smoothly:

¹⁵And after these times there will be another four hundred and seventy-seven years, and (then) he is coming to the earth.

[¹⁶And the tree of life which is planted in the middle of Paradise will cause all the uncultivated trees to bear fruit, and they will grow and sprout. ¹⁷And the trees that had (already) sprouted and boasted and said, 'We raised our top to the air,' he will cause them to wither together with the loftiness of their branches. And the firmly rooted tree will cause them to be judged. ¹⁸And what is scarlet will become as white as wool; the snow will be made black; the sweet waters will become salty, and the salty sweet in the great light of the joy of God.]

¹⁹And he will bless the islands that they may bear fruit at the word of the mouth of his anointed one. ²⁰For he will come! And he will go out and choose for himself twelve apostles, that they may preach among the nations, he whom I have seen adorned by his father and coming into the world on the Mount of Olives; and he will fill the hungry souls.

Can we achieve a synopsis of the four writings we have analyzed so far? The second century versions of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Lives of the Prophets* advocate a remarkably pro-Jewish theology with similar facets, so Jewish Christian involvement in their composition is likely. Between the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the Christianized version of *4 Baruch* there is a probable literary dependence and perhaps proximity in milieu. The *Ascension of Isaiah* has a strong Jewish flavor, and *4 Baruch* a pro-Jewish agenda. There are other cross-links between these writings with parallels in Jewish tradition, such as angelic Christology (*T. Dan* 6:1–5; *Ascen. Isa.* 6–11) and millenarianism (the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, cf. the expected Jewish return to the land and Jerusalem in the *Lives of the Prophets*, the *Testament of Twelve Patriarchs*, and *4 Baruch*). Some of the prophets in the *Lives of the Prophets* end their lives in connection with a vision, similar to the end of Isaiah in the *Ascension of Isaiah*

⁷²In its description of Jeremiah's death the Christianized version betrays links with the *Lives of the Prophets*. The Life of Jeremiah knows the same tradition of Jeremiah's martyrdom at the hands of Jews, but locates it in Egypt, rather than in Jerusalem: "he died in Taphnai of Egypt, having been stoned by the people" (*Liv. Pro.* 2:1). For James's martyrdom, see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.16–17 (transmitted by Hegesippus). For Bar Kokhba's persecution of Jewish believers, see Justin, *1 Apol.* 33.6 and *Apoc. Pet.* 2 and 27 (Gr). See Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 98. Bogaert suggests that the book was edited and promoted by one Jewish Christian group to bring hope and encouragement to another (Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch* [Paris: Cerf, 1969], 216–21).

and Jeremiah in *4 Baruch*, and reminiscent of the sages giving their predictions before their deaths in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. These four writings point to an active interest in prophetic traditions along with some kind of a “charismatic” prophetic milieu permeated with eschatology in the land of Israel in the first century C.E.⁷³ Their traditions were transmitted to Christian milieus where Jewish believers played a vital role by the late first and second centuries in Syria-Palestine. While some of these communities may have been exclusively Jewish believers, most were probably a mixture of Jews and Gentiles.

Other sources indicate that Jewish believers shared such views. Jewish believers “adored the city of Jerusalem as the house of God” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.2). Elxai prescribed praying towards Jerusalem (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 19.1.3.5). Jerusalem and the land are central in *Rec.* (1.37.1; 1.57.4 [Syr]; 1.71.5 *passim*), which also expects a millennial kingdom (1.69.4). Cerinthus held Jesus’ kingdom to be an earthly one of a thousand years (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.28.4; Augustine, *Haer.* 8; Theodoret of Cyr, *Prol. lib.* 2.3). The Ebionites gave Jesus a status similar to an archangel (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.14.5), Christ is “an angel over the angels” (*Rec.* 1.45.2). *Ascension of Isaiah* 11 has some docetic traits, and an adoptionist-like formulation on Jesus’ baptism is found in *T. Levi* 18:6–7, cf. *Rec.* 1.48.1 and the Fathers’ ascription of adoptionism to the Ebionites (Epiphanius, *Anacephalaiosis* t.2 30.1.14.4; 30.1.16.3; Timothy of Constantinople, *De Receptione Haereticorum* 28). Our interpolators interpret Christ with Jewish images and may represent a “primitive” Christology. But their repeated mention of “God taking on a body” and their proximity to Matthean and Johannine tradition point to a closeness to developing orthodox Christology.

6. Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Ezra

Fourth Ezra is a Jewish apocalypse, composed in Hebrew in the last decade of the first century, and translated into Greek before Clement of Alexandria quotes it as authoritative text around 190 C.E. The translation may belong to the stage of intra-Jewish transmission or to the stage of transition into the church.⁷⁴ The

⁷³ According to Peter Hirschberg (cf. chapter 8 of this book) Revelation shows that wandering prophets emigrated from Israel to Asia Minor in the late first century. There may be a closeness to the wandering prophets of *Didache* 10–13. On Jewish prophecy in the first century, see Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁷⁴ In my view, the following statement is too absolute: “Although it is in theory possible that a translation from Hebrew to Greek was made by a Christian, this sort of translational activity at this period is a priori less likely. In fact, to my knowledge there is no direct evidence of any Christian translation of Jewish literature from Hebrew into Greek.” So Theodore A. Bergren, “Christian Influence on the Transmission History of 4, 5, and 6 Ezra,” in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (ed. J. C. VanderKam; CRINT 3.4; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 106, n. 11.

apocalypse announces the end-time vindication of the remnant of Israel around its Messiah and the annihilation of the Gentiles gathering against him; there will be an end-time messianic kingdom from Zion, at the end of which the Messiah will die.

The various versions of *4 Ezra* reflect different degrees of Christian interpolation. Most versions have only minor textual alterations, while the Armenian text has more extensive ones. None of the additions have an obvious Jewish Christian flavor. Some of the additions in the Armenian (which go back to a Greek *Vorlage*) are critical of the Jews and are clearly Gentile in origin. The earliest text of *4 Ezra* 7:28 probably reads, “For my Messiah shall be revealed.” The Syriac and Arabic (A1) texts have “For my son the Messiah shall be revealed.” The addition could be Christian, but is not necessarily so, as the next verse has “my son the Messiah” in all versions, cf. “my son” in 13:32, 52. Both the New Testament and Jewish tradition connected Messiahship with sonship (cf. e.g., Ps 2:7). “Son” could be a Christian addition in both verses, but may not necessarily be Jewish Christian.

Many motifs in *4 Ezra*—for example, God’s faithfulness to his people, sin and its consequences, eschatological reward for the righteous, Messiah portrayed as the Son of Man, and the death of the Messiah—would have been attractive to Christian readers. Christians would have identified themselves with the restored Israel gathered around the Messiah.

At least by the fourth–fifth century *4 Ezra* had two appendixes, *5 Ezra* and *6 Ezra*.⁷⁵ *Fifth Ezra* (= *4 Ezra* 1–2, also called *2 Esdras*) is a second century Ezra pseudepigraphon (preserved in Latin, probably written in Greek). The writer knew *4 Ezra*, and the book should likely be read as a Christian adaptation of *4 Ezra*. The major part of the book is a speech by God to Ezra, announcing that Israel will be thrown away from his presence and its privileges (Torah and prophets, glory of God, and kingdom of Jerusalem) transferred to “the people soon to come.” In 2:2–4 the mother (Zion) loses her rebellious sons, while 2:15–32 admonishes the mother (the church) to rejoice in her children. Stanton lists factors that speak for a Jewish Christian community as the milieu of origin shortly after Bar Kokhba: Matthew is the only gospel used; Christian prophecy continues in the community; links to the *Apocalypse of Peter*; the imminent expectation of the end typical of late first and second century books; the continuity between Israel

⁷⁵ According to Bergren (“Christian Influence,” 117–27), both books had independent lives before they were physically attached to *4 Ezra* as postscripts, *6 Ezra* somewhere in the second–fourth centuries, and *5 Ezra* probably in the fifth century. Metzger (OTP 1:520) asserts that *5* and *6 Ezra* were written as prescript and postscript to *4 Ezra* by Christian writers around the mid-third century. Knibb asserts that *5 Ezra* originally had an independent existence, while (the third century) *6 Ezra* was written to reinterpret the existing book. See Michael A. Knibb, “The Second Book of Esdras,” in *The First and Second Books of Esdras* (ed. R. J. Coggins and M. A. Knibb; Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 76. Charlesworth (“Christian and Jewish Self-Definition,” 46) tends to see *5 Ezra* as a preface of the second century.

and “the people soon to come;” and the recent and painful separation between those two entities.⁷⁶ Further, the people of Israel “have hands that are stained with blood” (1:26),⁷⁷ a possible reference to Bar Kokhba’s treatment of Jewish believers in Jesus—the martyrs are mentioned in 2:45. “The people soon to come” will suffer hardship and are admonished to persevere (2:24–32). The devastations of this war may also be recalled in 2:6–7: “Bring their mother to destruction. Let them never have offspring, let them be scattered among the nations, and let their name be blotted out from the earth.”

Stanton’s reasons for seeing the book as a reflection of the experiences from the second revolt are persuasive. More open is the question of Jewish Christian or Gentile authorship. Israel has “not obeyed my law,” and the victorious saints “have fulfilled the law of the Lord,” but such statements on the law do not necessarily point to the hand of a Jewish believer (see n. 44). Unlike the *Lives of the Prophets* and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *5 Ezra* does not refer to a future conversion and restitution of Israel. But if the book was intended as a supplement to *4 Ezra*, it may presuppose some of the eschatology of that book. The fact that the author was a millennialist is not decisive, but it could point to a Jewish Christian: “Tell my people that . . . I will give them the kingdom of Jerusalem, which I was going to give to Israel” (2:10).⁷⁸ A Jewish connection may be found in the revelation to Ezra on Horeb, cf. the Sinai tradition in the Life of Jeremiah (see above, section 2). As 2:39–47 is dependent on Rev 7:9–17 and Christian prophets belong to the milieu of *5 Ezra*,⁷⁹ there is reason to ascribe the book to the same circles of Christian prophets that we see behind the *Lives of the Prophets*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Ascension of Isaiah* and *4 Baruch*. The proximity to the second Jewish revolt would locate *5 Ezra* in Syria/Palestine rather than in Asia Minor. A second century dating adds weight to the option that *5 Ezra* was consciously written as an interpretative prescript to *4 Ezra*.

Sixth Ezra (= *4 Ezra* 15–16, also called *5 Esdras*) is less relevant for our discussion. Probably written in Greek, this work reflects Roman persecution of Christians in the mid-third century, and has no clear signs of Jewish Christian

⁷⁶ Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 256–77 (originally published as “*5 Ezra* and Matthean Christianity in the Second Century,” *JTS* 28 [1977]: 67–83). Stanton suggests that *5 Ezra* and *Apoc. Pet.* represent a direct continuation of the Jewish Christian community of Matthew. Also Knibb (“The Second Book of Esdras,” 77–100) ascribes *5 Ezra* to a mid-second century Jewish Christian. For Wilson (*Related Strangers*, 92, 95–7) the evidence clearly suggests a Jewish Christian environment. Bergren dates the book between 130 and 250. See Theodore A. Bergren, *Fifth Ezra: The Text, Origin and Early History* (Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies 25; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), 26; Bergren, “Christian Influence,” 120.

⁷⁷ Translations from Bergren, *Fifth Ezra*.

⁷⁸ Knibb, “The Second Book of Esdras,” 91.

⁷⁹ Cf. the “wonders you have seen from the Lord God” (2:48) and the references to both Old Testament prophets and ministers of the church as “my servants,” 1:32; 2:1, 18, 26.

influence.⁸⁰ It shows no anti-Jewish tendency. When the book was connected to *4 Ezra*, the recurring phrase “My (chosen) people” could be read either of Israel or of the church. The “Jewish question” that was burning for the author of *5 Ezra* is not a hot issue any more. The work has a heavy flavor of Old Testament prophecies of doom, applied against a number of nations, but not against Israel. The world, the nations and the sinners (within the Christian community?) will be destroyed, while God will take care of the faithful among his chosen people.

7. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 29:3–13

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is an apocalypse written between the two Jewish revolts, probably in the land of Israel.⁸¹ Semitisms show that it was written in Hebrew or Aramaic. It was subsequently translated into Greek and, in the tenth century, into Slavonic (the language in which it is extant). The MSS contain gnostic and late Slavonic glosses. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* acknowledges that the loss of the temple came because of Israel’s sins (27:1–8). But God will keep a righteous remnant of Israel and redeem his elect. At the end of the ages, God will send “his elect one” and punish the Gentiles by the hand of his elect one and his people (29–31). Christian readers would feel well at home in the rejection of idolatry, the assertion that Israel was defeated by Gentiles and their temple desolated because of their sins, and in the end-time scenario with judgement and a future either in a burning hell or in Eden. Both individual retribution and a restoration of Israel with its temple (29:17–18) are envisaged. The cosmology, with seven heavens and the vision of the divine throne, is similar to the *Ascension of Isaiah*. *Apoc. Ab.* 29:4–13 contains a christological reworking of a Jewish vision originally criticizing the imperial cult.⁸² The original vision portrays a man coming from the hea-

⁸⁰ According to Bergren, the book can be dated anywhere between 95 and 313. However, he tends to follow the majority of scholars who see 15:28–33 as alluding to wars in the Eastern Empire 262–267 C.E., and thus dating the book to the late third century. Further, 15:46–63 lists out Asia as a godless nation responsible for killing God’s elect ones (Theodore A. Bergren, *Sixth Ezra: The Text and Origin* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 15–28, 103–32). Knibb (“The Second Book of Esdras,” 78, 284) asserts that *6 Ezra* was written as an appendix to *4 Ezra* in the late third century, to adapt the previous book to a situation of persecution.

⁸¹ R. Rubinkiewicz, H. G. Lunt, *OTP* 1:681–705 (dating the book between 70 and 150); John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 180–86. We suggest dating the work before 132. The focal point of history is the destruction of the temple, chs. 25, 27. If written in the land of Israel in the first decades after the Bar Kokhba revolt, the author would have alluded to the revolt and the following calamity, but no such allusion is to be found.

⁸² With Wilson (*Related Strangers*, 98) who slightly adapts the view of Robert G. Hall (“The ‘Christian Interpolation’ in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,” *JBL* 107 [1988]: 107–10). Many scholars (Rubinkiewicz, Collins, Stone, Philonenko-Sayar/Philonenko) regard this as a Christian interpolation. Hall thinks it is a Jewish vision; only v. 9b is a Christian gloss.

then, being worshiped by them and by Azazel. A Christian pen makes the man a son of Abraham, called by God to be the savior. Some from Israel will insult Christ, others will worship him (29:5, 12–13), and “many of the heathen will trust in him” (29:11). “The man whom you saw insulted and beaten and again worshiped is the liberation from the Gentiles for the people who will be (born) from you” (29:8). It is remarkable that Christ is portrayed as Israel’s liberation from the Gentiles. The Christian version of ch. 29 does not change the Israel-centered eschatological scheme with its vision of a restored Jerusalem temple.⁸³ So even if the transmission of Slavonic pseudepigrapha is a complicated issue, it seems reasonable that the interpolator was a Jewish believer or a Judaizing millennialist. The apocalypse ends (ch. 31) with God sending “his elect one” (originally Michael, in the Christian version Christ) to redeem and gather Israel, who have been humiliated by the Gentiles.

8. Sibylline Oracles

The prophecies collected in the *Sibylline Oracles* originated over a long period of time, from the second century B.C.E. to the seventh century C.E. In Books 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8, a Jewish first stage and a Christian second stage can be detected.⁸⁴ Scholars have suggested Jewish Christian authors in Books 2 and 8, but the evidence seems too meager for such a conclusion. Book 7 is a syncretistic Christian collection from the second and third centuries. A Jewish Christian author influenced by Gnosticism has been claimed by J. Geffcken, A. Rzach, A. Kurfess, and J. Daniélou.⁸⁵ While 7.29–39 refers to the house of David, 7.84 talks about the water baptism through fire, and 7.134–5 condemns those who “falsely claim to be Hebrews, which is not their race” (a polemic against Gentile Judaizers?). As shown by Gager, these references do not prove a Jewish-Christian provenance.⁸⁶

The first part of Book 8 is mainly Jewish; the second part Christian. 8.251–336 is a late second or third century poem on Christ that ends with an

⁸³ “This interpolation might be early enough to indicate Christian adaptation of the work in the second century, though this is by no means certain” (Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 98).

⁸⁴ Charlesworth dates the Christian redaction of Books 1 and 2 to 150 C.E. (Collins; no later than 150; cf. *OTP* 1:332). According to Charlesworth (“Christian and Jewish Self-Definition,” 50), the self-consciousness of this Gentile scribe and his community “has evolved out of dialogues with post-Yavnean Jews.”

⁸⁵ See Johannes Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina* (GCS 8; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902); A. Rzach, “Sibyllinische Orakel,” “Sibyllen,” Pauly-Wissowa 2A (1923): 2073–2183; Alfons Kurfess, *Sibyllinische Weissagungen* (Munich: Heimeran, 1951); Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme* (Bibliothèque de théologie; Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1958).

⁸⁶ John G. Gager, “Some Attempts to Label the *Oracula Sibyllina*, Book 7,” *HTR* 65 (1972): 91–7

exhortation to the holy daughter of Zion, who has suffered much, to receive Christ, “he that is your God.” This poem should be read as missionary outreach from a Gentile author, not as a Jewish Christian tract from inside the Jewish people (cf. 8.296 “they will stab his sides with a reed on account of their law”). Further, Christ will dissolve the Jewish laws, and the imperishable God pays no attention to perishable sacrifices (8.301, 334).

9. Tentative Conclusions

We found reason to assert a Jewish Christian interpolator in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Further, there are good reasons to ascribe the interpolation and editing of the *Lives of the Prophets*, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and *4 Baruch* to a charismatic Christian milieu in the first half of the second century. The writing of (both parts of) the *Ascension of Isaiah* and *5 Ezra* may be ascribed to related circles, before and after the Bar Kokhba revolt. Christian prophets played a vital role in these communities and provide the milieu in which the two latter books originated. Jewish believers were influential in these communities and their prophetic sub-groups. Most of the communities appear to have been mixed ones with both Jewish and Gentile members, but some may have consisted of Jewish believers only (in communion with Gentile brethren and sharing a universalist theology). The experience of the Bar Kokhba revolt played a decisive role in the theological reflection of these circles. This fact as well as a number of parallels between these writings and Matthew (and, in the case of *Ascension of Isaiah*, also with Ignatius and Matthew’s special source), *Didache*, and Johannine writings point to Syria/Palestine/Transjordan as the geographical provenance of these communities. According to other sources, in the early centuries Jewish Christians were to be found in exactly these regions.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ See section 3, esp. n. 36, in chapter 15 of this book, and chapter 14.

Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings

Graham Stanton

The Pseudo-Clementine writings have tantalized scholars for over three hundred years. Early interest in these writings focused on their possible historical value for the life of Clement of Rome, who is named as their narrator. Once their pseudonymity was generally accepted, attention shifted to evidence alleged to reflect christological controversies in several periods of early Christianity. For over two hundred years there has been perennial interest in their evidence for the existence and beliefs of early Jewish believers in Jesus.

This chapter will emphasize strongly that if these writings are to be used as evidence for Jewish believers in Jesus, we must proceed gingerly and in a critically responsible manner. James Carleton Paget has recently noted that the complex corpora present literary-critical problems of an almost insurmountable kind.¹ If anything, that is an understatement.

The basic problems which face students of the Pseudo-Clementine writings can be stated quite simply. (1) We have four sets of writings (and eight writings in all) whose precise relationship to one another cannot be determined with confidence: the very lengthy *Homilies*, and the similar and equally lengthy *Recognitions*; three short “introductory” writings; and three epitomes, two of the *Homilies* and one of the *Recognitions*. (2) There is general agreement that at least some of these writings draw on earlier sources, and also that they were interpolated by later hands. But even after three centuries of discussion, the nature and extent both of earlier sources and of later redaction and interpolations is still disputed. (3) The texts are extant in eight languages; some are fragmentary, some in a parlous state. (4) Elucidation of the passages here and there among the extensive Pseudo-Clementine writings which reflect the existence and distinctive beliefs of Jewish believers in Jesus is at least as complex as the interpretation of any early Christian writings.

¹James Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” *CHJ* 3:732.

In spite of these formidable hurdles, there has been no shortage of hypotheses concerning the origin and purpose of alleged Jewish Christian traditions, but significant scholarly agreement has been rare. Although Ferdinand Christian Baur was not the first to draw attention to the importance of the Pseudo-Clementine writings, his famous essay “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde” (1831) set the agenda for later research. Baur claimed that the *Homilies* provide crucial evidence for the continuing hostility of some parts of Jewish Christianity to Paulinism and for the wide gulf between early Jewish and early Gentile Christianity. Rather surprisingly, Baur did not comment on the *Recognitions* at all.² Even though his own views on the Pseudo-Clementine writings now attract little support, his long shadow still falls on many of the scholars who turn to these baffling texts.

The key role played by the Pseudo-Clementine writings in Baur’s and the Tübingen School’s reconstructions of early church history is a subject in itself.³ Many would now accept that the Pseudo-Clementine writings were given “a wholly disproportionate importance by the Tübingen School, who, putting them very early, saw in the narratives of Simon Magus a reflection of the fierce conflict between ‘Petrinism’ and ‘Paulinism’ in pre-Catholic Christianity.”⁴

In spite of the complexity of the issues and the diverse conclusions reached ever since the sixteenth century, some genuine advances have been possible more recently. Scholars now have at their disposal fine critical editions of the Greek text of the *Homilies*,⁵ and of Rufinus of Aquileia’s Latin translation of the *Recognitions*.⁶ Two translations into English of the Latin and Syriac texts of an important section of the *Recognitions* considered below (in section 5) have been published.⁷ Several substantial monographs,⁸ as well as very detailed histories of scholarship have been published.⁹ Nonetheless, for the reasons men-

² Ferdinand Christian Baur, “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde,” *TZTh* 4 (1831): 116.

³ See especially Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (TU 70; 2d ed.; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), 1–34. See H. Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).

⁴ See the unsigned article, “Clementine Literature,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone; 3d ed.; Oxford, 1997), 365–66.

⁵ Bernhard Rehm and Georg Strecker, *Die Pseudoklementinen I: Homilien* (GCS 42; 3d ed.; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1992).

⁶ Bernhard Rehm and Georg Strecker, *Die Pseudoklementinen II: Rekognitionen in Rufins Übersetzung* (GCS 51; 2d ed.; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1994).

⁷ F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71* (Christian Apocrypha Series 2; Texts and Translations 37; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1995).

⁸ See especially Strecker, *Judenchristentum*; Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (SBLDS 112; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989); Jones, *Jewish Christian Source*.

⁹ See especially Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 1–34; Franz Paschke, *Die beiden griechischen Klementinen-Epitomen und ihre Anhänge: Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Vorarbeiten*

tioned above, it is far from easy to locate firm footholds in the mire which surrounds these complex writings.

This chapter opens with a short overview of the text and date of the writings as a whole before considering whether their “final form(s)” provide any evidence for Jewish believers in Jesus. Only then shall we discuss the alleged earlier sources and their relevance for our current quest. This method is adopted deliberately. Scholars have all too often paid scant attention to the forms of the text for which we have firm textual evidence. They have started back to front, so to speak, and isolated earlier sources with breathtaking confidence as a prelude to reconstruction of their redaction by later editors.¹⁰ The influence of redaction critical studies of the Gospels on some recent studies of the *Pseudo-Clementines* is all too apparent.¹¹

1. An Overview of the Extant Writings

1.1. *The Homilies*

The *Homilies* recount at great length the life of Clement of Rome. They are extant in Greek in two codices with a similar text: P (Parisinus) from the 11th or 12th centuries; O (Ottobonianus) from the 14th century. A Syriac manuscript from Edessa which is dated to 411 contains parts of the *Homilies* (Homilies 10 to 17) and also parts of the *Recognitions* (books 1 to 3), so we have a *terminus ante quem* for both writings. The general consensus that in their final form the *Homilies* were compiled in the middle decades of the fourth century and the *Recognitions* a little later rests primarily on apparent links with Arian controversies.¹²

1.2. *The Recognitions*

The *Recognitions* also narrate the life of Clement of Rome in racy auto-biographical style. The similarities and differences between the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* suggest that they are both based on an earlier source usually known

zu einer Neuausgabe der Texte (TU 90; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 13–47; F. Stanley Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research,” *SecCent* 2 (1982): 1–33; 63–96.; Van Voorst, *Ascents*, 1–27.

¹⁰ Note, for example, Rehm’s opening sentence in his *Homilien*: “Das früheste Stadium des Klemensromans, das uns eingemessen greifbar ist, ist die *Grundschrift* (G).” For a recent example of hypothetical redaction critical reconstruction, see Bernard Pouderon, “Aux origines du roman clementin. Prototype païen, refonte judéo-hellenistique, remaniement chrétien,” in *Le Judéo-Christianisme dans tous ses états* (ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 231–56, who claims that a first century C.E. pagan novel has first been redacted by a Jewish author editor, and then redacted (radically) a second time by Ebionite editors at the beginning of the third century.

¹¹ This is especially clear in Strecker’s influential monograph, *Judenchristentum*. His discussion moves from the reconstructed sources of the *Grundschrift* to the final form of the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*.

¹² Strecker claims that the Homilist is an Arian who wrote just before Nicea: Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 268. Cf also Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” 84.

as the *Grundschrift*. Here we have a synoptic problem whose complexity turns the inter-relationship of the synoptic Gospels into child's play. Just as a minority of scholars claim that Luke knew and used both Q and Matthew, so some scholars have insisted that the *Recognitions* are based both on the *Grundschrift* and on the *Homilies*.¹³ And just as an even smaller minority of scholars believe that Matthew used Luke's Gospel, so a few have claimed that the author of the *Homilies* has used the *Recognitions*.

With the exception of only a few small fragments, the *Recognitions* have not survived in Greek.¹⁴ However Rufinus of Aquileia who translated some of Origen's writings into Latin, did the same for the *Recognitions*, perhaps in 407.¹⁵ Over one hundred manuscripts of Rufinus's translation have survived, so its popularity and influence in the west are clear.

Rufinus's comments on his own translation are important. "To the extent that we were able, we applied ourselves to diverge not only not from the meaning but also not from the wording and the modes of expression. Though this procedure renders the style of the narrative less ornate, it makes it more faithful." In spite of these claims, Rufinus does admit that he omitted some material "about the Ingenerate God and the Generate and about a few other subjects."¹⁶ In view of Rufinus's own ambivalence about his role as translator, the precise extent of his redaction of the original Greek text of the *Recognitions* is uncertain.

As noted above, part of the *Recognitions* is also extant in Syriac, including the section of special interest to students of early Jewish Christianity (1.27–71) which will be discussed below. We now have two recent translations of this section into English, with translations of the Latin and Syriac set out in columns.¹⁷ There seem to be good grounds for accepting F. S. Jones's conclusion that the two versions are "of approximately the same value, and neither deserves absolute priority."¹⁸ Retroversion of the Syriac into Greek has been attempted.¹⁹

1.3. The Shorter "Introductory" Writings

Both Greek codices of the *Homilies* include two letters addressed to James: the *Epistula Petri* (*EpPet*), the lengthy *Epistula Clementis* (*EpClem*), as well as a

¹³ Most notably Rehm, *Homilien*, viii.

¹⁴ See especially Wilhelm Frankenberg, *Die syrischen Clementinen mit griechischem Paralleltext: Eine Vorarbeit zu dem literargeschichtlichen Problem der Sammlung* (TU 48; Leipzig: J. C. Heinrichs, 1937).

¹⁵ So Caroline P. Hammond, "The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life and the Date of His Move South from Aquileia," *JTS* 28 (1977): 428. I owe this reference to Jones, *Jewish Christian Source*, 43.

¹⁶ Here I quote Jones's translation (*Jewish Christian Source*, 42–43) of Rehm, *Recognitionen*, 11.

¹⁷ Jones, *Jewish Christian Source*, also includes a translation of the Armenian fragments first published in 1978; apparently the Armenian version is an independent translation of the Greek.

¹⁸ Jones, *Jewish Christian Source*, 49.

¹⁹ Frankenberg, *Clementinen*.

writing known as the *Contestatio* (C) or *Diamartyria*. Were some or all of these writings attached to the *Homilies* by its author, or by a later scribe? Did at least some of them preface the *Grundschrift*? Although confident answers to these questions have been offered in support of particular theories, it is more prudent to acknowledge that answers continue to elude us.

Rufinus knows the *EpClem*, but does not include or refer to the other two introductory writings in his translation of the *Recognitions*. He notes that he did not include the *EpClem* because it is of later date, and because he had already translated and published it elsewhere.²⁰ Did Rufinus know the other shorter writings, but omit them as part of his editorial work? This is possible, perhaps because Rufinus was unimpressed by the “Jewish Christian” character of the *Epistula Petri* and the *Contestatio*.

1.4. *The Epitomes*

There are two later epitomes of the *Homilies* in Greek. Several of the ca. 30 manuscripts of the older epitome known as “E” date from the eleventh century. “E” makes some alterations on dogmatic grounds, and abbreviates and occasionally rearranges the text. Many more manuscripts of “e,” a later, shorter version of “E,” are extant. In addition, there is an epitome of the *Recognitions* in Arabic which is independent of Rufinus’s translation into Latin. There are about 190 extant witnesses in all, so there can be no doubt about the later popularity of the epitomes.²¹ Anyone who has read the full text of either the *Homilies* or the *Recognitions* will readily understand why epitomes of their rambling, loosely organized narratives were made.

2. Towards a Tradition History

I have already emphasized the importance of working backwards from extant texts to earlier stages. In other words, we must start from the epitomes, and then consider the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies* in their final form, before turning to possible earlier sources.

The epitomes were designed to make the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* more “user-friendly,” and, in particular, more useful in liturgical and hagiographical contexts. The numerous extant manuscripts of the later epitome (“e”) of the *Homilies* suggest that this writing circulated very widely indeed. None of the epitomes contains modifications, additions, or abbreviations which suggest that they were either prepared or transmitted by Jewish believers in Jesus.²²

²⁰ Rehm includes Rufinus’s Latin translation of the *EpClem* in his edition of the Greek text, *Homilien*, 5–22.

²¹ See Paschke, *Epitomen*. In 1966 Paschke announced that a new edition of the two Greek epitomes was in preparation; apparently it has never been completed.

²² For full details of the epitomes, see Paschke, *Epitomen*.

The *Recognitions* do include some Jewish Christian traditions, the most extensive of which is discussed below (in section 5), but these traditions play a minor role in the writing as a whole. Teaching on the unity of God, idolatry, and sexual ethics is set within a lively autobiographical framework. The received form of the *Recognitions* is a romance with a clear didactic intention. As in the epitomes, hagiographical concerns are prominent. In the view of most, in its present form this writing is “orthodox” or “catholic” and written later in the fourth century than the *Homilies*.²³

With the *Homilies* matters are not so straightforward. In both Greek codices (P and O) the *Homilies* are prefaced by three “introductory” writings. The letter of Clement to James (*EpClem*) is much the longest, and is written in a style quite different from that of the other two “introductory” writings. With the possible exception of the opening salutation addressed to “James, the lord and the bishop of bishops, who rules Jerusalem, the holy church of the Hebrews” and the prominent role given to Peter as the one who “ordains” Clement, it does not contain traditions relevant to our present concerns. Rufinus’s judgment may well be correct: the *EpClem* may have been written later than the *Recognitions*. Perhaps it was compiled as an introduction to both the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* to legitimate their accounts of the life of Clement, for one of its purposes is to narrate Peter’s ordination of Clement as bishop shortly before his martyrdom.²⁴

But why are the *Homilies* (but not the *Recognitions* in Rufinus’s translation) also introduced by two further shorter writings of some importance for our present concerns? The letter of Peter to James and the *Contestatio*²⁵ do not refer to Clement at all and sit uneasily alongside the *EpClem*. One can only suppose that the name of the writer of the letter, Peter, and the name of James, the “bishop” who responds in the *Contestatio* as well as possible links with some traditions within the main body of the *Homilies* were sufficient to ensure the retention of these two writings. They contain dire warnings against inappropriate use of the “books of Peter’s preaching,” and seem to be designed as “introductory” writings.

But “introductory” to what? Their relationship to the *Homilies* has been explained in three quite different ways. (1) Perhaps the most plausible theory (and also the simplest) is that they were originally intended to introduce the *Grund-schrift* and were then retained in the redacted and expanded *Homilies*, but omitted in the slightly later *Recognitions*.

(2) Bernhard Rehm, who prepared the now standard critical edition of the *Homilies* (1969), believed that the *Homilies* did not circulate widely, for at first

²³ See, for example, Oscar Cullmann, *Le problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930). Rehm, followed by Strecker, saw the author of the *Recognitions* as an orthodox Catholic who eliminated what he considered to be heterodox. The *Recognitions* are dated to ca. 350 in Syria or Palestine.

²⁴ Strecker defends a very different view, *Judenchristentum*, 90–92: the letter of Clement was written by the author of the *Grundschrift*. I accept the view of several scholars that this letter has been modelled on the *EpPet*.

²⁵ Rehm, *Homilien*, refers to this writing as the *Diamartyria*.

they were treated with suspicion in the “orthodox” church. However, they met with a positive response among the Ebionites who interpreted them to suit themselves, especially by means of the addition of *EpPet* and *C*. The favorable reception of the *Homilies* in these circles encouraged orthodox Christians to produce their own version of the traditions, the *Recognitions*, based on both the *Homilies* and the *Grundschrift*. On this view *EpPet* and *C* are late additions, an elaborate literary fiction rather than a cornerstone of the Pseudo-Clementine writings.

(3) In his influential monograph (1958; 2d ed. 1981) Georg Strecker defended and developed a very different theory proposed by H. Waitz (1904) and others.²⁶ Strecker claimed confidently that *EpPet* and *C* introduced one of the two Jewish Christian sources of the *Grundschrift*, the *Kerygmata Petrou*. The short introductory writings and the reconstructed source are allowed to interpret one another. Strecker insisted that the *Kerygmata Petrou* was an Ebionite writing from about 200 C.E.

Strecker’s claim that the *Kerygmata Petrou* was one of the two main “Jewish Christian” pillars of the Pseudo-Clementine writings has been very influential, but it has recently come under considerable fire. Although there is now general scholarly agreement that the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* are expanded, revised versions of a *Grundschrift*, the attempt to isolate an earlier source of the *Grundschrift*, the *Kerygmata Petrou*, has been deemed by several scholars to have failed, partly because it seems to be impossible to differentiate the style and vocabulary of the *Grundschrift* and the alleged source.²⁷ Strecker himself recognized some of the weaknesses in his theory:

... in reconstructing the KP-source (*Kerygmata Petrou*) we must proceed only from the introductory writings, the *Epistula Petri* and the *Contestatio*, isolating on the basis of conceptual and material parallels those contexts in the *Pseudo-Clementines* which display the same trend or tendency. Admittedly it is always only portions of the basic document that are thus laid hold of; statements regarding the *Kerygmata* cannot be wholly freed from the relativity that is theirs through their having been selected and interfered with by the author of the basic document.²⁸

²⁶ Strecker did not modify this theory in the revised second edition of his monograph (1981); the second edition adds some supplementary comments and notes, but the main text is unaltered.

²⁷ See especially Jürgen Wehnert, “Literarkritik und Sprachanalyse: kritische Anmerkungen zum gegenwärtigen Stand der Pseudoklementinen-Forschung,” ZNW 74 (1983): 268–301, and the literature referred to by Jones in his lengthy note: F. Stanley Jones, “A Jewish Christian Reads Luke’s Acts of the Apostles: The Use of the Canonical Acts in the Ancient Jewish Christian Source behind Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* I.27–71,” SBLSP 34 (1995): 617–35, 618–19, n.5.

²⁸ Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds., *Writings Relating to the Apostles: Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (vol. 2 of *New Testament Apocrypha*; ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher; trans. and ed. R. McL. Wilson; 2d ed. Cambridge: Clarke, 1992), 105–6. In the second English edition of this standard reference work (1992 = 5th/6th German edition), the *Kerygmata Petrou* no longer appears as a separate chapter, but is incorporated within the chapter on the *Pseudo-Clementines*. In the new edition, immediately after the comments quoted above, an additional paragraph is included which

The circular nature of the theory is apparent: a link between the hypothetical KP source and the *EpPet* and *C* is assumed, and confirmatory evidence is then sought. Gerd Lüdemann has put his finger on the Achilles' heel of the theory: it is a hypothetical source said to lie behind another hypothetical source.²⁹ Jones notes that in his forthcoming overview of the *Pseudo-Clementines* he will argue that “the time has come to abandon a hypothesis which has long dominated and mired Pseudo-Clementine research, namely, the hypothesis that a writing entitled the *Kerygmata Petrou* was a (determinative) source for the *Pseudo-Clementines*.³⁰

Although it may not be possible to isolate a major Jewish Christian source within the *Grundschrift*, it does contain some Jewish Christian traditions, the most important of which will be considered in section 4 below. Alongside these traditions are much more extensive traditions that do not necessarily reflect the distinctive interests of Jewish believers in Jesus, though they may well have been preserved in such circles. The *Grundschrift* may tentatively be dated to the middle of the third century.³¹ The relationship of the *EpPet* and *C* to the *Grundschrift* is best left as an open question, but it remains probable that the two shorter writings were originally intended as an introduction to this extensive source which lies behind both the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*.

The alleged *Kerygmata Petrou* as an early Jewish Christian source of the *Grundschrift* seems to be disappearing into thin air. However this is not the fate of a Jewish Christian source behind parts of *Recognitions* 1.27–71. As we shall see below (in section 5), confidence in its existence seems to be growing. This source, which may date from the middle of the second century, differs considerably in its genre and emphases from other Jewish Christian traditions in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, so it is not directly related to them.

Much remains uncertain, but some tentative conclusions may be drawn concerning the tradition history of the Pseudo-Clementine writings. We may be confident that the final stages of the whole trajectory, i.e., the epitomes and the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* in their final form, do not reflect the concerns of Jewish believers in Jesus, for Jewish Christian traditions within these writings are not at all prominent. Nonetheless, a handful of Jewish Christian traditions are retained in the *Homilies* and also in the *Recognitions*. We can only speculate on the reasons for their inclusion: the links seem to be literary and superficial rather than substantive.

acknowledges that the existence of the *Kerygmata Petrou* source has been called into question by some (489).

²⁹ Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (trans. M. E. Boring; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 169–70.

³⁰ Jones, *Jewish Christian Source*, xii. See also n. 26 above.

³¹ Cf. Cullmann, *Problème littéraire*, who dated the *Grundschrift* between 220 and 230, and positively affirmed its Jewish Christian nature. However, Strecker claimed that the author of the *Grundschrift* was neither a Catholic nor a Jewish Christian and dated it to ca. 260.

A further conclusion may be drawn with rather more confidence. Once doubt is cast on the existence of the *Kerygmata Petrou* with the letter of Peter to James and the *Contestatio* as its introduction, it becomes clear that the Jewish Christian traditions behind the *Pseudo-Clementines* may be disparate: we must not assume that they reflect the views of one individual or circle. Only in the case of the Jewish Christian traditions behind *Recognitions* 1.27–71 may we be reasonably confident that we are dealing with a coherent source rather than with a cluster of passages with different tradition histories.

In short, early disparate Jewish Christian traditions were retained, against the grain so to speak, in writings with very different concerns, especially the epitomes, the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies*, and perhaps even the *Grundschrift*. If so, there were precedents in earlier Christianity. For example, Justin's *Dialogue* and Matthew's Gospel both juxtapose awkwardly at times Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian traditions.

3. The Letter of Peter (*EpPet*) and the *Contestatio* (C)

We turn now to one of the most baffling sets of traditions in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. We have noted above that the origin and purpose of the short letter of Peter to James and the related *Contestatio* has been understood in quite diverse ways. Hence it seems prudent to discuss their relevance for our concerns without drawing on other parts of the Pseudo-Clementine writings to control or aid their interpretation.

In his letter to “James, the lord and bishop of the holy church,” Peter urges James not to communicate the “books of my preachings to anyone of the Gentiles, nor to anyone of our own tribe before testing” (*EpPet* 1.2). The same point is re-iterated later in the letter (*EpPet* 3.1). Gentiles are not excluded, but there is ambivalence about them, for some among the Gentiles have rejected Peter’s lawful preaching (*EpPet* 2.3). During Peter’s lifetime some have misinterpreted Peter’s words, claiming that he taught (but not openly) “the dissolution of the law” (*EpPet* 2.4). Peter expresses alarm at the possibility that after his death, some will misinterpret his words even more radically than they did during his lifetime (*EpPet* 2.7). Those to whom the books are committed are to adjure solemnly (but “not swear, for that is not lawful”) that they will carry out fully the instructions concerning the communication of the books of Peter’s preaching (C 1.2).

Peter underlines his very strong commitment to the law of God: it was spoken by Moses and “borne witness to by our Lord” in a version of Matt 5:18: “The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law” (*EpPet* 2.5). However, some Gentiles have rejected Peter’s lawful preaching (νόμιμον κήρυγμα) and have preferred a “lawless and absurd teaching (ἄνομόν τινα διδασκαλίαν) of the man who is my enemy (τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἀνθρώπου)” (2.3).

Who is Peter's enemy? Is it Paul? Is this a veiled attack on Paul's "lawless" teaching? The only other candidate for the label "enemy" seems to be Simon Magus who plays a major role in both the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*. He is portrayed as Peter's opponent in Acts 8:14–24 and in the *Acts of Peter* (passim). But nowhere does Simon Magus make annulment of the law the main theme of his preaching.³² So we can be all but certain that *EpPet* includes a thinly veiled attack on Paul. But unless this passage is interpreted (as it often has been) in the light of other passages in the *Pseudo-Clementines*, we cannot say more. A close reading of *EpPet* confirms that its primary concern is not Peter's enemy, but the careful preservation and correct interpretation of the books of Peter's preaching. This is the focus of the adjuration which follows; Peter's "enemy" does not reappear, though there is a general reference to those who misinterpret Peter's preaching (C 5.2).

On reading Peter's letter, James "sent for the elders" and read it to them before adding his own comments. James emphasizes Peter's insistence that the books of his preachings should not be communicated at random and then introduces several restrictions that are not in Peter's letter. The books should be communicated only to "one who is a good and religious candidate for the position of a teacher, a man who has been circumcised and is a believing Christian" (C 1.1). This person is to be proved for not less than six years; there is no suggestion that this person may be a Gentile.

James emphasizes that the one to whom the books of Peter's preaching is entrusted is to vow that he will be ultra cautious concerning their dissemination. He will hand them over to a third party only after proving him (as he himself had been proved) for no less than six years, and in agreement with his bishop. The recipient must be "a religious and good candidate for the position of a teacher." There is no further restriction to a circumcised person (cf. C 2.2), but this is probably taken for granted in view of James's initial instruction (C 1.1). If so, then with due caution we may take a further step. The difference of opinion between Peter and James can hardly be missed. Whereas Peter allows that Gentiles may be recipients of his preaching, James insists that it should be confined to those who have been circumcised. Differing views among Jewish believers in Jesus are reflected here.³³

These two writings seem to reflect the distinctive concerns of Jewish believers in Jesus who are committed to the law of Moses, and its confirmation by Jesus. Some seem to accept Gentiles as fellow-believers; all are very wary indeed about misinterpretation of the law (and of Peter's teaching) by contemporaries. Peter is defended against the accusation that he rejected the law, just as Luke's Paul is in Acts 18:13; 21:28; 24:10–21; 25:8–10.

³² So too Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 187.

³³ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 141 notes the differences, but attributes them to literary considerations. "Da die Beschneidung im übrigen weder hier noch in den KP² genannt wird, ist die Fiktion der Anordnung in Cont. 1,1 evident." But if, as I have suggested, other parts of the *Pseudo-Clementine* writings should not be allowed to control the interpretation of the *EpPet* and C, matters are very different.

The interpretation of both the ambivalence towards Gentiles and the attack on the preaching of the man who is Peter's enemy will always be closely related to decisions concerning the origin and purpose of these two short writings. But as we have seen, there are no easy answers to those questions.

Further puzzles remain. Why is the very different letter of Clement (the *EpClem* translated by Rufinus as a separate writing) also used as an introduction to the *Homilies* in the two extant Greek manuscripts (P and O)? And in particular, why are the letter of Peter to James and the related *Contestatio* retained as introductions in the two extant manuscripts of the *Homilies* given that there are only minimal links between them?

4. Anti-Paul Traditions in the *Homilies*

The preceding section has raised an issue that has always been prominent in discussion of the Pseudo-Clementine writings: the nature and extent of anti-Paul polemic. The locus classicus in the *Homilies* is 17.13–19. Simon repudiates Peter's claim that understanding of the teaching of Jesus comes via one's eyes and ears, not by a vision or apparition (17.13:1; ὄράματι ή ὄπτασίᾳ). Peter insists that the person who trusts in apparitions or visions or dreams is insecure, for an evil demon or deceptive spirit may be responsible (14.3).

Following an extended discussion, Peter insists that the Son was revealed to him by the Father (18.1; ἀπεκαλύφθη), not "from without" by means of apparitions and dreams, for they are statements of wrath (18.1–5). Statements to a friend are made face to face, not through riddles and visions and dreams, as to an enemy (18.6; πρὸς ἔχθρον).

Peter then presses his attack more vigorously. "If then, our Jesus appeared to you in a vision . . . and spoke to you, it was as one who is enraged with an adversary; and this is the reason why it was through visions and dreams, or through revelations that were from without that he spoke to you" (19.1; ἀποκαλύψεων ἔξωθεν). "How are we to believe you when you tell us that he appeared to you?" (19.3; ὥφθη σοι). And how did he appear to you, when you entertain opinions contrary to his teaching?" "Don't quarrel with me who accompanied him" (19.4; ἐμοὶ . . . μὴ μάχου). "You now stand in direct opposition to me, who am a firm rock, the foundation of the church" (19.4). Peter then reminds Simon that God revealed the Christ to him and pronounced him "blessed on account of the revelation" (19.6). Finally Peter urges Simon to "learn from us what we have learned from him (Christ) . . . and become a fellow-worker with us" (19.7).

This is one of the most subtly argued and rhetorically sophisticated sections of the Pseudo-Clementine writings. There can be no doubt at all that behind the mask of Simon Magus stands Paul.³⁴ Nowhere else in the *Pseudo-Clementines*

³⁴ See especially Eduard Schwartz, "Unzeitgemäße Beobachtungen zu den Clementinern," ZNW 31 (1932): 184–87.

does Simon Magus appeal to his own visionary experiences.³⁵ Peter has to defend carefully his own moment of revelation by the Father and differentiate it sharply from the claim that “Simon”/Paul received his gospel through a direct revelation of Jesus Christ rather than via a human source or teaching (cf. Matt 16:17; Gal 1:11,15). Paul’s claim that the Risen Christ appeared also to him (1 Cor 15:8) is called into question by the claim that it was as one who is enraged with an adversary (19.1). There even seems to be a grudging concession that “Simon”/Paul may have become an apostle for a single hour (19.4)!

In this passage there are striking verbal links with Paul’s dispute with Peter at Antioch (Gal 2:11–14). In 19.4 Peter claims that “Simon”/Paul withheld him (ἐναντίος ἀνθέστηκάς μοι); in Gal 2:11 Paul uses the same verb with reference to Peter: ἀντέστην. The verb in the following clause in Gal 2:11, κατεγνωσμένος, is used in the next sentence in 19.4, and then cited explicitly: . . . ἦ εἰ κατεγνωσμένον με λέγεις . . . Here we have a firm rebuttal of Paul’s stance at Antioch, but, rather surprisingly, without any references to the causes of the dispute.

The whole passage *Homilies* 17.13–19 runs to three large pages of Greek text in B. Rehm’s critical edition. It is dominated by one single issue: who enjoys God-given authority, Peter or Paul, and on what basis? Paul’s authority is obviously being undermined. The silence of this passage on circumcision, the law, and the terms on which Gentiles may be accepted is deafening. We can only assume that some of the distinctive concerns of Jewish believers in Jesus lie behind the appeal of Peter to “Simon”/Paul to “learn first of all from us what we have learned from him (i.e., Christ).”

It is almost impossible to determine the origin and date of this passage. Strecker sets it alongside the letter of Peter and the *Contestatio* discussed above as part of the *Kerygmata Petrou* source of the *Grundschrift* and dates it ca. 200.³⁶ This may still be a plausible date even if, as suggested above, the hypothetical *Kerygmata Petrou* source is crumbling under sustained scholarly attack. But unless this passage is linked closely with other Jewish Christian traditions in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, we cannot be confident about the dating.

There are some superficial similarities between this passage and the two short writings discussed in the preceding section. Both underline Peter’s authority, and both undermine Paul. But the differences should not be overlooked, as has happened frequently. Whereas the letter of Peter and the *Contestatio* focus on the law, its careful transmission by Moses to seventy teaching elders, and Peter’s cautious acceptance of Gentiles, these issues are conspicuous by their absence from *Homilies* 17.13–19. Hence we must not assume without further ado that they stem from the same Jewish Christian circles.

Gerd Lüdemann claims that there is a further short anti-Paul passage at *Homilies* 2.17.4, which he cites as follows: “first a false gospel from a deceiver must come, and after the destruction of the Holy Place, the true gospel must be

³⁵ Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 192.

³⁶ Ibid., 219.

sent out secretly, in order to correct the heresies that are to come.”³⁷ Lüdemann believes that a contrast is being drawn between the false Pauline gospel and the true Petrine gospel. Only after 70 does the true gospel emerge; the whole Christian period prior to 70 is deemed to have been corrupted—of course, by Paul. Lüdemann even claims that in this passage the Gentile mission is not denied to “Simon”/Paul. “It was through him, so to speak, that Peter’s approach to the Gentiles was first motivated.”

This is a serious misinterpretation, prompted in part by reading the passage in the light of *EpPet* 2.3 discussed above, a common move we have already called into question. Lüdemann fails to note that the words quoted above are the words of the true Prophet, i.e., Christ: they are Christ’s teaching concerning the end-times, and have nothing to say about the Petrine and Pauline missions. This passage is a free rendering of parts of Matt 24:11–31, not parts of Acts 8–11! The short section ends on a strong eschatological note: the true Prophet has told us that “towards the end, anti-Christ (with the false gospel) must come first, and then our Jesus must be revealed to be indeed the Christ (the true Gospel). And after this, the eternal light having sprung up, all the things of darkness must disappear” (17.4–5).

This misreading is a reminder that it is all too easy to read the *Pseudo-Clementines* wearing F. C. Baur’s spectacles and then discover anti-Pauline polemic in too many places.³⁸ We have discussed above the only clearly anti-Pauline passages in the *Homilies* and in the associated “introductory” writings. As we have seen, they are quite different in their focus, and probably have different tradition histories.

5. An Apologia for Jewish Believers in Jesus [*Recognitions* 1, parts of 27–71]

In recent decades no monograph on the *Pseudo-Clementines* has been more influential than Georg Strecker’s study of Jewish Christianity. Building on and developing the work of earlier scholars, he isolated two independent Jewish Christian sources behind the *Grundschrift*: the *Kerygmata Petrou* (KP) and the *Anabathmoi Jacobou* (AJ II). As we noted above, support for the former is crumbling. But there is now an even stronger consensus than when Strecker wrote that a Jewish Christian source can be isolated behind parts of Book I of

³⁷ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 190

³⁸ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 190–91, also suggests that *Homilies* 11.35.3–6 (and the parallel at *Recognitions* 4.34–35) is anti-Pauline: no one should be accepted who has not submitted his kerygma to James. Lüdemann concedes that, taken by itself, this passage does not suggest any particular anti-Pauline element, but taken in connection with other sections, it does appear to have traces of an anti-Pauline attitude. Once again *EpPet* is assumed to be the key which unlocks other passages. Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 1981: 194–95, is even more confident that *Homilies* 11.35.3–6 is an anti-Pauline passage.

the *Recognitions*. Although the two recent detailed studies of this source differ in their approach and in some of their conclusions, they both affirm without hesitation the existence of an earlier source behind parts of *Recognitions* 1.27–71.³⁹

Ever since Adolf Hilgenfeld first drew attention to the importance of this section of the *Pseudo-Clementines* in 1848, it has been prominent in scholarly research. In 1849 K. R. Köstlin first noted the similarities between part of this section and the *Anabathmoi Jacobou* mentioned by Epiphanius in *Haer.* 30.16.

Strecker developed the theory considerably and argued that *Recognitions* 1.33–44.2; 53.4b–71 should be attributed neither to the author of the *Grundschrift* (who inserted 44.3–53.4a) nor to the *Kerygmata Petrou* (whose perspective differs). Strecker accepted the link with the Epiphanius's *Anabathmoi* and suggested that both traditions drew on a common archetype dubbed AJ. He referred to the former as AJ I, and the source behind the *Recognitions* as AJ II.

More recently doubt has been cast on the closeness of the parallel with the *Anabathmoi* mentioned briefly by Epiphanius, so the “AJ I and AJ II” terminology should be dropped as it presupposes a link.⁴⁰ So what should this source be called? Lüdemann (1989) dubs it simply “R I,” but the reconstructed source in question is only part of the first book of the *Recognitions*. Van Voorst entitles his monograph on this source, *The Ascents of James* (1989), a variation on Strecker's terminology, though the sub-title is appropriate: “History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community.” F. S. Jones (1995) refers to the source as *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity*. This is closer to the mark, though to dub this source a “History of Christianity” overlooks its opening section: here we read a tendentious history of Israel from Creation (or, on some reconstructions, from Abraham) to Jesus, the prophet promised by Moses; in its genre this section is not unlike Acts 7 and 13.

Jones has also referred to the source as “a Jewish Christian ‘acts of the apostles’” and suggested that it may have been intended to replace Luke's Acts.⁴¹ The source certainly depends on Acts and offers alternative accounts of some of Luke's traditions. Nonetheless so many of its traditions are unrelated to Luke's Acts that rivalry as a primary purpose should not be pressed too far. As we shall see in the paragraphs that follow, the source sets out a selective history of Israel and of the earliest church in Jerusalem in order to legitimate the distinctive views

³⁹ Van Voorst, *Ascents*, and Jones, *Jewish Christian Source*. Neither writer allows that this source should be classified as Ebionite. Richard Bauckham has now argued strongly to the contrary. See his “The Origin of the Ebionites,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in the Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 167–80.

⁴⁰ Pace Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy. A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (NovTSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 252: “This name (AJ II) is as good as any other and seems to have gained some acceptance.”

⁴¹ Jones, “A Jewish Christian,” 619 and 634–35.

of Jewish believers in Jesus. Hence my preferred title for this source: “An Apologia for Jewish believers in Jesus.”

There is now general agreement that that this source existed, and that material has been interpolated into it at *Recognitions* 1.44–52, perhaps by the author of the *Grundschrift*. At this point, for example, the “prophet like Moses,” one of the distinctive themes of this source disappears, and is replaced by the “true prophet,” the term which is prominent throughout the *Pseudo-Clementines*.

Not surprisingly given its hypothetical nature, views on its origin, date, extent, and purpose have differed.⁴² As there are some links with passages in the *Homilies* (especially in *Recognitions* 1.27–32), the source may have been incorporated into the *Grundschrift*. If so, why was the source included in the *Recognitions* at this point but (largely) omitted in the *Homilies*? The redactor of the latter may have been out of sympathy or even uninterested in some of its concerns. On the other hand, the redactor of the *Recognitions* may have found it relatively easy to weave this lengthy source into the narrative by means of a simple introduction at 1.26 and a rather more clumsy link at 1.72. Although a close reading soon uncovers aporias with the surrounding narratives, the distinctive Jewish Christian emphases of the source are swallowed up, as it were, by the *Recognitions* as a whole, where Jewish Christian concerns are conspicuous by their absence. *Recognitions* is not the only early Christian writing to incorporate a source with an ethos and emphases which differ from the final form of the text.

The first major apologetic explanation concerns the origin, practice and cessation of sacrifices. Israel had learned to sacrifice to idols in Egypt (36.1). As a concession to Israel’s weakness, Moses permitted sacrifices “to God alone” (36.1, Latin) until Israel should learn from the promised prophet like Moses (i.e., Jesus) that God desires mercy and not sacrifice (37.2). Unexpectedly, “the land” and “sacrifices” are presented as opposites: “Whenever they observed the law without sacrifices, they were restored (to the land) and ransomed . . . Whenever they observed the law without sacrificing and returned to their place (i.e., the land) and offered sacrifices, they were thrust out and were cast forth from it, so that they might cease sacrificing forever” (37.4).⁴³ The prophet like Moses instructed Israel to cease sacrifices, and lest they conclude that forgiveness of sins would no longer be possible, he instituted baptism by water (39.2).

The sentences that then follow are startling: those who believe in the Mosaic prophet and are baptized in his name will be “preserved unharmed from the war that is impending on the unbelieving nation and the place itself” (39.3 Latin). “Non-believers will be exiled from the place and the kingdom” so that they might come to their senses and believe God (39.3 Latin).⁴⁴ Here the destruction of the

⁴² See Jones, *Jewish Christian Source*, 4–38 for a detailed account of the history of research.

⁴³ I have quoted Jones’s translation of the Syriac, *Jewish Christian Source*, 67; essentially the same points are found in the Latin, but with different phraseology.

⁴⁴ Jones’s translation of the Latin; the Syriac is similar.

temple and of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. are seen as punishment for Israel's unbelief. The reference to the exile of non-believers may be an allusion to Hadrian's decree following the Bar Kokhba revolt (135 C.E.).

Several scholars have gone much further and interpreted the promised preservation of believers as a reference to the tradition recorded by Eusebius that the Jerusalem church fled to Pella at the outbreak of the revolt of 66–70 C.E.⁴⁵ If this interpretation is correct, this "Apologia" contains important evidence concerning the history of early Jewish Christianity. The possibility emerges of a direct link between the earliest Christians in Jerusalem and the Jewish Christians in Pella in the middle of the second century. However this is unlikely. At 37.2, but only in the Syriac, believers are told that they will be led in safety "to a fortified place of the land" and thus preserved safely at the time of the battle. Although this passage is more specific than 39.3 (quoted above), Pella was not "in the land," but in the Decapolis. The promised preservation of believers lacks specific details; it refers to the immediately preceding promise of eternal life given to those whose sins are forgiven through baptism.⁴⁶

This source provides an apology for Jewish believers in Jesus who are bewildered by the fact that sacrifices are no longer practiced in their own day, even though they are prominent in Scripture. Continuity from Moses to the prophet like Moses is underlined—with the notable exception of baptism introduced by Jesus to replace sacrifices as the means whereby sins are forgiven. The sustained anti-sacrifice apologetic becomes a prominent theme throughout the source (cf. also 54.1; 64.1–2).

The source's explanation for the acceptance of Gentiles is equally intriguing. "But since it was necessary for the nations to be called in the place of those who remained unbelievers so that the number that was shown to Abraham might be filled, the saving proclamation of the kingdom of God was sent out into all the world" (42.1 Latin).⁴⁷ There is no question of the Gentile church replacing Israel, but only unbelieving Jews within Israel.⁴⁸

For the first seven years "after the passion of Jesus" the church grew so rapidly that it became more numerous than unbelieving Jews. Even the priests began to fear lest "the entire people should come to our faith" (43.1–3). At this point the "insider"/"outsider" terminology is striking. "They" frequently ask "us" to speak to them about Jesus, and to show "us" whether he is the prophet foretold by Moses, "the eternal Christ." (The latter phrase is found in both the Syriac and the

⁴⁵ See Craig Koester, "The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 90–106, and Jozef Verheyden's reply, "The Flight of the Christians to Pella," *ETL* 66 (1990): 368–84. Verheyden is unimpressed by Koester's preference for the more specific Syriac over the Latin. See also Strecker's "Nachträge" to the 1981 edition of his *Judenchristentum*, 283–86.

⁴⁶ Pace Van Voorst, *Ascents*, 100–101.

⁴⁷ I have quoted Jones's translation of the Latin, *Jewish Christian Source*. The Syriac text is shorter, but not significantly different.

⁴⁸ Cf. Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 330

Latin texts.) “For only in this regard does there seem to be a difference between us who believe in Jesus and the unbelieving Jews” (43.2 Latin).⁴⁹

There is no suggestion that Jewish believers in Jesus differed from unbelieving Jews in law observance, either in the writer’s day or at any earlier point (cf. 68.4 and 69.1). The one exception is sacrifices. The failure of unbelieving Jews to accept that at the coming of Christ’s baptism had replaced sacrifices leads directly to the destruction of the temple, the erection of “the abomination of desolation in the holy place,” and “the proclamation of the gospel to the nations” (64.2).

The rapid growth in numbers of Jewish believers in Jesus is presented as an astonishing success story which is halted only by the intervention of “a certain hostile person” (70.1). Nonetheless even during “the golden era” objections were raised by opponents such as the high priest (55.1), a Samaritan (57.1), one of the scribes (58.1), a certain Pharisee (59.1), one of John’s disciples (60.1),⁵⁰ and Caiaphas (44.2; 61.1–2; 62.1–2). One by one the twelve apostles refute the objections raised.

Gamaliel is the only Jewish leader who is portrayed differently. He is described as the “head of the people,” a secret believer who had been advised by believers to stay among the “unbelievers” as a double-agent; this key point is repeated more fully a few verses later (cf. 65.2 and 66.4–5). When Gamaliel urges caution (at some length), Caiaphas’s suspicions are aroused and he asks James to debate on the basis of Scripture “whether Jesus is the Christ or not” (67.1–68.2).

James accepts the challenge and during the next seven days he speaks to such good effect that he persuades all the people and the high priest to make haste immediately to acquire baptism (69.8). At that moment a “certain hostile person with a few others” enters the temple and asks why they have been swayed by people who have been deceived by the magician Jesus (70.2). The “hostile person” listens to the counter-arguments and is “overcome by James the bishop.” However James’s response turns out to be in vain, for it serves only to incite “the hostile person” to violence, initially by using a firebrand from the altar. Much blood is shed. James is thrown from the top of the stairs, but as he is presumed to be dead, he is not attacked further (70.3–7).

Even though the believers are more numerous than their opponents, they do not retaliate, and some are killed (71.1). “Before dawn, we went down to Jericho, in number about 5,000 men” (71.2). Three days later the believers learn from Gamaliel directly (Syriac) or indirectly (Latin) that Caiaphas had commissioned (with letters) “that hostile person” to persecute (Latin) or massacre (Syriac) all those who believe in Jesus. The arch-opponent went off to Damascus because he thought that Peter had gone there—and that is the last we hear of Saul. There is no reference to his conversion or call on the way to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:1–3),

⁴⁹ The Syriac is almost identical.

⁵⁰ John is neither called “the Baptist,” nor is he said to baptize. Presumably this is because it is Jesus, not John, who introduces baptism as a replacement for sacrifices.

and no reference to his acceptance of Gentiles or his alleged hostility to the law. The silence is deafening. The “*Apologia*” ends with a brief account of the miraculous annual whitening of the graves of two believers: this is said to have suppressed the anger of the believers’ opponents, “for they see that our people are held in remembrance with God” (71.6 Latin).

This is a tendentious and imaginative retelling of selected traditions from Acts 1–12. The narrative underlines the numerical strength of believers in Jesus and clearly implies that but for the intervention of “that hostile person,” impressive growth would have continued. The twelve apostles had successfully repudiated the objections of non-believing Jewish leaders to their claims concerning the Messiahship of Jesus; but for “that hostile person,” the Jewish leadership might even have been won over to the faith.

Here we have a “foundation narrative” of a community of Jewish believers in Jesus. It is an optimistic account of its origins and an explanation for its failure to live up to early expectations. The rather curious ending leaves a door open for the possible future conversion of some fellow-Jews, for their bitter antagonism is no longer in evidence. By means of the forthright responses of the twelve apostles to the objections raised by Jewish leaders to claims about Jesus, a strong line of apologetic is sustained. Explanations for the cessation of sacrifices and for the acceptance of Gentiles are prominent, as is acceptance of Jesus as the prophet like Moses, “the eternal Christ.”⁵¹

This intriguing “*Apologia*” leaves many questions unanswered. Continuing antagonism towards Paul is implied. But why does the focus fall on his pre-conversion hostility to Jewish believers in Jesus rather than on his post-conversion years? Are Gentiles expected to be circumcised? Why is the apostolic decree not mentioned? The importance of observance of the law is underlined firmly by James (69.1–3), but nothing is said about the Sabbath or about food or purity issues. Nonetheless, this “*Apologia*” is one of our most important pieces of evidence for Jewish believers in Jesus.

Can anything further be said about its date? I have suggested above that at 39.3 there is probably an allusion to Hadrian’s decree following the Bar Kokhba revolt (135 C.E.). There are enough similarities with Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* to suggest a date close to the middle of the second century.⁵² Like Justin’s *Dialogue*, this “*Apologia*” responds to the objections of learned unbelieving Jews, yet leaves a door open for their possible conversion. The teaching in chapters 49 and 50, and again in 69.4, on the “two parousias” of Jesus (the first in humility,

⁵¹ See also Claudio Gianotto, “Alcune riflessioni a proposito di *Recognitiones* I, 27–72: la storia della salvezza,” in *Le Judéo-Christianisme dans tous ses états* (ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones; Paris: Cerf, 2001), for further discussion. However his claim that this source contains a soteriology opposed to that of Paul is unconvincing; see O. Skarsaune’s review in *Mishkan* 36 (2002): 127–30, 129.

⁵² So too Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 253–54 and Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 252–53.

the second in glory) is strongly reminiscent of Justin,⁵³ as is the objection that Jesus was a magician and not the expected prophet like Moses (but, by implication, a false prophet).⁵⁴ O. Skarsaune has shown convincingly that the sustained polemic against sacrifices is a more primitive, original version of the line of argument found in Justin and in Barnabas.⁵⁵

6. Conclusions

In his helpful discussion of Jewish Christianity in the *Pseudo-Clementines*, F. Stanley Jones notes that there have been two tendencies in research.⁵⁶ Some scholars have maintained F. C. Baur's general position by dating Jewish Christian elements early in their history and by emphasizing the importance of Jewish Christianity in the history of the early church. A very different trend in scholarship has tried to refute Baur either by denying the importance of the Jewish Christian element in the *Pseudo-Clementines* or by assigning a late date to it.

In my judgment both approaches are somewhat simplistic. The evidence is complex and must be treated with due caution and rigor. The later stages of the long history of Pseudo-Clementine traditions (the epitomes, and the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* in their final form) have been shaped by didactic and hagiographical concerns rather than by any distinctively Jewish Christian emphases.

But what about the earlier traditions incorporated within the Pseudo-Clementine writings? I do not think there is sufficient evidence to enable us to call the compiler of the *Grundschrift* a "Jewish Christian," unless we assume that *EpPet* and *C* were intended to introduce it. Only one Jewish Christian coherent source can be uncovered within the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the fairly substantial and important set of traditions behind parts of *Recognitions* 27–71 which I have dubbed "an *Apologia* for Jewish believers in Jesus." This "Apologia," which may date from the middle of the second century, sheds considerable light on the views of some Jewish believers in Jesus. Here we have a "community foundation story" from believers in Jesus; their "story" of the first seven years after the

⁵³ See Graham N. Stanton, "The Two Parousias of Christ," in *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge* (ed. M. C. de Boer; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 183–95. Although chapters 49 and 50 are part of the section generally considered to be an interpolation from the *Grundschrift*, both Strecker, *Judentum und Christentum*, 236 and 249–50, and Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 286 argue that they come from the original source.

⁵⁴ See Graham N. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?" in *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127–47.

⁵⁵ See Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 296–98, and 316–18.

⁵⁶ Jones, "Pseudo-Clementines," 87.

passion functioned for them as a form of legitimization. They are anxious to retain their Jewish identity even though they seem willing to accept Gentiles.

The other clearly Jewish Christian traditions are unrelated to this “Apologia,” and probably have different tradition histories.⁵⁷ This is strongly suggested by the varied anti-Pauline references. In the “Apologia” the focus is on Saul’s pre-conversion persecuting activities. In *EpPet* 2.3 the preference of some Gentiles for Paul’s “lawless teaching” is noted. In *Homilies* 17 the claim that Paul’s authority is based on his revelatory experiences is undermined.

It is easier to set down what the Pseudo-Clementine writings do not tell us about early Jewish believers in Jesus than to set out distinctive Jewish Christian concerns common to the disparate traditions we have discussed. We have not found explicit evidence for the *history* of Jewish Christianity, though others are more confident of links to the Pella traditions. On the other hand, cumulative evidence pointing to the origin of the “Apologia” in the middle or late second century is strong; it is more difficult to be confident about the date of the other Jewish Christian traditions.

While there are christological emphases of considerable interest, especially the depiction of Jesus as the promised prophet like Moses in the “Apologia,” they are not markedly “unorthodox” by later standards. The esteem in which Peter and James are held is clear in the traditions we have discussed, but that is also the case with the Pseudo-Clementine writings as a whole. The continuing importance of the law is underlined strongly, but we learn much less than we would like about the precise ways in which the law was observed. Evidence for ambivalence towards Gentiles is clearer than evidence for their rejection, but we are not told whether circumcision was required. Puzzles remain, but the Pseudo-Clementine writings contain several strands of traditions that contain invaluable evidence for the distinctive ethos and views of Jewish believers in Jesus.

⁵⁷ Hence one should be cautious about linking the Jewish Christian traditions within the Pseudo-Clementines to specific groups such as the Ebionites. See further chapter 14 of this book and note 39 above.

Fragments of Jewish Christian Literature Quoted in Some Greek and Latin Fathers

Oskar Skarsaune

1. Introduction

This chapter and the following chapter are meant to be read together. I introduce the topic at the beginning of this chapter, and the next chapter has the conclusion for both chapters.

Scattered quotes from now lost works in Eusebius and other ecclesiastical writers tell us that what we now have is only a random selection of early Christian literature from the first three centuries. To some extent the works that have come down to us are those which the Constantinian and post-Constantinian church valued the most. But to an even larger extent the preservation (or lack thereof) of these early documents is a question of sheer accident. Destruction of manuscripts by natural causes like fire, humidity, mice, and worms, and by the banal cause of too frequent use, was the order of the day. In order to survive, a literary work had to be copied with sufficient frequency to counter the processes of destruction.

The works of early Jewish believers in Jesus were not highly valued and were often produced in places and in languages that made reproduction difficult. Both of these factors contributed to the exclusion of the writings of early Jewish believers in Jesus from what we might call the literature preservation program of the “Great Church.”

This makes the few fragments that have been preserved, mostly as quotes in Gentile ecclesiastical writers, all the more valuable as primary sources to the theology and practice of Jewish believers during these early centuries, and especially the second century.

In the present chapter I shall concentrate on fragments expressly presented as quotes, as something not being conceived or produced by the author in whose work they occur. For the most part we are dealing with quotations from written

works. But Papias and Origen also speak about oral traditions they have received, or direct enquiries they made with Jewish believers. In these latter cases, Jewish Christian traditions only became literature by being put in writing by these authors. However, I will include this material under the present heading as quoted material.¹

In the next chapter I shall present some Jewish Christian works, represented in larger and smaller fragments, that are *not expressly presented as quotes*. In part we are dealing with near verbatim, but unrecognized, quotes, and in part we are dealing with cases in which a Gentile author has incorporated the works of others into his own in such a way that we must speak of *use of*, rather than quotations from, these works. Nevertheless, ideas and lines of argument in the author's unrecognized sources may still be discernible, especially when they are at some variance with the author's own ideas. The techniques of redactional criticism are applicable here. When I claim that the sources and fragments recovered in this way should be considered Jewish Christian, this claim must be substantiated in each case.

The present chapter can make no claim of completeness. I have, in fact, been especially interested in those scattered fragments that are often cursorily treated by modern scholars as exotic curiosities, being of minor significance and of little interest within the greater framework of the history of theology.²

The fragmentary nature of the material will be reflected in its presentation. I have chosen to arrange the following study of this material according to the generally accepted chronology of the authors in whose writings it is preserved.³ This chronology is not necessarily the same as that of the fragments themselves. On occasion I have departed from this strictly chronological arrangement in order not to unduly separate fragments which, from a thematic point of view, are best seen together. I have also, on occasion and for the same reason, included brief references to material that, strictly speaking, should belong to the next chapter.

2. Traces of Early Jewish Christian Eschatology (1): Papias

There was no *one* standard and normative Jewish eschatology in the first and second centuries C.E. On the contrary, this period is characterized by a varied and intense effort to create eschatological scenarios that could give meaning to and

¹ In some cases the quotes are explicitly said to come from Jewish Christian authors, in other cases this is claimed implicitly, in still other cases I am the one who claims that the material is Jewish Christian. This will be clarified as we proceed.

² The one significant exception to this rule is Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (vol. 1 of *The Development of Christian Doctrine before The Council of Nicaea*; trans. J. A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964). In this study, however, Daniélou makes little distinction between documents he claims were authored by Jewish believers, and Jewish Christian ideas cropping up in Gentile Christian writers. All these very different sources cannot be synthesized into one unified "theology of Jewish Christianity."

³ I include Papias and Hegesippus among these authors although they are only known through quotations in Eusebius and some other fathers.

comfort in the dramatic and epoch-making events of this era. The same pluri-formity and variety is to be observed in the Christian writings of the first two centuries and even beyond. One is struck by the great amount of similarity that characterizes the two strands of eschatological tradition, the Jewish and the Christian. A priori there is a great probability that Jewish believers in Jesus had a fair share in the creative process that resulted in this similarity. For them, Jewish eschatological ideas would not be something they took from books or from late-in-life conversations with Jews. For them, Jewish eschatology would be something they owned as their own heritage. They would think Jewish from the beginning. I shall present some examples that may serve as empirical evidence to underpin this a priori statement, beginning with Papias.

Not much is known about Papias.⁴ He was bishop of Hierapolis in the Lycus valley, a close neighbor to Laodicea and Colossae (cf. Col 4:13). He wrote five books of “Interpretation of the Lord’s sayings.” These were written during the reign of Trajan (98–117) according to Eusebius,⁵ but during the reign of Hadrian (117–138) according to Philippus Sidetes.⁶ Two of the most recent commentators have opted for the period of Trajan, dating Papias’s work to ca. 110.⁷ Unfortunately, this work is only preserved in a few fragments scattered in

⁴The classic studies of Papias are those of Zahn and Lightfoot: Theodor Zahn, “Papias von Hierapolis, seine Geschichtliche Stellung, sein Werk und sein Zeugniss über die Evangelien,” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 39 (1866): 649–96; “Papias,” in *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur* (9 vols.; Jena-Leipzig: Deichert et al., 1881–1916), 6:109–57; John B. Lightfoot, “Papias of Hierapolis I–II,” in Lightfoot, *Essays on the Work entitled Supernatural Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1889), 142–216. The current text edition (to which references are made in the following) is Ulrich H. J. Körtner and Martin Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente, Hirt des Hermas* (Schriften des Urchristentums 3; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998). Major recent studies include William R. Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias* (vol. 5 of *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*; ed. Robert M. Grant; Camden, N.J.: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964–1968), 89–127; Ulrich H. J. Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (FRLANT 133; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Josef Kürzinger, *Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments* (Eichstätter Materialien 4, Abt. Philosophie und Theologie; Regensburg: Pustet, 1983); and Richard Bauckham, “Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel,” *JTS NS* 44 (1993): 24–69.

⁵Chron. II ad anni Abrahae 2114 = Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, frg. 2, page 52. Cf. comments there, p. 30.

⁶Hist. eccl., ed. C. de Boor, TU 5,2:170 = Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, frg. 10, p. 62. Cf. comments, 30–31.

⁷Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 30–31; Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 91–92. Körtner supports this date by two observations: (1) Eusebius makes Papias contemporary not only with Polycarp but also with Ignatius; and (2) when Philippus Sidetes says that Papias relates that some of those whom the Lord raised from the dead survived to the time of Hadrian, Sidetes may confuse Papias with Quadratus, who actually says that they lived “until our times,” and Quadratus was dated to Hadrian’s time by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4.3.1–2). The latter observation also in Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 119–20.

different patristic writers, the most important ones being found in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. In addition to the fragments explicitly or implicitly attributed to Papias, there may be other non-recognized quotations from, or allusions to, his work in later writers. The relationship between Papias and "the Elders" referred to on more than one occasion by Irenaeus is also an unsettled question. Papias may well be Irenaeus's source for some traditions attributed to the Elders.

No one in antiquity claimed Papias was a Jewish believer, and there is nothing in the preserved fragments that unmistakably shows him to be one. What makes him interesting in our context is the oral traditions he claims to have received from the first and second generation of Jesus' disciples. It is implicit in this claim that Papias's sources for these traditions were Jewish believers, and this is, at least in part, confirmed by the nature of the traditions themselves.

Papias is quite explicit about his sources of oral tradition, and also about the way he used this material in his five-book work. This is what he says in the prologue of his work:

I shall not hesitate also to set down for you along with my interpretations [of the Lord's sayings] all that I thoroughly learned from the Elders and fully recalled, vouching for its truth.

For not in those who have much to say did I delight, as do the many, but in those who teach what is true, nor in those who mention foreign commandments, but in those who mention the commandments given by the Lord to faith and coming from the Truth itself.

And if by chance someone should come who had actually attended the Elders, I would enquire about the words of the Elders:

what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples [said],

and [enquire about] that which Aristion and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord, were [still] saying.

For I assumed that what is derived from books does not profit me so much as what is derived from a living and abiding voice.⁸

Simple as this text may seem, the proposed interpretations are legion. It would exceed all reasonable limits to enter upon a full-scale discussion of all the complicated problems here.⁹ I take the text to mean the following: when interpreting the Lord's sayings—which Papias probably took from the written gospels of Mark and Matthew (see below)—he would often incorporate oral material into his comments. This oral material came from "Elders" who were able to re-

⁸ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.3–4; translation according to Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 97–101, slightly modified.

⁹ For an extensive discussion, see my article "Was Papias the source behind Irenaeus' Elders?" (forthcoming).

port what the twelve disciples of Jesus had been teaching while still alive, and what two other disciples of the Lord, Aristion and the presbyter John, who were still alive when Papias received tradition from them, were teaching. Papias did not have this tradition directly from the mouth of the Elders, but from someone who “came” to Hierapolis. The Elders were apparently situated elsewhere; they did not visit Papias themselves. When he says that he preferred oral tradition to that which was written in books, he is probably not talking about the transmission of “the sayings of the Lord.” His well known comments on the gospels of Mark and Matthew seem to indicate that he trusted these written gospels as reliable sources for the Lord’s sayings.¹⁰ His preference of oral versus written tradition concerns material he used in his interpretative work. His preference for the “living voice” over against written records was commonplace within rhetorical literature in antiquity. It had nothing to do with a general preference for “oral tradition” over against “written tradition,” but simply meant that it was much better to hear a man in person than merely to read him.¹¹ For Papias, at least some of the authorities whose “living voices” he preferred were dead, and consequently he could now hear them only through intermediaries. That may be the reason he modifies the traditional expression and says “living *and abiding* voice.”

There can be no doubt that the disciples whose names are given by Papias were Jewish believers. It is also reasonable to assume that all or most of the Elders were Jewish as well. I will review some of the traditions Papias renders in their name.

2.1. *Eschatological bounty*

[The blessings of Gen 27:28–29 refer to the time] when creation, renewed and liberated, will bear an abundance of every kind of food “from the dew of heaven and the fertility of the earth”; *thus the Elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, recalled having heard from him* how the Lord used to teach concerning those times and say: “The days will come when vineyards shall grow each with ten thousand vines, and on one vine ten thousand branches, and on one branch ten thousand shoots, and on every shoot ten thousand clusters, and in every cluster ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give twenty-five measures of wine; and when one of

¹⁰ Greek text: Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 58. English translation: Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 106–10. Papias possibly also used John and Luke, cf. Bauckham, “Papias and Polycrates,” 44–63. Cf. also Armin Daniel Baum, “Papias als Kommentator evangelischer Aussprüche Jesu. Erwägungen zur Art seines Werkes,” *NovT* 38 (1996): 257–76; “Papias, der Vorzug der *Viva Vox* und die Evangelienhandschriften,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 144–51.

¹¹ See, e.g., Heinrich Karpp, “*Viva vox*,” in *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser* (ed. A. Stüber and A. Hermann; JAC Ergänzungsband 1; Münster Westfalen: Aschendorf, 1964), 190–98; A. F. Walls, “Papias and Oral Tradition,” *VC* 21 (1967): 137–40; Loveday Alexander, “The Living Voice: Scepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman Texts,” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (ed. D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl and S. E. Porter; JSOTSup 87; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 221–47.

the saints grasps a cluster, another cluster will cry out: "I am better, take me, bless the Lord on my account."¹² Similarly a grain of wheat will bring forth ten thousand ears, and every ear will have ten thousand grains, and every grain ten pounds of clean white flour. And all the other fruits and seeds and grass will bring forth in like proportion. And all the animals using foods which are produced by the earth will live peacefully and harmoniously together fully subject to men." *Papias, a man of the primitive period . . . also bears witness to these things in writing* in the fourth of his books; for he is the author of five books. And he went on to say: "These things are credible to those who believe. And," he says, "when Judas the traitor did not believe and asked, "How then will such extraordinary growths be brought about by the Lord?" the Lord said, "Those who are alive when they take place will see them" (Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 5.33.3–4, italics mine).¹³

The context in Irenaeus is instructive in that it probably reflects the normal procedure of Papias. (1) Irenaeus begins by *quoting Jesus' eucharistic words* about the fruit of the vine: "... But I say to you: I will not drink from now on of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I will drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:27). (2) Then follows a short *exposition*, in which Irenaeus explains what this saying means: Christ has promised his disciples a resurrection in the body and a new life on this earth, thus fulfilling the very concrete promises to the patriarchs of a blessed life on this earth (Gen 27:28–29). This is Isaac's blessing of Jacob, which includes the following: "May God give you . . . an *abundance* of grain and new wine." The Hebrew word for "abundance," *rob*, can be vocalized to read *ribbo*, meaning "ten thousand," so here we have the scriptural basis for Papias's midrash on the ten thousandfold bounty of wine and grain in the millennium. This midrashic exegesis of Gen 27:28 is typically Jewish, and is paralleled in *2 Bar.* 29.5¹⁴ ("The earth will also yield fruits *ten thousandfold*. And on one vine will be a thousand branches, and one branch will produce a thousand clusters, and one cluster will produce a thousand grapes, and one grape will produce a *cor* of wine"¹⁵). As this pseudepigraphic text may be roughly contemporary with Papias,¹⁶ it is a parallel rather than a possible source for the midrash of his Elders. Nevertheless, it clearly shows that Papias's Elders transmitted to him an entirely Jewish piece of haggadic midrash.

¹²H. J. de Jonge observes that this presupposes good knowledge of Jewish halakah: "even if a man ate only grapes, he had to say a benediction" ("BOTRUC BOHCEI. The Age of Kronos and the Millennium in Papias of Hierapolis," in *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* [ed. M. J. Vermaseren; Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 78; Leiden: Brill, 1979], 47).

¹³Translation according to Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 94–96.

¹⁴Cf. also *1 En.* 10:19.

¹⁵Translation according to OTP 1: 630. That this text is a midrash on Gen 27:28 is made certain by the occurrence of the "dew from heaven" motif in *2 Bar.* 29:7.

¹⁶A. F. J. Klijn dates it to the first or second decade of the second century in his introduction in OTP 1:616–17.

There is probably more midrashic exegesis underlying Papias's tradition. In Jewish exegesis of the period, the blessings of the patriarchs were often combined with the blessings promised for the Messiah and his age. Thus Gen 27:28–29 could easily be combined with Gen 49:8–12:

Gen 49

Judah, your brothers . . . shall bow down before you (v. 8)

Binding his foal to the vine and his . . . colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his robe in the blood of grapes; his eyes are darker [chaklyly] than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk (vv. 11–12).

Gen 27

Be lord over your brothers, and may [they] . . . bow down to you (v. 29a).

May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty [tenthsandfold] of grain and wine (v. 28).

In Gen 49:12 the phrase *chaklyly 'enaym myjajyn* may be read *cheky ly ly 'enaym myjajyn*: “take me, me; [my] sources [are richer] than wine,” which would correspond to the clusters saying in Papias: “I am better, take me.” In this way, the whole of Papias’s fragment in Irenaeus may be seen to be a midrash on Gen 27:28–29 and the closely related text Gen 49:8–12.¹⁷ It is also clear that the material from Papias extends beyond the formal quotation in *Adversus haereses*. Irenaeus’s own introduction in *Haer.* 5.33.1–3, which includes the quotes Matt 26:27 and Gen 27:28, must also depend on Papias.

As John Lightfoot recognized, we have here an excellent example of how the work of Papias was organized. (1) A saying of the Lord (Matt 26:27) was (2) given an interpretation, based on biblical (Old Testament) prophecies, and into this interpretation (3) a tradition from the “Elders” was incorporated (in this case a midrashic expansion of the Old Testament texts).¹⁸ The Jewish character of Papias’s tradition is very striking indeed. The abundance of blessing in the millennial kingdom is expressed in very concrete terms, creating a hyperbolic narrative which is typical of midrashic haggadah. The same feature is prominent in another of Papias’s fragments, his story of Judas’s end.¹⁹ The curse that rested upon Judas is

¹⁷ This midrashic explanation of Papias’s passage was first proposed by Léon Gry, “Le Papias des belles promesses messianiques,” *Vivre et penser* 3 (1944): 112–24; “Hénoch X,19 et les belles promesses de Papias,” *RB* 53 (1946): 197–206. Gry’s explanation was adopted by Schoedel in his commentary (*Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*), 94–95.

¹⁸ Essays, 158–59. Lightfoot rightly points out how this pattern exactly corresponds to Papias’s words about his work in the prologue: along with his interpretations of the Lord’s sayings he will also render some traditions he received from the elders. See also the studies by Armin Daniel Baum listed in note 10 above.

¹⁹ Fragment 6 in Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 58–61 (the text is reconstructed from fragments in different commentaries and catenae). See extensive commentary in Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 111–12.

translated into the grotesque picture of his body. He was so swollen that he was broader than a carriage, even his head alone had this monstrous dimension. His male member was likewise swollen, and his natural emissions were full of pus and vermin. To anyone familiar with the monstrous hyperboles of rabbinic haggadah, this comes as no surprise. It explains one of Eusebius's complaints about Papias: He brought “some strange parables of the Savior . . . and some other mythical things” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.11).²⁰ Eusebius's main complaint about Papias is that he took the blessings of the millennial kingdom quite literally.

2.2. *Papias on the millennium (according to Eusebius)*

Among them [the mythical things of the former quote] he mentions a certain period of a thousand years after the resurrection from the dead when Christ's kingdom will be established physically upon this earth of ours. I rather suspect that he came up with these things through a misinterpretation of the apostolic accounts which he received, not comprehending what was said by them mystically and figuratively. For he appears to be a man of very little intelligence, to judge from his writings. Nevertheless, he was the reason that a great number of churchmen after him, on the grounds that he was a man of the primitive period, shared this opinion—I mean, for example, Irenaeus and all others who have expressed similar thoughts (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.12–13).²¹

Let me first make some remarks on Eusebius's comments on Papias. Eusebius was a disciple of Origen. He had learned from Origen to despise simple Christians who took the biblical promises of salvation in a very concrete, earthly sense. Therefore he was clearly in a dilemma with regard to Papias and his traditions from the Elders. On the one hand he needed Papias as a valuable source on the first and second generation of Christian leaders, and on the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. At the same time, much of the material Papias submitted from this first generation of believers was utterly foreign to Eusebius's theological ideas. Not being willing to debunk this material—after all it came from Apostles and Elders!—Eusebius simply had to assume it was not meant as literally by its originators as Papias took it to be. In order, therefore, to retain Papias as a valuable transmitter of significant tradition, Eusebius had to make him simple-minded at the same time. His approach to Papias, then, is the same as Origen's approach to those who took the eschatological blessings promised in the Bible literally: they were *simpliciores*, simpletons, not on the level of those who were able to interpret these blessings in a spiritual, that is Christian, way. They thought in a carnal and Jewish way.²²

²⁰ Translation according to Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 104.

²¹ Fragment 5.12–13 in Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 56–58; translation according to Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 104–5.

²² Cf. Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides simpliciorum according to Origen of Alexandria* (Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 76, 1984; Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984), 35–37; 80–92. There may in fact be a certain “Jewishness” in Papias's language, see Hermann Herbert Schmidt, “Semitismen in Papias,” *TZ* 44 (1988): 135–46.

Taken this way, Eusebius's characterization of Papias as "of very little intelligence" may actually tell us more about Papias than Eusebius intended. It probably tells us that Papias incorporated much eschatological material of a very concrete, Jewish, nature in his five books. But since most of this material, which would have been of great interest to us, was so distasteful to Eusebius, it fell prey to his theological censorship.

Eusebius makes Papias a millenarian, "he mentions a certain period of a thousand years after the resurrection from the dead when Christ's kingdom will be established physically upon this earth of ours." This could be taken directly from Rev 20:4–6. But if, as is very likely, Papias's midrash on paradisiacal bounty (rendered by Irenaeus) refers to the millennium, Papias would be one of those early Christian writers who saw the millennium as the time and place of fulfillment of biblical prophecies of bounty. As we shall see, he was not alone in this, but this was not the idea of the book of Revelation. In Revelation, it is not the millennium, but rather the New Jerusalem following after it, in which the prophecies of paradisiacal blessings are fulfilled.²³ It is therefore reasonable to assume that Papias had other sources for his millennialism besides Revelation, and that these sources represented a millennialism with a different theological profile.

3. Traces of Early Jewish Christian Eschatology (2): The "Elders" in Irenaeus

Irenaeus introduces the one fragment he quotes from Papias in the following way:²⁴ "*the Elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, recalled having heard from him* how the Lord used to teach concerning those times and say . . ." It is only at the end of the quote of what the Elders recalled that Irenaeus reveals the written source from which he had this tradition from the Elders: "*Papias, a man of the primitive period . . . also bears witness to these things in writing* in the fourth of his books; for he is the author of five books. And he went on to say . . ." As we have seen, Papias in general attributed his tradition to "Elders". This raises the question whether Irenaeus could also have the remaining traditions he attributes to "Elders" from the same written source, Papias. I think a good argument can be made for this proposal,²⁵ but since it is not important in my present argument, I will not pursue it here. It is sufficient to my present argument to state that the material transmitted by Irenaeus's Elders belongs to the same type as that transmitted by Papias's Elders.

3.1. Jesus the eschatological Adam

In *Haer.* 2.22.5 Irenaeus argues, based on a tradition from John via the Elders, that Jesus lived into his forties. Irenaeus deduces from John 8:57 ("You are

²³This theme is taken up in the next chapter.

²⁴This and the following quote in *Haer.*, 5.33.3–4.

²⁵See Skarsaune, "Was Papias the source behind Irenaeus' Elders?" (forthcoming).

not yet fifty years old") that, during his ministry, Jesus must have been more than forty years old, indeed, that he was closer to fifty than forty. Besides this appeal to John, he appeals to the Elders who had heard John. Unfortunately, he gives us no details about this tradition from the Elders, and it would seem that it had little in common with the eschatological material dominant in the other "Elder" traditions. This, however, may be a misleading conclusion. Compare the following passage in Ps. Cyprian, *De duobus montibus Sina et Sion* 4.3:

"[The numerical value of Adam's name (in Greek) is 46.] This number 46 designates the passion of Adam's flesh [worn by Christ] . . . So this number 46 declares passion . . . because Solomon built a temple to God in 46 years. Jesus said that the temple is a parable for his own flesh as he said to the Pharisees: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." And the Pharisees said: "It has taken 46 years to build this temple and he is going to raise it in three days?" But the temple Jesus spoke of was his body" [cf. John 2:19–21].²⁶

Here Christ appears as the second Adam, fulfilling by his age, 46 years, the numerical value of the name Adam (in Hebrew 45, in Greek 46). This piece of Jewish *gematria*, developed from Adam's name and John 2, could well be contained in the tradition to which Irenaeus appeals. The reason why he does not quote it is easy to see: it would have appeared weak to him as an argument against the gnostics, whom he accused of precisely this kind of playing with numbers. Accordingly, Irenaeus may have substituted this part of the tradition by his reference to John 8:57 instead, which gave him roughly the same age for the Savior. It may well be that *Sina et Sion* preserves tradition related to that of Irenaeus's Elders here. Adam/Christ typologies were widespread in early Christian literature. The peculiar feature in the Elders' version of it may have been the typically midrashic technique of *gematria*. Jesus recapitulated by his age the numerical value of Adam's name!

3.2. *The world's six "days"*

In *Haer.* 5.30.1 Irenaeus enlists the support of the Elders for the view that the numerical value of the name of the beast in John's Revelation is 666, not 616. As the context in *Haer.* 5.29–30 makes evident, the testimony of the Elders concerning the number of the beast being 666 consisted in a tradition that gave the digits 6, 60 and 600 a specific typological significance. This seems to have been done within the well known scheme of the six-day duration of the world—each day comprising a thousand years according to Psalm 90:4. Important events in the beginning, during, and towards the end of the world's six-day history were related to the digit six. In the beginning, the deluge happened when Noah was 600 years old. During the six-day history, the three martyrs of Dan 3 were put in the

²⁶ *Sina et Sion*, 4.3. Translation according to Anni Maria Laato, *Jews and Christians in De duobus montibus Sina et Sion: An Approach to Early Latin Adversus Iudaeos Literature* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1998), 173–74.

furnace because they refused to worship the idol that was six cubits wide and sixty cubits high (Dan 3:1). Finally, the beast comes, recapitulating all this towards the end of the world's six days of duration. "Thus, then, the six hundred years of Noah, in whose time the deluge occurred because of the apostasy, and the number of the cubits of the image for which these men were sent into the fiery furnace, do indicate the number of the name of that man in whom is concentrated the whole apostasy of six thousand years . . ." (*Haer.* 5.29.2).²⁷ Papias may also have known the six-day scheme of world history as indicated in one of the two references to him in Anastasius Sinaita, in which it is said that Papias was the first (among several followers) "who understood the whole six days to refer to Christ and the Church."²⁸

Irenaeus's Elders, and possibly Papias, were not the only early Christian writers to use the six-day scheme of the world's duration. In chapter 15 in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (dated to the first half of the second century) there is an interesting instruction on the duration of the world. God has promised blessing for his people when they observe the Sabbath fully. This blessing will only happen on the eschatological Sabbath following after the six "days" of this world.

This means that in six thousand years the Lord will complete all things. For with him a day represents a thousand years [a quotation of Ps 90:4 follows to substantiate this]. And so, children, all things will be completed in six days—that is to say, in six thousand years (15.4).²⁹

After this world-time of six days, each comprising 1,000 years, there is to follow the seventh "day" of rest, after the return of Christ and the final judgment. Only on that eschatological day will people (Christians) be so sanctified as to be able to observe the Sabbath as God intended it to be observed. From this Barnabas concludes that the Sabbaths observed by the Jews weekly in this world are not acceptable to God (referring to Isa 1:13). Christian celebration of the eighth day (= the first day of the week), however, is seen as a legitimate proleptic celebration of the eschatological eighth day, the new world. This last element disturbs the convenient week-scheme of six plus one day in the rest of the text, and is probably Barnabas's own addition.³⁰ It raises the question, however, whether the idea of a proleptic (and legitimate) weekly celebration in this world of an eschatological "day" could not originally have been applied to the Sabbath (in Barnabas's source). This scheme would be entirely Jewish, and there are parallels to it in several Jewish texts.³¹ After

²⁷ SC 153: 368–70; translation according to ANF 1: 558.

²⁸ In *Hexaëmeron* 1, Greek text in Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 66; translation according to Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 114–15.

²⁹ Text and translation: Ehrman, LCL.

³⁰ See Pierre Prigent, *Les testimonia dans le christianisme primitif: L'Épitre de Barnabé I–XVI et ses sources* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1961), 65–70.

³¹ The idea, based on Ps 90:4, that God's days are one thousand years, is first encountered in *Jub.* 4.30. Later, the whole concept of six thousand-year-days of creation is met

Barnabas, it was to appear time and again in Christian writers concerned with computing the age of the world.³²

3.3. Enoch and Elijah in Paradise

[Adam was placed in Paradise, but expelled from there into this world when he sinned.]

“Therefore the Elders, disciples of the Apostles, also say that those translated were translated to it, for Paradise has been prepared for just men and bearers of the Spirit—to it also Paul the Apostle was carried . . . [2 Cor 12:4]³³—and those translated shall remain there until the end of all things as inaugurators of incorruptibility” (*Haer.* 5.5.1).³⁴

As the preceding context in Irenaeus makes plain, those “translated” in the body are Enoch and Elijah. The question to which locality Elijah and Enoch had been transferred—and, accordingly, where they are now—was disputed among Jewish scholars in the decades around 100 C.E. Josephus confesses his ignorance (*Ant.* 9.2.2); some said it was heaven;³⁵ some said it was Paradise.³⁶ Irenaeus’s Elders seem to think of a super terrestrial Paradise. This was probably based on an alternative reading of *miqedem* in Gen 2:8: the Garden in Eden was “from aforetime,” hence preexistent before creation.³⁷ Their idea seems to be especially close to that of the *Parables of Enoch* (late first century C.E.?).³⁸ This would speak for locating this tradition to the land of Israel around the turn from the first to the second century C.E.

3.4. Gradations in blessedness

As the Elders say, [that after the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth, Isa 66:22], those thought worthy of an abode in heaven will go there, others will enjoy

with in numerous rabbinical texts, and is obviously a well established tradition. The classic statement of the idea occurs in *b. Sanh.* 97a. Several parallels listed in Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–1938), 5:128.

³² See Richard Landes, “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100–800 C.E.,” in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (ed. W. Verbeke, C. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen; Medievalia Lovaniensia Series I, 15; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 137–209. See also below on Julius Africanus, section 5 of this chapter.

³³ This may be an insertion by Irenaeus, but one cannot totally rule out the possibility that it was contained in the Elders’ tradition.

³⁴ Preuschen, *Antilegomena*, 70; translation according to Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 125–26. On this fragment, see the very interesting comments in Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 65–67.

³⁵ *Pesiqta of Rab Kahana* 5b et al.

³⁶ 1 En. 60:8,23; 70:3–4; 2 En. 8:1–8; Der. Er. Zut. 1 (20c). For more rabbinic references and instructive comment, see Str-B 4:765–66.

³⁷ The same exegesis is contained in rabbinic sources: *b. Pesah.* 54a.

³⁸ The *Parables of Enoch* correspond to chapters 37–71 of 1 En., cf. the references given in note 36. For the disputed date of these *Parables*, see M. A. Knibb, “The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review,” *NTS* 25 (1979), 345–59.

“the delights of paradise” [Ezek 28:13], others will possess the brightness of the city [the New Jerusalem]; for the Savior will be seen everywhere to the degree that those who see him are worthy. And they say that this is the distinction between the dwelling of those bringing forth a hundredfold and those bringing forth sixtyfold and those bringing forth thirtyfold [Matt 13:8]; the first will be taken up into the heavens, the second will abide in Paradise, the third will inhabit the city.³⁹ And it was for this reason that the Lord said: “In my Father’s house are many rooms” [John 14:2].⁴⁰ . . . The Elders, disciples of the Apostles, say that this is the order and arrangement of those who are saved and that they advance by such steps and ascend through the Spirit to the Son, through the Son to the Father, the Son finally yielding his task to the Father, as it is also said by the Apostle: “For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet . . .” [1 Cor 15:25] (*Haer.* 5.36.1–2).⁴¹

As I said above, there were different and partly competing eschatological scenarios in the Judaism of the first two centuries C.E. Part of the differences had to do with the question of where exactly the scene of eschatological rewards for the pious would be. Was it to be in heaven, in Paradise, or in the new Jerusalem? There were different ways of combining these scenarios. In the book of Revelation the new Jerusalem is clearly identified with Paradise (Rev 21–22). In *2 Baruch* Paradise is located in heaven (2 Bar. 51). Life in the new Jerusalem and life in heaven could also be arranged in sequence, the new Jerusalem being the scene of the millennial kingdom on this earth, heaven being the scene of life eternal, after the millennium. We shall see examples of this in Justin and Irenaeus (cf. below, chapter 13, sections 2 and 4.3). The tradition from the Elders, just quoted, follows another line of thought, however. Here the different scenes are arranged as gradations in blessedness. New Jerusalem is the “lowest” reward, heaven the “highest.”

The end of the fragment is not easily interpreted. It may indicate a post mortem progress of the righteous, from one stage to the next. It may also indicate an end to a millennial kingdom in the New Jerusalem, based on a millennial reading of 1 Cor 15:25–28. But the end of the fragment sounds very Irenaean. One can therefore hardly exclude the possibility that Irenaeus takes over towards the end of the text.

In conclusion, the eschatological fragments attributed to “The Elders” in Papias and Irenaeus exhibit basically the same type of characteristically Jewish

³⁹ There is a parallel to this in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, 6.114.4: “These chosen abodes, which are three, are indicated by the numbers in the Gospel—the thirty, the sixty, the hundred.” Clement could well depend on the same source as Irenaeus here. (Translation according to ANF 2: 506.)

⁴⁰ Again, this reference to John may be Irenaeus’s addition to Papias’s tradition, but this is far from certain. No far-reaching conclusions should be based on the premise that Papias did not know, or on purpose neglected, John’s gospel. For a persuasive argument to the contrary, see Bauckham, “Papias and Polycrates,” 44–63.

⁴¹ Preuschen, *Antilegomena*, 71; translation according to Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 126–27.

eschatological ideas, often developed by applying midrashic techniques to minutiae in the Hebrew text. This can be seen as confirmation of the claim made by Papias and Irenaeus: the “Elders” reported what they had learned from the original circle of Jesus’ disciples. We should not go very far wrong when we recognize in these fragments relics of the theological work done among the first and second generation of Jewish believers in the land of Israel.

4. Jewish Christian Traditions about James and the Early Community: Hegesippus

Hegesippus⁴² made a journey from somewhere in the East, via Corinth to Rome, arrived in Rome under the tenure of Anicet (155–166), and wrote there his five books of *Memoirs* during the episcopacy of Eleutherus (175–189).⁴³ As an author, this makes him roughly contemporary with Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons. Fragments of his work are preserved mainly by Eusebius,⁴⁴ but there are also two fragments in later writers.⁴⁵ Eusebius claims he

⁴² Select bibliography: Theodor Zahn, “Brüder und Vettern Jesu,” in *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur* (9 vols.; Jena-Leipzig: diff. publishers, 1881–1916; vol. 6: Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1900), 6:228–73; Hugh Jackson Lawlor, “The Hypomnemata of Hegesippus,” in Lawlor, *Eusebiania: Essays on the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphili, ca 264–349 A.D. Bishop of Caesarea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912; repr., Amsterdam: Philo Press 1973), 1–107; Karlmann Beyschlag, “Das Jakobusmartyrium und seine Verwandten in der frühchristlichen Literatur,” *ZNW* 56 (1965): 149–78; Luise Abramowski, “Diadoché und orthos logos bei Hegesipp,” *ZKG* 87 (1976): 321–27; Ernst Zuckschwerdt, “Das Naziräat des Herrenbruders Jakobus nach Hegesipp (Euseb. h.e. II 23,5–6),” *ZNW* 68 (1977): 276–87; T. Halton, “Hegesippus in Eusebius,” in *Papers of the 1979 International Conference on Patristic Studies* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; 3 vols.; StPatr 17; Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 3:688–93; Alain Le Boulluec, “Le schéma hérésiologique d’Hégésippe,” in *La notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque II^e–III^e siècles* (2 vols.; Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 1:92–110; F. Stanley Jones, “The Martyrdom of James in Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, and Christian Apocrypha, including Nag Hammadi: A Study of the Textual Relations,” in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1990* (ed. D. J. Lull; SBLSP 29; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), 322–35; Richard Bauckham, “For What Offence Was James Put to Death?” in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199–232; F. Stanley Jones, “Hegesippus as a Source for the History of Jewish Christianity,” in *Le Judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du colloque de Jérusalem 6–10 juillet 1998* (ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 201–12; Yaron Z. Eliav, “The Tomb of James, Brother of Jesus, as Locus Memoriae,” *HTR* 97 (2004): 33–59.

⁴³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.11.7. and 4.22.3.

⁴⁴ See review below. There is no modern complete and critical edition of Hegesippus’s fragments. See, however, the edition contained in Erwin Preuschen, *Antilegomena: Die Reste der ausserkanonischen Evangelien und urchristlichen Ueberlieferungen* (Giessen: J. Ricker, 1901), and the edition contained in Lawlor’s essay quoted in note 42 above.

⁴⁵ One in Philippus Sidetes, ed. by C. de Boor, *Neue Fragmente des Papias, Hegesippus und Pierius in bisher unbekannten Excerpten aus der Kirchengeschichte des Philippus Sidetes*

was “a Believer of Hebrew [=Jewish] origin” (*Hist. eccl.* 4.22.8). If that were correct, Hegesippus himself would have considerable interest as a person in our story. Some modern scholars doubt that Hegesippus was Jewish, however, a matter that will come up for discussion immediately below. But no one doubts that Hegesippus’s main work embodies Jewish Christian traditions. This will be the main topic of this section.

4.1. Was Hegesippus a Jewish believer?

This is what Eusebius says about Hegesippus, the “believer of Hebrew origin”:

He sets down certain things from the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Syriac [Gospel] and, in particular, from [writings in?] the Hebrew tongue, thus showing that he was himself a believer of Hebrew origin. And he relates other matters as well, on the strength of unwritten Jewish tradition (*Hist. eccl.* 4.22.8).⁴⁶

It is evident from this that Eusebius’s reason for concluding that Hegesippus was a Jewish believer, was Hegesippus’s knowledge of the two Jewish languages, Syriac [Aramaic] and Hebrew, as well as his use of oral Jewish traditions. Whether or not modern scholars agree with Eusebius in his conclusion, his criteria are interesting. Even scholars who dispute Eusebius’s assessment of Hegesippus do accept his criteria. They argue against Eusebius by pointing out that Hegesippus does in fact not meet them.

The case against Hegesippus being a Jewish believer was made by W. Telfer in 1960,⁴⁷ and most authors after him sharing the same position are satisfied with referring to him. He argues as follows: (1) Eusebius was not qualified to evaluate Hegesippus’s level of knowledge either of Aramaic/Syriac or Hebrew nor of oral Jewish tradition, since he was ignorant in these areas himself. (2) Hegesippus himself shows no evidence of knowing Syriac or Hebrew firsthand, nor does he show evidence of any knowledge of Jewish customs or traditions. On the contrary, he seems to be ignorant of both. (3) Telfer then complicates his argument somewhat by allowing that Hegesippus used a Jewish Christian source for his information on the early Jerusalem community, but that this source must have been written by a very hellenized Jewish Christian who knew no Semitic language, as well as being ignorant of the pre-70 Jewish customs and realities in the land of Israel.⁴⁸ It is

(TU 5.2; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1889: 167–84): 169 (text), 175–76 (comments); one in John Anthony Cramer, *Anecdota graeca e cod. manuscriptis bibliothecae regiae parisensis* (4 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1839–41; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1967), 2:88 (lines 15–16).

⁴⁶ Translation according to Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History and The Martyrs of Palestine* (2 vols.; London: SPCK, 1928; repr., 1954), 1:128.

⁴⁷ W. Telfer, “Was Hegesippus a Jew?” *HTR* 53 (1960): 143–53.

⁴⁸ Telfer, in fact, seems to believe that this Jewish Christian author was part of the post-70 Jewish Christian community living in Jerusalem between the two wars, and that

difficult to see why this Hellenized Jewish Christian could not be Hegesippus himself, and it is equally difficult to see how the ignorance of one of Hegesippus's sources could be evidence of Hegesippus's own state of knowledge. If one assumes that Hegesippus was in fact Greek-speaking himself, Telfer's first two arguments against his Jewishness lose much of their force.

There is very little to exclude the possibility that Hegesippus was what Eusebius claimed he was—a Jewish believer—although Eusebius has probably overestimated his knowledge of Hebrew. On the other hand, there is also too little unambiguous evidence to prove that Hegesippus was Jewish. The question is best left open. No one, however, doubts that Hegesippus was using Jewish Christian material. Those features in his own writing that are normally adduced as indicative of his Jewish descent could be explained as coming from his source or sources rather than from himself.

I shall comment on two themes in Hegesippus's fragments: (1) his portrait of James and his significance; and (2) his remarkable insistence on the significance of the family of David throughout salvation history.

4.2. Hegesippus on James

The fragment on James is quite extensive. I will not quote it in full here. Instead, I render it in my own paraphrase.

James the Lord's brother became the leader of the church. He was called "The Righteous" by all people, to distinguish him from the many other Jameses. He was also called "Oblias," meaning "Bulwark of the people," and "Righteousness"—all these names taken from prophetic oracles in Scripture. Representatives of the seven sects among the Jews asked him "Which is the door of Jesus?" and James answered that he [Jesus] was the savior. Many believed because of this, which caused uproar "among the Jews and Scribes and Pharisees." They come together and demand of James that he shall tell all the people (assembled for Passover) not to be led astray by Jesus. They place James on the pinnacle of the temple, so that all can hear him, and ask, "Which is the door of Jesus?" James answers that The Son of Man sits at the right hand of the Mighty Power, and shall come on the clouds of heaven. Hearing this, the Scribes and Pharisees shout that even The Righteous has been led astray, and they kill him by throwing him down from the pinnacle, stoning him afterwards, and finally letting a fuller kill him with a blow of his club.⁴⁹

There are many interesting, and quite a few rather enigmatic, features in this story. It borrows traits from Stephen's martyrdom as well as Jesus' own; at the same time it contains some very distinctive and peculiar ones. A basic premise for interpreting this story is pointed out by Richard Bauckham:⁵⁰ It

this community was "utterly severed from actual Judaism and wrapped up in a thought-world of its own" (Telfer, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?" 147).

⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.3–19, verbatim quotations according to the translation in Lawlor and Oulton, *The Ecclesiastical History*.

⁵⁰ "For What Offence," 211–12.

seems we have to do with that kind of storytelling in which highly symbolic theological statements are in part told as if they were concrete facts. The most obvious case would be the story's insistence that James alone had the right to enter the sanctuary—very likely the Holy of Holies is meant—and that he there conducted a service of prayer that (this is the obvious implication) substituted the sacrifices of atonement brought by the high priest (Lev 16). There is hardly any doubt about the historicity of James's martyrdom as such, in that it is attested by Josephus, as Eusebius is eager to point out. But in Hegesippus's story, this historical incident is couched in a story full of symbolic traits. The challenge before us now is to gauge the theological significance of these traits, rather than to extract the historical facts of the narrative. For the sake of brevity, I shall present my interpretation in the form of a commenting paraphrase of Hegesippus's story, referring in the footnotes to arguments supporting my case.

4.2.1. *James was greater than the high priest and supplanted him*

The high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year, and his (ineffective) means of averting God's wrath was through sacrifices. James, on the other hand, entered the Holy of Holies daily, and his (effective) means of averting God's wrath was intercessory prayer alone.⁵¹ He did not do this once a year, he did it continuously, on his knees, so that his knees became like those of a camel. Thus were fulfilled the words of Isaiah (56:7), quoted by Jesus (Matt 21:13 par.): The house of the Lord should become *a house of prayer*. As soon as James was killed and his intercessory prayer was ended, "immediately Vespasian attacked them." They were warned by a Rechabite priest: "Cease [stoning him], what do ye? The

⁵¹ This portrait of James as greater than the high priest, in fact becoming his better substitute, is achieved by portraying him as a Nazirite (cf. Judg 13:16; 1 Sam 1–2) or a Rechabite (Jer 35). As such, James surpasses the high priest on all counts: he is more holy than him by not drinking wine or any strong (alcoholic) drink (Nazirites: Judg 13:7; 16:17, Rechabites: Jer 35:6,8), by not shearing his hair (Nazirites: Judg 13:5; 16:17; 1 Sam 1:11), and by not eating anything with its soul (blood) in it (cf. Nazirites, Judg 13:14: not eating anything unclean. Probably James is here seen as surpassing the high priest by not eating meat at all.) He is wearing a linen robe (Nazirite: 1 Sam 2:18), but unlike the high priest, who was invested with this robe at his inauguration (Exod 29:5,29), and later used it only when officiating (Lev 16:4), James never wore anything else. The high priest is sanctified by anointment with oil at his inauguration (Exod 29:7; 30:30–33; Lev 8:12); James was holy from his mother's womb, without any use of oil. The high priest is purified by water at his inauguration, and constantly has to maintain his purity by means of purifying water (Exod 29:4; 30:17–21 ["Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die," v. 20]. James, on the contrary, was holy from his mother's womb, so he needed no baths to maintain this purity. The contrast between the offices of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16) on the one hand, and James's permanent office of intercession on the other, is especially conspicuous in Hegesippus's account. To all of this, see Zuckschwerdt, "Das Naziräat." I think this "more than the High Priest" explains James's non-anointing and non-bathing better than taking them as an extension of Nazirite asceticism.

Just One is praying on your behalf!” (2.23.17).⁵² (It is of interest to notice that the same idea is contained in James’s letter in the New Testament: The prayer of a just man [δίκαιον] is powerful and effective—example: Elijah [James 5:16–18]).⁵³

The idea embodied in all of this—the sacrificial service of the high priest in the Holy of Holies being replaced by the intercessory prayer of James the Just in the Holy of Holies—has its closest parallels in some other early Christian traditions that are usually thought to be Jewish Christian.

First and foremost there is the temple action of Jesus himself, destroying the apparatus of ordinary people’s animal sacrifices and proclaiming the sanctuary as a house of prayer instead.⁵⁴ Next there is the speech of Stephen in Acts 7, which is, however, difficult to interpret exactly when it comes to what stance Stephen represents concerning the temple and its sacrifices. One can hardly deny an element of criticism of temple and sacrifices in his speech, but how strong and how comprehensive is difficult to gauge (Acts 7:40–50).

A more striking parallel, however, occurs in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.37. This is of especial interest, since James is the greatest authority (next to Jesus) in this Jewish Christian apology (*Rec.* 1.27–73).⁵⁵ In *Rec.* 1.37 we read that continuing with animal sacrifices in the sanctuary (after Jesus) will mean constant wars and threats to the city and the sanctuary, while acts of mercy and justice will, “without sacrifices, restore the people to their native land.” In *Rec.* 1.39 we find that baptism and “invocation of God’s name,” not sacrifices, will now bring remission of sins.

Closely related to these ideas are the *names* attributed to James in Hegesippus’s story. He was called three names. The first is ὁ δίκαιος (corresponding to Hebrew *ha-zaddik*). Since biblical times, it was an established conviction of Jewish piety that the intercessory prayer of The Righteous was effective: “The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous” (Prov 15:29, cf. James 5:16 and a rich material of parallels in Jewish literature⁵⁶). If we are right

⁵² Here, as throughout, the translations of verbatim quotations are from Lawlor and Oulton, *The Ecclesiastical History*.

⁵³ In Jewish wisdom literature, the picture of the high priest is sometimes transformed from a priest who makes atonement through sacrifices into a man propitiating God through intercessory prayer: “...the divine wrath did not long continue. A blameless man was quick to be their champion, bearing the weapons of his priestly ministry: prayer and the incense that propitiates; he withstood the divine anger and set a limit to the disaster . . . He overcame the avenging fury not by bodily strength or force of arms; by words he subdued the avenger, appealing to the sworn covenants made with our forefathers” (Wis 18:21–22, referring to Num 16:41–50).

⁵⁴ Mark 11:15–17; Matt 21:12–13; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:13–17. For a thorough treatment of this event and the Gospel narratives, see Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel: die Tempelaktion und das Tempelwort als Ausdruck seiner messianischen Sendung* (WUNT 2. Reihe 119; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁵⁵ For this and the following, see chapter 11 of this book.

⁵⁶ See especially Rudolf Mach, *Der Zaddik in Talmud und Midrasch* (Leiden: Brill, 1957), 124–33.

to see James as the better substitute for the high priest in the Holy of Holies, it is worth noticing that also the Qumran community applied the word-root “righteous” to its founder (probably a Zadokite priest, opposed to the Maccabean high priests): the Teacher of Righteousness. The legitimate high priest is *righteous*.

This epithet is also exploited in the story of James’s martyrdom, just as it is in early Christian reflection on the death of Jesus. In Isa 3:8–11 LXX there is a passage in which ungodly Israelites are said to boast of their sins, whereas they persecute the Righteous. In Wis 1:16–2:20 there is an extensive paraphrase of this passage, in which the ungodly first boast of their sins (2:1–11), and then plan to persecute and kill the Righteous (2:12–20). All of this presupposes an alternative reading of the Hebrew text in Isa 3:10; instead of massoretic *'imru* (“say ye”) the LXX seems to have read *nisor* (“let us bind”), and Wis possibly *nisof* (“let us take away”).⁵⁷ The latter reading seems to lie behind the rendering of this text in Justin and Hegesippus: ἄρωμεν τὸν δίκαιον.⁵⁸

Second, James was called “Oblias” [in Hebrew], which probably means “bulwark of the people.” Among the many attempts at deciphering Oblias, the most convincing, to my mind, has been put forward by Richard Bauckham. He refers to Isa 54:11–12, in which the new Jerusalem (often identified with the new temple) is said to be rebuilt of precious materials, “and all *your* bulwark (Hebrew: *gebulek*) of precious stones.” The bulwark here is the protecting wall around Jerusalem or the temple. James being called *Gebul 'am*, protecting wall of the people, would be in line with the temple imagery used for the early Jerusalem community and its leaders in early Christian documents.⁵⁹ It would also be in line with the theme of James protecting the people through

⁵⁷In Hebrew, the three verbs are graphically close: מִבָּא, רְבָא, and סְבָא. See Bauckham, “For What Offence,” 215–16. In the scripts of the first and second centuries C.E., these letters were even more similar than in the standardized font used here. See Frank Moore Cross, jr., “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. G. E. Wright; New York: Anchor, 1965), 170–264, esp. 175–77 and 209.

⁵⁸Justin, *Dial.* 119.3; 136.2; 137.3; Hegesippus, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.15. Far from proving that Hegesippus was ignorant of the Hebrew text (so Telfer, “Was Hegesippus a Jew?” 146), this reading could well be taken as proof of excellent knowledge of the Hebrew text, as well as of Jewish exegetical methods in handling the text (so Bauckham, “For What Offence,” 215–16).

⁵⁹E.g., the community as the temple, and its leaders as the rock of the temple (Matt 16:18), or its *pillars* (Gal 2:9), or its (twelve!) foundations (Rev 21:14). See on this Richard Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. R. Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 415–80; esp. 442–50. A Jewish parallel to James being called *pillar* and *protecting wall* of the people occurs in *Paralipomenai Ieremiou* (*4 Baruch*) 1.2, where Jeremiah is portrayed as preventing the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem by his intercessory prayer: “your prayer is like a firm *pillar* in the middle of it, and like an *unbreachable wall encircling* it” (OTP 2: 418). The same is said to Baruch in *2 Baruch* 2:1: “For your works are for this city like a firm *pillar* and your prayers like a *strong wall*” (OTP 1: 621).

his intercession in the Holy of Holies. In Sirach it is said about Simon, the ideal high priest: In his days the temple was reinforced, the wall (bulwark, περιβολή) was built with powerful turrets (50:2). Now it is James who fulfills the function of the righteous high priest.

The third name of James, Righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη*) is either a mere variation of the first, or could be a reference to Jer 33:16 (New Jerusalem being called “The Lord is our Righteousness”), or Isa 54:14 or Isa 28:17 (Isa 28:16–17: The Messiah being the cornerstone of the new temple, “righteousness” its plumb line). Again, it seems James is seen in a new temple context.

To conclude: James is portrayed as the only legitimate high priest. His intercessory prayers provided Israel with more effective averting of God’s wrath than the sacrifices of the ordinary high priest. James changed the Holy of Holies, and with it the entire temple, from being a house of sacrifices into being a house of prayer.

4.2.2. James was put to death as a witness (martyr) to Jesus being the Messiah

Those who put him to death were representatives of the seven sects within the Jewish people. We encounter here one of the most original and also one of the most characteristic concepts in Hegesippus. His words about the seven sects deserve careful attention:

Now these were the different opinions in the circumcision, among the sons of the Israelites, *against the tribe of Juda and the Messiah*: Essenes, Galileans, Hemero-baptists, Masbotheans, Samaritans, Sadducees, Pharisees (*Hist. eccl.* 4.22.7, italics mine).

As Alain Le Boulluec has well observed, the seven sects are here seen as latter-day equivalents of the ten tribes that severed themselves from Judah and the Davidic dynasty in the days after the death of Solomon. The true Jews are those who accept the Davidic Messiah. Those who reject him are apostates from true Judaism; they are sects. Hegesippus attributes all opposition against Jesus the Messiah and his Davidic relatives to these seven sects. Common to them is a denial of the very center of the Jewish hope, that the Messiah is of David’s seed.⁶⁰

In the story of James’s martyrdom this motif is quite dominant. Some of the seven sects ask him “Which is the door of Jesus?” and he answers that Jesus is the Savior. Because of this some came to believe that Jesus is the Messiah (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.8–9). In order to understand the meaning of the question, and how James’s answer to it really answers the question, let us tabulate the relevant material.

(1) The sects:

- (a) did not believe either that Jesus rose again or that he is coming to render to every man according to his works (2.23.9)
- (b) feared that the whole people should expect Jesus as the Messiah (2.23.10)

⁶⁰ *La notion d’hérésie*, 1:95–99

- (c) asked James to testify against the people, “for it is gone astray unto Jesus, [imagining] that he is the Messiah” (2.23.10)
- (d) said that the people had gone astray after Jesus who was crucified (2.23.12)

(2) James:

- (a) said Jesus was the Savior; people accordingly believed Jesus was the Messiah (2.23.8–9)
- (b) said, “why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man, since he sits in heaven at the right hand of the Mighty Power, and shall come on the clouds of heaven?” To which the people responded with “Hosanna to the Son of David” (2.23.13–14)
- (c) was a true witness to Jews and Greeks that Jesus was the Messiah (2.23.18)

Obviously the sects thought that Jesus being crucified meant the end of him, therefore he was not the Messiah. James proclaimed, on the other hand, that Jesus rose again, was enthroned at God’s right hand, and would come to judge all people. For James, Jesus’ resurrection and heavenly enthronement coincides with his being installed as Messiah. This concept echoes the (probably) pre-Pauline formula in Rom 1:3: Jesus was of David’s seed according to the flesh, according to the Spirit he was made God’s Son (Messiah) through his resurrection from the dead.

I think this may give us a clue to the meaning of the strange question put to James: “Which is the door of Jesus?” According to James’s opponents, Jesus was a πλάνος, a deceiver. This implies the metaphor of Jesus leading his flock on a way that leads to perdition. Jesus was crucified, and that was the end of him. His way went through “the door of perdition” (Matt 7:13), and those who follow him will go through the same door. According to James and the Christian tradition, Jesus led his followers on the way of life and through “the door of life” (Matt 7:14). During his resurrection and ascension, he entered heaven as “the King of Glory” through the “ancient doors” of Ps 24:7–9. I suggest that these metaphors are in the background when representatives of the sects twice ask James: Which is the door of Jesus? This interpretation gives coherence to the main motifs of the story: Jesus being pictured as a πλάνος, James being said to have been deceived himself, James answering all opposition against the Messiahship of Jesus by pointing to his resurrection and ascension and future judgment of all human beings. To ask about the door of Jesus would be equivalent to asking where his exit from life brought him, to perdition or to the position as Messiah enthroned at God’s right hand.⁶¹

⁶¹ I here propose this new exegesis of the question about Jesus’ door because I have not found previous attempts convincing. For a different interpretation, see Bauckham, “For What Offence,” 209–10. Bauckham proposes that the original question was: “Who is

After this brief analysis of James's martyrdom in Hegesippus, it remains to show how the motifs we have encountered here run through the rest of the fragments preserved by Eusebius.

4.3. Hegesippus on the early community

Hegesippus maintains that after James's martyrdom, other relatives of Jesus took over the leadership of the community. Again I synthesize and shorten Hegesippus's fragments into the following paraphrase:

After the martyrdom of James, the surviving apostles and first-generation disciples of Jesus met together with his relatives, and they elected Symeon, the son of Clopas who was brother of Joseph, Jesus' father (hence Symeon was Jesus' cousin) to succeed James. A Roman persecution of David's family followed (3.11–12; 4.22.4). Later, under Domitian, a new persecution of royal Davidic descendants broke out, and two grandsons of Jude, Jesus' brother, were arrested and tried. They acknowledged to be of David's line, but of very modest means, and expecting a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one. Having been released, they ruled the Churches, "inasmuch as they were both martyrs and of the Lord's family" (3.19–20; 32.5–6). At 120 years of age, Symeon son of Clopas was accused by the Jewish sects of being of the House of David and a Christian; after torture he was crucified under Trajan (3.32.1–6). Until then the Church had been an undefiled virgin, but now Thebuthis, in revenge for not having been made bishop, began secretly to corrupt her from the seven sects among the people, to which he himself belonged. From this came two rounds of heresies: (1) first Simon and Simonians, Cleobius and Cleobians, Dositheus and Dositheans, Gorthaeus and Goratheni, and Masbotheans; next (2) Menandrianists, Marcianists, Carpocratians, Valentinians, Basilidians and Satornilians (4.22.5–6).

The second round of heresies no doubt has gnostic teachers and their schools in mind, whereas the first round are very likely thought to be Jewish heresies trying to pass as Christian. Simon was a Samaritan, and was already in the days of Justin portrayed as the founder of all later heresies (mainly gnostic ones). Cleobius and Dositheus are mentioned as companions or rivals of Simon in later patristic writers, as is Gorthaeus, a Samaritan according to Epiphanius.⁶² Whether or not there is any historical basis for all of this, there can hardly be any doubt that Simon is the "model" for this second round of heresies: he was, originally, a Jewish heretic (belonging to the Samaritan heresy), but became, when he tried to recast himself as a Christian, the father of gnostic heresies. What was wrong with all these people, according to Hegesippus? Most likely it was the same as the error of the seven Jewish heresies behind them: they denied the Davidic

'the gate of the Lord'[Ps 118:21]," and that the intended answer should be "Jesus himself." In this case Hegesippus's text is indeed "a little garbled," as Bauckham remarks.

⁶²The Masbotheans are elsewhere included among the seven Jewish heresies by Hegesippus, and should therefore not be mentioned here among those who "came from them." Many scholars therefore suspect a gloss in the text here, but no doubt Masbotheans is the *lectio difficilior*.

Messiah and the prophecies giving him legitimacy. Let us recall his words about the seven Jewish heresies: they were “against the tribe of Judah and the Messiah [of David]”—this, of course, would apply to the Samaritans more than anyone else. And this, I suggest, is the common denominator between the seven Jewish heresies (Essenes et al.), the Jewish-Christian heresies (Simonians et al.), and the gnostic heresies (Menandrianists et al.). Hegesippus states with great satisfaction that in Corinth and other cities he found “true doctrine” ($\delta\rho\theta\circ\varsigma\lambda\circ\gamma\circ\varsigma$, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.2). This meant in practice that “what the Law preached, and the Prophets and the Lord,” was faithfully followed (*Hist. eccl.* 4.22.3). This tallies well with the simple criterion of “orthodoxy” that Hegesippus seems to follow: believing Jesus to be the Davidic Messiah announced by the Law and the Prophets (and hence believing the God of the Bible to be the one who sent him) is the hallmark of “right doctrine”; denying this is the mark of heresy.

Herbert Kemler has rightly emphasized the great originality of Hegesippus’s concept of right succession within the church.⁶³ Different from Irenaeus and other heresiologists, Hegesippus does not speak of the Apostles, the Twelve, nor the Twelve and Paul, as being at the head of the orthodox succession. Instead, it is James and other relatives of Jesus who inaugurate the succession of “right doctrine.”⁶⁴ We have seen how this matches the enormous importance he accords the Davidic dynasty in his concept of salvation history.

The other peculiar feature in Hegesippus’s heresiology is that he derives later heresies from the seven Jewish ones.⁶⁵ This again has to do with his basically very simple scheme of salvation history: the true people of God expect or believe in the Davidic Messiah of Judah, promised in Gen 49:8–12; the schismatics and heretics do not, be they Jews, Jewish “Christians,” or Gentiles.

As seen above, there are parallels between motifs in Hegesippus’s material and the Jewish Christian apology in *Rec.* 1.27–71. We are now in a position to list these parallels as follows:

Hegesippus:	<i>Rec.</i> 1.27–71:
(1) James substituting sacrifices by his intercessory prayer.	(1) James teaching that sacrifices should cease.
(2) James the highest authority in the early community.	(2) James the highest authority in the early community.

⁶³ Herbert Kemler, “Hegesipps römische Bischofsliste,” *VC* 25 (1971): 182–96.

⁶⁴ Remaining Apostles and disciples taking council with the relatives of Jesus on the choice of James’s successor (*Hist. eccl.* 3.11), is probably a construction by Eusebius, based on Clement of Alexandria’s *Hypotyposes* (cf. *Hist. eccl.* 2.1.2–3), rather than a direct quotation from Hegesippus, cf. Kemler, “Hegesipps römische Bischofsliste,” 187.

⁶⁵ See on this, in much detail, Le Boulluec, *La notion d’hérésie*, 1:95–110.

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|--|---|
| (3) James disputing with the (seven) Jewish heresies (mainly Scribes and Pharisees). | (3) James disputing with the (five) Jewish heresies (mainly the high priests) (1.53–54; 68–69). |
| (4) James's martyrdom being caused by representatives of the heresies (Scribes and Pharisees). | (4) James's near-martyrdom caused by "an enemy" (the Pharisee Paul). |

The accounts are not only sufficiently different to exclude direct literary dependence of the one upon the other, but also they are sufficiently similar to allow the conclusion that they probably depend on a shared narrative tradition. There seems to be no good reason to deny that this tradition was Jewish Christian, and that it derives from a Jewish Christian milieu looking to the early Jerusalem community and to James as its ultimate authority.

5. Traditions from the Relatives of Jesus: Julius Sextus Africanus

Julius Sextus Africanus⁶⁶ is in many respects similar to Hegesippus. Very little is known about his life. His works are only fragmentarily preserved. He may have been a Jewish believer. And he certainly included Jewish Christian material in his writings. It is the latter two points that claim our attention here.

5.1. Africanus: the man of Jewish learning

The only facts about his life that are known are those that can be culled from his writings. He regarded the colony of Aelia Capitolina as his birthplace or ancestral home.⁶⁷ Later in life he had some relationship with Emmaus-Nicopolis (the Emmaus near present day Latrun) in the land of Israel, since he headed an embassy on behalf of this city to the Emperor in 221–222 C.E., to request the reconstruction of Emmaus with the rights of a Roman city and a new name, Nicopolis. All this was granted.⁶⁸ Somewhat earlier, he seems to have served as a tutor of prince Mannos at the court of King Abgar 9 (179–216 C.E.) of Edessa, and re-

⁶⁶The classic study of his life, career, and works is Heinrich Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie 1: Die Chronographie des Julius Africanus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1880), 1–19; in more recent times, see esp. Jean-René Vieillefond, *Les "Cestes" de Julius Africanus: Étude sur l'ensemble des fragments avec édition, traduction et commentaires* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1970), 13–70; E. Habas (Rubin), "The Jewish Origin of Julius Africanus," *JJS* 45 (1994): 86–91. I quote the *Kestoi* fragments according to Vieillefond's numeration, and with page references to his edition (= the above mentioned book).

⁶⁷*Kestoi*, frg. 5 (Vieillefond, *Les "Cestes,"* 291). Africanus calls Aelia by its full Roman name: "the colony of Aelia Capitolina in Palestine," and also calls it ἡ ἀρχαία πατριά.

⁶⁸According to Eusebius, *Chron.*

counts an episode from a bearhunt in which the prince took part.⁶⁹ He claims in his chronography to have visited the Mountains of Ararat in Parthia (Armenia) and the village Celaenae of Phrygia (both of them candidates for being the resting place of the ark of Noah after the flood).⁷⁰ We cannot know the date of this visit, nor the date of his visit to Alexandria to hear the famous Heraclas.⁷¹ His visit in Rome, when he constructed or planned⁷² the Emperor's library of the Pantheon near Alexander's baths,⁷³ must have occurred after the latter were finished in 227 C.E.⁷⁴

All this shows that Africanus was a widely traveled person who offered his services in various high places. His apparently universal learning (though shallow in many areas) is in good harmony with this lifestyle, and is a useful reminder that we should not envisage all early Christians as ascetics, or narrow in their interests.

His literary output seems to have been extensive, but little is preserved. He wrote a world chronicle leading up to 221 C.E., which is fragmentarily preserved in later chronicles. He exchanged letters with Origen in the 240s C.E.⁷⁵ These dates make him a contemporary with Origen—probably somewhat older than him, since he calls him “my son.” Apart from the writings already mentioned, he also wrote a letter to (an otherwise unknown) Aristides concerning the two genealogies of Jesus, and also a work of learned “miscellanies,” called the *Kestoi* (Κεστοί). In these, he writes about natural science, medicine, magic, agriculture, and the art of war, including a substantial tract on veterinary medicine concerning horses. This work is dedicated to the Emperor Alexander Severus (222–235 C.E.), and shows Africanus to be a well-educated “man of the world” in the syncretistic days of the Severan dynasty. Some scholars have found the positive interest in magic in this work incompatible with Christian (or Jewish) faith, and have concluded that Africanus was still a pagan while writing this book (around 230 C.E.).⁷⁶ This would, of course, be a strong argument against his being of Jewish stock. Francis C. R. Thee, however, has argued that Africanus managed to combine the practice of magic with his Christian (or Jewish) faith because he did not regard magic as having to do with the power of spirits, but as being a religiously neutral τέχνη.⁷⁷ If so, the author of the *Kestoi* could still be a Jewish believer.

⁶⁹ *Kestoi*, frg. 1.20 (Vieillefond, *Les “Cestes,”* 183).

⁷⁰ *Chronography*, 4, see the translation in ANF 6: 131.

⁷¹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.31.2.

⁷² Africanus says ἡρχιτεκτόνησα. For a discussion of the meaning of this term, see Vieillefond, *Les “Cestes,”* 21–22.

⁷³ According to himself in *Kestoi*, end of frg. 5 (= Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 412; Vieillefond, *Les “Cestes,”* 291).

⁷⁴ Cf. Vieillefond, *Les “Cestes,”* 20–22.

⁷⁵ For the text and date of Africanus's letter to Origen, see Nicholas de Lange, *La Lettre à Africanus sur l'histoire de Susanne* (= pages 471–521 in M. Harl, *Origène: Philosophie, 1–20 sur les écritures; SC 302*; Paris: Cerf, 1983).

⁷⁶ For this date within the reign of Alexander Severus, see the extensive argument by Vieillefond, *Les “Cestes,”* 60–64.

⁷⁷ Francis C. R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 19; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984).

Was Africanus a Jew by birth?⁷⁸ He refers to Aelia Capitolina as “the old ancestral home.” This could mean “my place of birth,” in which case no conclusion is possible as to Africanus’s ethnic origin. Gentile origin seems more likely than Jewish, if Hadrian’s banning of Jews from Aelia was still in force, but this is uncertain in the 160s or 170s, when Africanus was probably born. One can also translate “our old ancestral home,” in which case he himself, *but also his readers*, were Jewish.⁷⁹ The latter presupposition seems rather unlikely;⁸⁰ therefore the former translation seems to be preferable. It implies old family ties to Jerusalem/Aelia, but this in itself does not necessarily mean Jewish descent.

An argument not mentioned by Vieillefond is Africanus’s apparent knowledge of the Hebrew/Aramaic text of the book of Daniel. In his letter to Origen he argues that a word-play in the story about Susanna cannot be retroverted into Hebrew, hence this part of the book can have no Semitic original. He also seems to accord great authority to Jewish expertise on the questions of the text and canon of the Bible, and has very good knowledge of Jewish tradition and local Jewish customs in the land of Israel. Again, all this is easily compatible with his being of Jewish stock himself, but does not prove him to be so. Having spent years of his life in or near Jerusalem would seem to be sufficient explanation for this part of his knowledge and learning. (Some Jewish features of his letter to Aristides will be shown below to belong to his sources rather than to Africanus himself.)

Thus the argument for Jewish descent seems to be inconclusive. There is no doubt, however, that Africanus, possibly because of his background in the land of Israel, had access to, and in part transmitted in his works, Jewish Christian traditions and sources. He himself explicitly makes this claim for the material we are going to study.

In his chronography, Africanus followed the Jewish scheme of a six-day duration of the world, followed by the seventh day (the millennium), each “day” being one thousand years.⁸¹ This was based on Gen 1:1–2:4, Gen 2:17 and Ps 90:4; first indications of the scheme (or parts of it) occur in *Jubilees*, and the first complete presentation comes in *Barn. 15*.⁸² New in Africanus’s writings, however, is a calculation of the time since Adam, which has Jesus being conceived by Mary in

⁷⁸The case for has been made by Vieillefond, *Les “Cestes,”* 17; 41–49; the case against by E. Habas (Rubin), “The Jewish Origin.”

⁷⁹This is argued by Vieillefond, cf. preceding note.

⁸⁰Among Jews the official Roman name for Jerusalem, “Colonia Aelia Capitolina in Palestine” was shunned; it is therefore very unlikely that Africanus would have used this name in a work addressed to fellow Jews. In a work addressed to a Roman audience, however, this would be very natural.

⁸¹See Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus*, 24–26. On Africanus’s millennialism, see also William Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and Its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989), 19; 68–70; E. M. Jeffreys, “Malalas’ Use of the Past,” in *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (ed. G. Clarke et al.; Rushcutters Bay, Australia: Australian National University Press, 1990), 121–46; esp. 122–30.

⁸²On which compare section 3.2 of this chapter.

5500, and resurrected in 5531 after Adam, and expects the millennium to be inaugurated 500 years after Jesus' conception.⁸³

Not only is the overall layout of this work Jewish, there are also some details in it which betray considerable Jewish learning. In Gen 6:3 it is said that man's lifespan shall not exceed 120 years, but many persons after the flood lived more than 120 years. Africanus solves the problem by saying that these words in Gen 6:3 were said to that specific pre-flood generation 100 years before the flood, when they were already 20 years old. It was not meant as a general statement. The same way of solving the problem occurs in Targums *Onqelos* and *Yerushalmi ad loc.*, and in several *midrashim*.⁸⁴ Another chronological problem in the LXX text of Genesis is that Methusalah should have survived the flood by 14 years. The Jewish historian Demetrius solved this problem by adding 20 years to the LXX antediluvian period—Africanus does the same (as do later some LXX copies).⁸⁵ Africanus knows and quotes the book of *Jubilees* extensively (especially 8:1–4 and 11:14–12:31). But, interestingly, he "corrects" the material from this book so that it agrees with the Hebrew text of Genesis on points where *Jubilees* presupposes the deviant LXX text.⁸⁶ Finally, Africanus has a very learned exposition of Dan 9:24–27, at variance with Tertullian's, and more informed by the Jewish lunar calendar. The 70 weeks of Daniel equal 490 "Hebrew" lunar years, which equal 475 solar years.⁸⁷ These pieces of "Jewish" learning, and the whole attempt at writing a world chronicle arranged according to the Jewish six-plus-one-day scheme, was probably a pioneering effort in Africanus, soon to be followed by several successors.⁸⁸

⁸³ See extensive discussion of these dates in Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus*, 46–51, cf. also Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 171.

⁸⁴ See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (trans. H. Szold; 7 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–1938), 5:174, note 19.

⁸⁵ See on this Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 47.

⁸⁶ Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 196–203. The only Fathers to quote *Jubilees* after Africanus are Epiphanius in his *On Measures and Weights* (Epiphanius, like Africanus, came from the land of Israel), and later Greek chronographers—the latter probably taking their material directly or indirectly from Africanus and Epiphanius, cf. Adler, *Time Immemorial*, 193–230. This means that in his use of *Jubilees* Africanus displays Jewish learning unparalleled in any other Father except, perhaps, Epiphanius (and, in other respects, Eusebius).

⁸⁷ *Chronography*, 16 and 18, cf. trans. in ANF 6:134–38. Africanus refers here to another work of his in which these calculations are obviously treated in greater detail, *On the Weeks*. Cf. Reinhard Bodenmann, *Naisance d'une Exégèse: Daniel dans l'Eglise ancienne des trois premiers siècles* (BGBE 28; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986), 366–68.

⁸⁸ His most influential successor was Eusebius, who also expanded the literary format of the endeavor far beyond the mere tables of Africanus, and developed the genre into a world chronicle proper. See Brian Croke, "The Originality of Eusebius' Chronicle," *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982): 195–200; and the same author, "The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle," in *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (ed. B. Croke and A. M. Emmett; Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1983), 116–31; both articles reprinted in Croke, *Christian Chronicles and Byzantine History, 5th–6th Centuries* (Collected Studies Series 386; Aldershot: Variorum, 1992).

5.2. Africanus: the genealogy of Jesus and his relatives

It is in his letter to Aristides that Africanus writes the material which interests us most in the present context. The letter (which is not preserved *in extenso*) makes three points, which correspond to the three sections of which the letter is made up:⁸⁹

(A) The two genealogies in Luke and Matthew are not to be explained as some do, i.e., by saying that the two genealogies mean that Jesus was Priest as well as King. This is wrong, since both genealogies are royal (from David).⁹⁰

(B) The true explanation is to be found in the biblical phenomenon of second marriage and levirate marriage. This allows for one son to have two fathers: one “by nature” and one “by law.” These two fathers need not be full brothers, they can be half-brothers. Joseph, the father of Jesus, is a case in point. He was conceived by Jacob when Jacob married his half-brother Eli’s widow, to raise up seed to Eli, who had died childless (levirate marriage). Jacob and Eli were the result of a double marriage. Matthan had married Estha, from which union Jacob was conceived. Then Matthan died, and Estha married Melki, from which union Eli was conceived. Thus Jacob and Eli, being half-brothers, had different fathers. This allows Joseph to have two genealogies: one for his natural father Jacob, and one for his legal father Eli.

(C) All this is not Africanus’s own speculation, but based on tradition from Jesus’ own relatives, called δεσπότουνοι.⁹¹ They also handed down the following.⁹² King Herod, in order to conceal his own non-Jewish and non-royal origin, had all Jewish

⁸⁹ Passages B and C of the letter are preserved in Eusebius’s *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.2–16. The first passage, A, or parts of it, was quoted in Eusebius’s now lost *Quaestiones evangelicae* (= *Dem. ev.* 7.3.18), but since this work is quoted in later writers (an epitomator; a catena of Niketas), Africanus’s text may be recovered with some certainty. The ANF translation of the whole letter, ANF 6: 125–27, is based on Angelo Mai’s reconstruction of passage A (*Bibliotheca nova Patrum* 4, 231 and 273), and Eusebius’s text for passages B and C. The authoritative reconstruction and edition of the entire text of the letter is still Walther Reichardt, *Die Briefe des Sextus Julius Africanus an Aristides und Origenes* (TU 34.2b; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1909), 1–62; text at 53–62. Since Reichardt arrives at a text very close to that published by Mai (he mainly follows the epitomator upon whom Mai based his text), there are only insignificant differences between Reichardt’s Greek text and the ANF translation. In all quotations here, however, I have modernized and/or modified the ANF translation to agree more exactly with Reichardt’s text, or used other modern translations, as indicated in each case.

⁹⁰ The genealogies in Matthew and Luke are identical from Abraham to David, but in Matthew the genealogy continues through David’s son Solomon and the reigning Judean kings after him, and ends in Jacob, Joseph, Jesus. In Luke, the genealogy continues through David’s son Nathan and follows a completely different line of names down to Eli, Joseph, Jesus. (The only overlap is that Zerubabel occurs in both lists.) The problem is, accordingly, the identity of Joseph’s father: was he Jacob descending from Solomon, or Eli descending from Nathan?

⁹¹ “... [T]hose already mentioned, called *desposynoi* [“those close to the Master”] on account of their connection with the family of the savior,” *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.14; translation adapted from ANF 6:127.

⁹² Implying that also the argument presented in passage B was something Africanus had received from tradition (as he says explicitly concerning the name of Estha, and towards the end of his letter.)

genealogies burned. But some Jewish families managed to keep their genealogies intact, either by memory or from hidden copies, and among these families was that of Jesus. “From the Jewish villages of Nazareth and Kokhaba they traveled around the rest of the land and interpreted [ἔξηγησάμενοι] the genealogy they had [from the family tradition] and from the Book of the Days [i.e., Chronicles] as far as they could trace it [or: as far as they went on their travels].”⁹³

Africanus presents points B and C as containing material he had received from a tradition coming from the relatives of Jesus. Whether or not the latter claim is to be taken at face value, there can hardly be any doubt that Africanus here is transmitting traditions originating in circles of Jewish believers in the land of Israel. His background and provenance taken into consideration, this should come as no surprise. I will now analyze the three sections in more detail.

Concerning A. It is not easy to grasp exactly what the theory was which Africanus is attacking. He reports, e.g., the following: (1) His opponents claim that “this difference between the enumeration of the names [in Matthew and Luke?], and the mixture of what they hold to be priestly [names], and royal ones, is proper, in order to show that Christ justly became priest as well as king.” (2) They claim “a mixture of the registered generations.” (3) “[They] base Christ’s kingship and priesthood on the interchanges of names, since the priestly tribe of Levi was joined to the royal tribe of Judah when Aaron married Elisabeth the sister of Naasson [of the tribe of Judah; Exod 6:23], and again when Eleazar married the daughter of Phatiel [Exod 6:25] and begat children with her.”⁹⁴

It would seem that the main point of this theory was *not* to reconcile the two genealogies, but to provide a *genealogical basis* for the claim that Christ was priest *as well as* king. A genealogical basis for this double status evidently was supported by the marriage between Judeans and Levites early in the genealogies. Aaron, the first priest, married the Judean Naasson’s sister Elisabeth (Exod 6:23; this Naasson was mentioned in the Davidic pedigree in both evangelists). Such a mixed marriage occurred also in the next generation. Aaron’s son Eleazar married the daughter of [the Judean] Phatiel and begat children with her (Exod 6:25; among them the famous Phinehas). Thus the priestly line had a Judean-royal component as well. A “mixing”⁹⁵ had taken place.

This idea is very likely of pre-Christian origin. One notices that the ones to pass on the double seed of Judah and Levi are the (high) priests, not the Davidites. This lends support to Vigdor Aptowitzer’s ingenious suggestion⁹⁶ that this theory may originally have been devised to legitimize the royal reign of the

⁹³ Translation of quote according to Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 358–59.

⁹⁴ Translations from ANF 6.

⁹⁵ In the first section of the letter (Reichardt, *Die Briefe*, 53–54) Africanus uses the three Greek terms ἐπιμέξια, μῖξις, and ἐναλλαγή.

⁹⁶ Vigdor Aptowitzer, *Parteipolitik der Hasmonäerzeit im rabbinischen und pseudographischen Schrifttum* (Vienna: Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1927), 82–94. Cf. also William Adler, “Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah,” *JTS NS* 48 (1997): 24–47.

priestly Hasmoneans.⁹⁷ Indeed, one could suggest it was even older. In the entire post-exilic period one had to face the problem that Israel was not ruled by a king from Judah, as it should be according to Gen 49:10; but rather by a high priest from Levi. The idea of a Judean streak in the genealogy of the Aaronite priests would at least alleviate the problem.

More than one consideration could lead early believers in Jesus to adopt this model. (1) For them, too, it would be important that the ruler from Judah according to Gen 49:10 should not be missing long before the advent of Jesus. Traces of such concerns are to be found in Justin's *Dialogue*. Here we also find hints of a debate between Jews and Christians on this point. The Jews seem to have objected that Judean rule did not reach until Jesus in any case, because Herod intervened, and he was not a Judean (*Dial.* 52.3).⁹⁸ This clearly shows that it was important for the Christian argument based upon Gen 49:10 to recognize the reign of the high priests as a legitimate "Judean" rule (Justin makes much of this in *Dial.* 52.3). (2) The second concern would be the opportunity this model provided to see the priestly as well as the royal role of Jesus as genealogically based. In the Christian interpolations (or editing) of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the two Messiahs of Levi and Judah (probably belonging to the pre-Christian Jewish substratum [or source] of the text) have been merged into one person, a Messiah from Judah *as well as from Levi*. This could well reflect a Christian adaptation of the originally Hasmonean model of the anointed Priest-King of Levi and Judah.⁹⁹ The concept was not soon forgotten in the Christian Fathers. Hippolytus says that Christ was tribally mixed in order that "as a descendant of both tribes he might be shown to be both king and priest of God."¹⁰⁰ Origen,

⁹⁷ This would explain why Phinehas was singled out as having a mother from Judah: Phinehas, because of his zeal for the Law of God (Num 25:6–13), was the great ancestor hero of the Hasmoneans.

⁹⁸ Cf. *T. Jud.* 22.2–3: "My [Judah's] rule shall be terminated by men of alien race, until the salvation of Israel comes, until the coming of the God of righteousness, so that Jacob may enjoy tranquility and peace, as well as all the nations. He shall preserve the power of my kingdom forever. With an oath the Lord swore to me that the rule would not cease for my posterity" (translation according to *OTP* 1:801). This short passage illustrates well the great difficulty in deciding whether a particular text in the Testaments be considered "Jewish" or "Christian."

⁹⁹ It is possible, but by no means certain, that the earliest Christian attestation of this idea is *1 Clem.* 32:2, where it says that from Jacob came the priests and all the Levites, who serve the altar of God, from him comes the Lord Jesus according to the flesh, from him come the kings and rulers and governors [the two last words are taken from Gen 49:10 LXX] in the succession of Judah. Jesus being placed between Levi and Judah makes Annie Jaubert inclined to think we have here the concept of Jesus' double genealogy from the two tribes, "Thèmes Levitiques dans la Prima Clementis," *VC* 18 (1964): 200–201. The idea was first advocated by Adolf Hilgenfeld. For a critical discussion of it, see Walter Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909), 11–12.

¹⁰⁰ Greek text PO 27.1–2: 72. See Adler, "Exodus 6:23," 36; M. de Jonge, "Hippolytus' 'Benedictions of Isaac, Jacob and Moses' and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor philosophie en theologie* (Nijmegen) 46 (1985): 257–60.

commenting upon Num 36:6 [which forbids intermarriage between different tribes], says that God deliberately exempted the Levites and Judahites from this prohibition in order to ensure that Christ would be able to fulfill the terms of his dual office as “king and priest after the order of Melchizedek.”¹⁰¹

It would seem clear from the above analysis that the idea of Jesus’ double descent from Judah and Levi had nothing to do, from its beginning, with reconciling the two different Gospel genealogies. One can easily imagine, however, that this idea consequently was seen to provide a possible solution to this specifically Christian problem. If so, one would expect that the one genealogy was taken to be Davidic, and that this could be no other than Matthew’s. Then Luke’s, being less “royal,” had to be the priestly. This could at once solve a problem that greatly concerned early Christian commentators on the Gospel narratives. Luke 1:5 and 1:36 clearly imply that Mary was herself of priestly stock, since her relative Elizabeth was so. If Luke’s genealogy was taken to be priestly, it had to be Mary’s in order to solve this problem.¹⁰²

Concerning B. Africanus explicitly says that this solution to the problem of the two genealogies was transmitted to him from tradition originating with Jesus’ relatives. Concerning Estha, the woman married in turn to the two half-brothers Matthan and Melki, Africanus says that “tradition asserts that this was the woman’s name.” And at the beginning of section C he says that the Lord’s kinsmen *also* handed down the tradition contained in C, implying that they were responsible for the tradition recorded in B as well.

In Africanus’s elaborate theory of first a double marriage, and then a levirate marriage, to explain how Joseph could have two fathers of different genealogical lines, there is one puzzling point. It may be illustrated by the following table:

Luke:	Africanus:
Jannai	
Melki	Melki married Estha, widow of Matthan
Levi	
Matthan	
Eli	Eli (Joseph’s father by law) Jacob (Joseph’s father by nature)
Joseph	Joseph

¹⁰¹ *Selecta in Numeros*, PG 12.584C.

¹⁰² The earliest indubitable attestation of the view that Mary was of Levi’s tribe, based on Luke 1:36, comes in Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 1.5.4. He attributes it to some unnamed opponents (perhaps Ebionites). Origen responds by quoting the standard answer to this idea: Mary and Joseph obeyed Num 36:7–8, and therefore had to be of the same Davidic tribe. Elisabeth was called “relative” of Mary in the same sense of “compatriot” as in Rom 9:3. Origen himself remains uncommitted, and recommends an allegorical interpretation. (English translation of the passage in Thomas P. Scheck, trans., *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1–5* [FC 103; Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001], 71–72.)

As one can easily see, Africanus has left out Levi and Matthat in Luke's genealogy, and has made Melki (in Luke Eli's great grandfather) Eli's father. This is sometimes explained by the assumption that Africanus himself happened to have access to a defective copy of Luke.¹⁰³ But this seems to me very implausible. It presupposes that the name "Estha" was the only information that Africanus took from his source, and that he himself combined it with Melki rather than Matthat, because of his defective text of Luke at this point. It seems much more reasonable to suppose that Estha's double marriage to Matthan and Melki was part of the tradition about her, and thus was something Africanus found in his source. And for the theory of double marriage and levirate marriage to work, there cannot be any generations between Melki and Eli. Accordingly, the deviation from the canonical text of Luke at this point was very likely contained in Africanus's source.

It is now time to try to situate Africanus's tradition in his passage B within the work on the genealogy of Jesus, as evidenced in Luke and Matthew.¹⁰⁴ There can be no doubt that the *Lukan* genealogy was originally conceived as a *Davidic* genealogy of *Joseph* (not Mary).¹⁰⁵ In its oldest form (before it was edited into Luke's gospel) it seems to have expressed what may be called "branch" messianology. The Messiah spoken of in the prophets is *not* to be an offshoot of the official royal line of kings of Judah, because this line was cut off during the exile (Jer 22:24–30). The end-time Messiah is to come from a non-royal side-branch of the Davidic dynasty, branching off from the royal dynasty near its root (Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5–6; Jer 33:15–16). It seems this messianology was applied to Zerubabel ("The Offspring from Babel"). He was regarded as this "Branch" from the root of David (or Jesse) (Zech 3:8; 6:12).¹⁰⁶ It is hardly an accident that the Lukan genealogy traces the line leading to Joseph precisely through Zerubabel, who was the only name in the list's original shape to receive an epithet, Aramaic *resh-a*, corresponding to Hebrew *ha-rosh*.¹⁰⁷ Joseph is portrayed as descending from Zerubabel, who descended from David through Nathan, not Solomon, and therefore was a first model of the "branch" Messiah.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ See Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 372.

¹⁰⁴ In general on the Gospel genealogies, see Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 315–74, and also Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* (SNTSMS 8; 2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁰⁵ For this and the following, see especially the extensive, and to my mind convincing, analysis in Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 315–54.

¹⁰⁶ That Zerubabel came from a Davidic family descending from Nathan, not Solomon, is clearly implied in Zech 12:12–13 (see comments on this passage in Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 341–43).

¹⁰⁷ Being misunderstood, before the inclusion of the genealogy in Luke's Gospel, as the name of the next after him (his son): Rhesa (Luke 3:27). This presupposes that the genealogy was originally constructed the same way as Matthew's: in chronological order, and as a list of mere names. On this whole issue, see Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 328–34.

¹⁰⁸ In *Quæstiōnes evangeliacae ad Stephanum* 3.2 Eusebius reports that "differing opinions concerning the Messiah prevail among the Jews": some trace his genealogy from

In a second stage, also prior to its inclusion in Luke, this genealogy was expanded by some additional names, so as to contain 11 times 7 generations from Adam to Jesus, with key figures in the list placed at the beginning or end of the seven-name groups. This brings us back to Africanus's tradition in his section B. Here the father of Eli is Melki, while there is no trace of the Levi and the Matthat who intrude between them in Luke's list. Could it be that Africanus's source employed the Lukan genealogy in an early version existing independently of the Gospel, still not having the additional names that were included in the later version used in the Gospel? This fascinating possibility would be a strong indicator that Africanus's tradition is *very early*.¹⁰⁹

Another interesting feature of the Lukan genealogy is its disagreement with the genealogy of Zerubabel given in Chronicles. In 1 Chr 3:16–19 Zerubabel is said to be the son of Pedaiah who was son of Jehoiachin, the king of Judah taken captive by the Babylonians. Zerubabel is here grafted on to the official royal line—probably because the Chronicler understood the prophecy of Nathan about an everlasting Davidic dynasty to be valid for Solomon and his sons, not any side-line through other sons of David. From this three conclusions seem to follow. (1) The Lukan genealogy must rest on a strong tradition, since its creators dared to ignore the genealogy in Chronicles, and stick to the older “branch” model through Nathan. Of the two genealogies, the non-royal has every chance of being the older and more original. (2) The authority of Chronicles' genealogy would explain why Matthew was not satisfied with the non-Solomonic genealogy (used in Luke) for Zerubabel and Joseph, and that he followed Chronicles instead. Given the Lukan genealogy, Matthew's simply had to appear as its rival. (3) Since both genealogies could be said to have biblical authority, the attempts to

David through Solomon and the royal line, others prefer to trace it through David's son Nathan, because Jeremiah had said that no offspring of Jeconiah should sit on David's throne [Jer 22:24–30]. “They say that Nathan also prophesied, according to what is said in the books of Kings. They are certain that the Messiah would come forth from the successors of Nathan and trace the ancestry of Joseph from that point.” Luke followed this genealogy, not necessarily because he took it to be true; therefore he added the “as was thought” (ὡς ἐνομίζετο, 3:23). It is evident from this that Eusebius knew a Jewish Messianology that made Nathan, not Solomon, the ancestor of the truly Messianic line, and which identified David's son Nathan with the prophet Nathan. His saying that “the Jews” trace the ancestry of Joseph according to this line must either mean that Eusebius had this tradition from Jewish believers, or that he assumed Luke's “as was thought” referred to some official or well known genealogy for Joseph's family among the Jews. (His choice of words in the passage seems to indicate the latter alternative in my opinion.) On this passage in Eusebius, see Johnson, *Biblical Genealogies*, 243–45; Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 348–50. As Bauckham points out, this passage in Eusebius occurs immediately before the excerpt from Africanus's letter, passage A, in the same work. Eusebius's report here could therefore have some relationship to polemics against this view in Africanus.

¹⁰⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.22.3, says Luke has 72 generations from Adam to Christ. Theodor Zahn speculates that Irenaeus may know the same shorter version of the Lukan genealogy as Africanus, but this remains very hypothetical. See Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (3d ed.; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1910), 54, note 17.

reconcile them should also be early. Even more so, one could add, because the problem with one man having two fathers was present in the biblical genealogies also. Zerubabel was such a man. In 1 Chr 3:19 Jehoiachin's son Pedaiah is Zerubabel's father, but elsewhere Shealtiel is said to be the father of Zerubabel (Ezra 3:2, 8; 5:2; Neh 12:1; Hag 1:1, 12, 14; 2:2, 23).¹¹⁰ The simplest way to reconcile this would be to think Shealtiel died childless and Pedaiah raised up seed to him.¹¹¹ And if Shealtiel was held to be Pedaiah's half-brother (having the same mother), there was room for letting him belong to a line from Nathan. There would thus be "scriptural precedent" in Zerubabel's case for the explanation given for Joseph also having two fathers belonging to the same two genealogical lines.¹¹²

All taken together, passages A and B in Africanus's letter allow us a glimpse into a fascinating process of intense, learned, and theologically loaded work with the genealogical dimension of Paul's simple formula: "of David's seed according to the flesh" (Rom 1:3). Gentile Christian authors show, as a rule, little interest in this question beyond repeating the formula itself (as already seen in Ignatius). In Africanus, however, we see how early Jewish believers worked intensely with this issue, and debated among themselves over it. As I will show concerning the Ebionites, there were even some to whom the Davidic descent of Jesus was so important that they chose to eliminate one possibly complicating factor, the doctrine of the virginal conception.¹¹³ It also does not come as a surprise that these people preferred the official royal (and "canonical") genealogy in Matthew over against the Davidic but non-royal given in Luke.

Concerning C. Here also Africanus is using a source, probably a written one. But it may be slightly different in orientation than the one(s) used for passage B, although Africanus has smoothed over the differences.¹¹⁴ He says that the rela-

¹¹⁰ In 1 Chr 3:17 Shealtiel is also made a son of Jehoiachin, but this is probably at variance with the older tradition, which believed Shealtiel belonged to a non-royal line from Nathan, as in Luke.

¹¹¹ Matthew may attest to such a harmonization, making Shealtiel, not Pedaiah, Zerubabel's father in a genealogy otherwise following 1 Chr 3.

¹¹² The explanation given by Africanus makes Joseph a natural descendant of the royal line through Solomon (Matthew's genealogy), and a descendant by law of the non-royal "branch" line through Nathan (Luke's genealogy). In principle, the explanation could be constructed so that the opposite resulted, i.e., Joseph being a natural descendant of the Nathan line and an adopted descendant from the royal Solomonic line. It is difficult to say if there is any significant theological tendency in favor of Matthew's genealogy in the model chosen by Africanus's source. One could perhaps say that the royal lineage of Matthew is the most uncomplicated and direct substantiation of the claim that Jesus is such a son of David that the promise of Nathan in 2 Sam 7:11–16 applies to him. On the other hand, the chosen explanation could be seen simply to reflect the different language of the two evangelists: Matthew says Matthan *begot* Jacob (hence natural birth), while Luke only says Joseph was "Eli's" or "of Eli."

¹¹³ See chapter 14 of this book, section 4.4.1.

¹¹⁴ For details on this, see Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 348–50 and 355–63.

tives of Jesus (1) told a story about Herod's humble origins,¹¹⁵ and (2) "explained" the genealogy of Jesus (and of themselves) when traveling around preaching, out from Nazareth and Kokaba in Galilee. The bridge between B and C is the information that Jesus' relatives were among those who were able to reconstruct their genealogy in spite of Herod's attempt to destroy all genealogies by arson. The overarching theme binding all this together is the juxtaposition of Herod's non-royal, even non-Jewish, origin, set against Jesus' undeniable descent from David.

This is a point which Africanus makes nothing of, but which makes excellent sense in a pre-70 Galilean setting, and perhaps some years beyond 70 as well. Jesus and his "dynasty" represent the legitimate Davidic line, not Herod and his sons, who are entirely non-Davidic and were not even Jewish! The story of Herod's burning other, legitimate, genealogies, has a point very similar to Matthew's story of Herod killing the babies of Bethlehem—namely, the illegitimate king trying to eliminate his legitimate rival(s). The original setting of this polemic has every chance of being Galilee, ruled by the Herods pretending to be legitimate Kings of the Jews (Agrippa I ruling the whole territory in 41–44; Agrippa II in part 50–94). Africanus, who says they told the story of Herod's origin "to magnify their own origin or simply to state the fact," seems almost puzzled by this preoccupation with Herod's genealogy among Jesus' relatives. The only part of the Herod story that matters to him is the assurance that Herod did not succeed in destroying the genealogy of the relatives of Jesus. Hence the information he uses in his attempt to reconcile the two genealogies should be trustworthy.

¹¹⁵ Herod was the son of Antipater, who was the son of a Gentile temple-slave (male prostitute) in Ascalon, according to Africanus's source. In an interesting article, Abraham Schalit has argued that this (unhistorical) tradition originated in Jewish polemics surrounding the dynastic struggle between the declining Hasmonean and the rising Herodian dynasties. The crucial point here was legitimate descent; anti-Hasmonean propagandists made much of the "fact" that Hyrcanus's or Jannaeus's mother had been a prisoner of war (insinuating she might have been violated by a Gentile, and hence the two Hasmonean priest-kings really not being Jews at all, *b. Qidd.* 66a; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.13.5). As counter-invective, the Hasmonean propagandists spread the story of Herod's Gentile background from Ascalon. He was not even of Idumean descent, but of Gentile! (First literarily attested in Justin, *Dial.* 52.3: "You [Jews] say Herod was from Ascalon" (and accordingly do not recognize him as legitimate king).) Once this tradition of Herod as "the man from Ascalon" was established, one could make a midrashic play on the name Ascalon. It could be read *ish qelon*, "man of shame," hence the story about his father's origin from a temple prostitute. The latter is only attested for the Christian version of the tradition, in Africanus, but could well have been invented in the Jewish stage of the developing tradition. When Jewish believers took an interest in the story, it was not in favor of the long extinct Hasmoneans, but in favor of the legitimacy of Jesus' and his relatives' royal descent. See Abraham Schalit, "Die frühchristliche Überlieferung über die Herkunft der Familie des Herodes. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Invektive in Judäa," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 1 (1962): 109–60.

There are minor linguistic points in Africanus's report (unit C) that also betray a Jewish-Hebrew origin. The book of Chronicles is named, in Greek, ἡ βίβλος τῶν ἡμερῶν, which corresponds to its Hebrew name: "the Book of Days" (*sefer [dibre] jamim*).¹¹⁶ Africanus may have misunderstood this as referring to the written genealogies saved through Herod's extermination campaign.¹¹⁷ Proselytes are called, in his source, γειώραι, echoing Hebrew *gerim*. And the Greek term δεσπόσυνοι ("those close to the Master") seems not to belong to his own vocabulary, nor to that of his readers (nor, as far as we know, to that of any other ecclesiastical author), since he has to explain it: it means "those who belong to the Savior's family." In fact, using δεσπότης as referring to Jesus seems to have been a peculiarity of early Jewish believers of the land of Israel.¹¹⁸

Taken together, there are good reasons to regard passage C in Africanus's letter as embodying old Jewish Christian, perhaps even Galilean, traditions about a preaching activity of Jesus' close relatives (cf. 1 Cor 9:5) in which they proclaimed Jesus the legitimate Davidic Messiah and therefore opposed the legitimacy of the Herodian dynasty. We may here be in touch with a tradition of Jesus-the-Messiah-son-of-David not very different from the one encountered in Hegesippus. But whereas his material is clearly Jerusalem-centered, Africanus's may be more Galilee-oriented (thus echoing the perspective of Matthew rather than the Lukan perspective of Hegesippus's traditions).

The material here surveyed gives us glimpses of a process of theological and genealogical work carried out among Jewish believers of the very first generations, some of them probably belonging to the family of Jesus. This work began prior to the writing of Luke and Matthew, was integrated in two different forms in these two gospels, and continued afterwards. Much theology and messianology was involved in this process, but on Gentile Christians it made little impact, and the two most well known literary vestiges of this work, the genealogies of Luke and Matthew, were to later generations more of an embarrassment than a theologically significant resource.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.14.

¹¹⁷ The meaning of the source would rather be that the relatives of Jesus completed their remembered genealogy backwards by connecting it with the Davidic descendants according to Chronicles. They are probably envisaged as proclaiming the Messianic significance of the *one* genealogy they made known, and this could well be of a Matthean type (this would be implied by the reference to Chronicles). (On this point I have some difficulty with Bauckham's theory that the genealogy envisaged by this passage in Africanus's source was of the Lukan type.)

¹¹⁸ See the only occurrence in the New Testament, Jude 4, and the comments on this term in Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 302–7.

¹¹⁹ Typically expressed by Eusebius: "Since Matthew and Luke in writing their Gospels have presented to us the genealogy of Christ in different forms, and most people imagine that they are discordant; and since every believer through ignorance of the truth has been eager to multiply words on these passages, we must quote the account of them that has come down to us . . ." (*Hist. eccl.* 1.7.1).

6. Jewish Christian Traditions in Origen

Origen's evidence on Ebionites, a Hebrew Gospel, and Elxai is treated elsewhere in this volume (chs. 9, 14, and 16). Here I shall focus on fragments of exegesis of Scripture which he received through personal contact with Jewish informants. Some of these were Jewish believers in Jesus, some were not. I shall analyze in some detail some of the teachings Origen learned from them.¹²⁰

6.1. *Origen's encounters with Jews*

Origen, who may have been born around 185 C.E., spent most of his life in his native Alexandria.¹²¹ During his Alexandrian period, he made visits to Rome (before 217 C.E.), Arabia (ca. 228 C.E.), Caesarea (fall 230 C.E.), Antioch (231–32 C.E.), and Greece (probably Athens) via Caesarea (232–33 C.E.) He then settled in Caesarea (234 C.E.) He lived there until his imprisonment and torture under Decius (250–51 C.E.). He survived, but died a short while later, possibly in Tyre (ca. 253 C.E.) During his Caesarean period he made visits to Athens (245 C.E.?) and Nicomedia (248 C.E.).

In Alexandria, Origen befriended and availed himself of the expertise of one or more “Hebrews.” In Caesarea, he had every opportunity of doing the same. Some leading rabbis lived there,¹²² and there was also a local Christian community in the city, a community that very likely was mixed, comprising Gentile as well as Jewish believers. Origen, in some of his homilies, clearly presupposes that some in the community that he addresses on Sunday had visited

¹²⁰ Bibliography (selective): Gustave Bardy, “Les traditions juives dans l’oeuvre d’Origen,” *RB* 34 (1925): 217–52; Ephraim E. Urbach, “The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Expositions of Origen on Canticles, and the Jewish-Christian Disputation,” *Scripta hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 247–75; Hans Bietenhard, *Caesarea, Origenes und die Juden* (Franz Delitzsch Vorlesungen 1972; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1974); Nicholas Robert Michael de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 25; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Günter Stemberger, “Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire,” *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation, I: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300), Part 1: Antiquity* (ed. Magne Sæbø; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 569–86; esp. 577–83.

¹²¹ For the outline and dates of this biographical sketch, I follow Pierre Nautin, *Origène: Sa vie et son oeuvre* (CAnt 1; Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 363–441.

¹²² De Lange, *Origen*, 27, enumerates the following rabbis who are known to have stayed in or visited Caesarea during the period when Origen lived there: Resh Lakish; Rabbi Johanan (his brother-in-law); Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman; and Rabbi Abbahu of Caesarea. “We have several accounts of . . . [Rabbi Abbahu’s] discussions with non-Jews, including Christians, and he echoes several of Origen’s pet themes” (p. 27); cf. one interesting example on p. 54. See further Samuel Tobias Lachs, “Rabbi Abbahu and the Minim,” *JQR* 60 (1969/70), 197–212. In this article Lachs discusses ten cases of discussion between Abbahu and (presumably Christian) *minim*, but on the Christian side, Lachs only refers to the early Fathers in general, not to Origen specifically.

the local synagogue on the day before—something Origen is not at all happy about, and which was probably symptomatic of this community.¹²³ Whether these people were Judaizing Gentiles or Jewish believers is not clear. They could well comprise both categories. It shows that in third-century Caesarea there was no watertight boundary between the Jewish and Christian communities in the city (much the same situation is mirrored in Chrysostom's sermons in Antioch some 150 years later).

It is in these settings that we should place the passages in which Origen refers to interpretations and arguments he received from “a certain Hebrew” or “Hebrews.” While Origen refers to Jews by the name Ἰουδαῖοι when he voices traditional Christian anti-Jewish polemic, he calls them “Hebrews” when he avails himself of their linguistic and interpretative expertise. In these cases, the usual anti-Jewish rhetoric is mostly absent, and de Lange draws the likely conclusion that as far as contemporary, learned Jews were concerned, Origen was on quite friendly terms with them.¹²⁴

6.2. Jewish and Jewish Christian traditions in Origen

There are two cases in which it seems certain that Origen’s “Hebrew” was a Jewish believer. The first case is perhaps also the most interesting. It occurs in a catena commentary on Ezekiel, in which the following is attributed to Origen concerning Ezek 9:4 (“Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark [*taw*]¹²⁵ on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan. . . .” [NRSV]).

We have inquired among the Hebrews to find out if they could report any teaching of their Fathers concerning the subject of the *taw*, and we have learned the following: (1) One said that the *taw*, being the last one among the 22 letters used among the Hebrews, according to their traditional order, was chosen to express the perfection of those who, because of their virtue, grieve and suffer because of the sins committed in the people’s midst, and who suffer with the transgressors of the Law. (2) Another said that the *taw* symbolized those who observed the Law, since the Law is called Torah among the Hebrews, and *taw* is the first letter in the word Torah; and also of those who lived according to the Torah. (3) A third, *one of those [Hebrews] who have believed in Christ*, said when talking about the ancient letters, that the *taw* was in the

¹²³ *Hom. Lev.* 5.8; *Sel. Exod.* 12:46; cf. de Lange, *Origen*, 36; 86 with notes. Both of these works belong to his Caesarean period, see Nautin, *Origène*, 410–11.

¹²⁴ *Origen*, 30–31. “It was Origen’s dilemma that as a theologian he must condemn the Jews while as a scholar and exegete he depended on them. The dilemma is not resolved, but concealed, by using a different word in each case for the same people,” *Origen*, 31.

¹²⁵ The Hebrew text reads *taw*, the name of the last letter [t] of the Hebrew alphabet. Aquila and Theodotion translate this by “the sign of the *taw*,” while the LXX renders it by “sign” alone. The Hebrew word *taw* means sign, so the LXX translation is not incorrect; but the translation of Aquila and Theodotion renders the meaning of the Hebrew text more precisely: it no doubt meant that in some fashion the letter *taw* was to be marked on the foreheads of the righteous in Jerusalem.

form of the cross.¹²⁶ It thus prophesied what was later to be used as a sign on the forehead among Christians. Believers now sign themselves whenever they begin a work, and especially before prayers and the holy readings.¹²⁷

This text was written during Origen's residence in Caesarea, and vividly reflects his opportunities to gain Jewish information there. He could inquire of Jews of different persuasions, among whom were some Jewish believers in Jesus. The two first interpretations obviously come from non-Christian Jews, and are plain and straightforward. Either the last letter of the alphabet should be taken as a symbol of completeness or perfection in virtue, or it should be taken to indicate the Torah and faithfulness towards it. It is relevant to notice that among the rabbis Ezek 9:4 was interpreted in a way which can be said to combine the two interpretations reported to Origen. "What is the meaning of the *taw*? R. Samuel ben Nachman [ca. 260 C.E.] has said: 'Those are the men who have observed the whole Torah from *aleph* to *taw*'"¹²⁸

The third interpretation is interesting in our context, as coming from a Jewish believer in Caesarea. At first one could object that there is nothing very Jewish about it, since its main elements are on record in Gentile Christian authors prior to Origen. Tertullian says against Marcion that the persecution of the followers of Christ, like that of Christ himself, was foretold in Scripture. Ezek 9:4 speaks of a *taw*¹²⁹ being placed on the foreheads of the righteous. "Now the Greek letter *tau* and our own letter T is the very form of the cross, which he predicted would be the sign on our foreheads in the true catholic Jerusalem."¹³⁰ The latter part of this quote probably refers to Rev 7:2–3; 14:1 and 22:4. The "sign" of Ezek 9:4 is the *name* of God or his Messiah, with which the righteous in New Jerusalem are sealed. Jean Daniélou is probably right in taking this as indicating that in Jewish tradition in the first century C.E., the meaning of the *taw* sign in Ezek 9:4 was taken to be *the name of God*,¹³¹ not, we may add, because the letter *taw* in itself was an abbreviation of God's name, but because of its *function*. When an owner marked someone or something with his protective seal or mark, the mark stood for the owner and his name.¹³² In Christian interpretation the cross-shape of the

¹²⁶ In the ancient Hebrew alphabet the *taw* was either written + or X. See Ada Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script: History, Palaeography, Script Styles, Calligraphy & Design* (London: The British Library, 2002), fig. 1, page 2.

¹²⁷ *Sel. Ezech.* 9.4; PG 13:800–801; my translation.

¹²⁸ b. *Šabb.* 55a; cf. parallels in *Str-B* 1:51; 814–15.

¹²⁹ Tertullian presupposes a Latin translation based upon Aquila or Theodotion, rather than the standard LXX. This may indicate the employment of a source here.

¹³⁰ *Marc.* 3.22.5–6; CCSL 1.1:539; translation according to ANF 3:340–41. Basically the same interpretation of Ezek 9:4 is contained in *Against the Jews* 11.

¹³¹ Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 154. This may indeed be the original meaning of Ezek 9:4. For pre-Christian Jewish interpretations of Ezek 9:4, see, e.g., *Pss. Sol.* 15:6–9; *CD* 19.10–12, and Erich Dinkler, *Signum Crucis: Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament und zur Christlichen Archäologie* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), 19–20.

¹³² Cf. the rich patristic material on this topic collected in Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Liturgical Studies; Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1966), 54–63.

God-mark in Ezek 9:4 could easily be given a christological reference, and the *name* implied in the mark is taken to be God's or Christ's without any clear distinction. The very shape of the sign could either be taken to refer to the cross upon which Christ died, or be taken to represent the first letter in his Greek title of Messiah: Χριστός. It is evident that Tertullian based himself on the Greek and Latin shape of the *tau*, not the ancient shape of the Hebrew *taw*. This may be accommodation to his readers who knew no Hebrew, but may also betray his own ignorance concerning the ancient Hebrew *taw*.

In Tertullian there is another reference to signing oneself with the cross-mark, apparently quite unrelated to Ezek 9:4, but otherwise clearly in contact with the tradition reported to Origen. "At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign."¹³³ Tertullian presents this as common Christian practice for which there is no scriptural authority. This is rather curious, because the scriptural warrant for this practice is not difficult to find. In the three scriptural passages of the *Shema Israel* (Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Num 15:37–41), recited twice daily by all observant Jews, the following commandment occurs twice: "Talk about them [God's words] when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols [*leoth*; εἰς σημεῖον] on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deut 6:7–9, par. 11:18–20). Tertullian's enumeration of those occasions at which one marks one's forehead with the cross-sign, reads very much like a somewhat free midrashic expansion of the corresponding passage of the *Shema*:

<i>Shema</i>	Tertullian
at your sitting in your house	ad mensas, ad lumina, ad cubilia, ad sedilia
at your walking along the road	ad omnem progressum atque promotum
at your lying down	
at your getting up;	ad uestitum, ad calciatum
bind them on your foreheads;	frontem signaculo terimus
write them on your doorframes	ad omnem aditum et exitum

¹³³ *De corona*, 3.4; CCSL 2:1043, translation according to ANF 3: 94–95.

In the English rendering of the Shema here, I have indicated one peculiarity of the Hebrew text that recurs in Tertullian: actions are referred to not by using the verb but by using the preposition *be* and the verbal noun: “at your sitting . . .” etc. The same recurs in Tertullian: *ad progressum*, etc. There is one passage in Clement of Alexandria that supports the conclusion that this is not accidental. The true gnostic, says Clement, “all day and night, speaking the Lord’s commands, rejoices exceedingly, not only on rising in the morning and at noon, but also when walking about, when asleep, when dressing and undressing, and he teaches his son. . . .”¹³⁴ Here the allusion to Deut 6:7/11:19 is beyond reasonable doubt, but it is also evident that Clement’s paraphrase is “midway” between the Shema version and Tertullian, and that Tertullian’s version as well as Clement’s are based on an understanding of Deut 6:7–9 as not being a complete enumeration of all the cases at which God’s commands are to be rehearsed, but rather as meaning “at all relevant moments of everyday life.”¹³⁵ This interpretation of Deut 6:7 is clearly stated in Justin, who also otherwise demonstrates a good knowledge of the Jewish practice of Shema recital:

... God imposed all such commandments upon you [Jews] through Moses, in order that, by observing these many precepts, you might *always*, and *in every action*, have God before your eyes . . . [Deut 6:6–7]. Thus, he commanded you to wear a red ribbon [Num 15:38] . . . and he ordered you to wear the phylactery [Deut 6:8], made up of very thin pieces of parchment upon which were inscribed what we consider truly sacred letters. By these very ordinances he urges you to have God always in mind. . . . (*Dial.* 46.5, italics mine)¹³⁶

After this detour, we are back with Origen’s Jewish Christian informant. He says Christians sign their foreheads with the cross-wise *taw* “whenever they begin a work, and especially before prayers and the holy readings.” In the light of what

¹³⁴ *Strom.* 7.80.3–4; GCS 17:57; translation according to ANF 2:546. It should be noted that while the Shema and Tertullian use the construction with preposition plus verbal noun, Clement follows the LXX in using a series of participles: “sitting, walking, rising . . .”

¹³⁵ The tendency in rabbinic interpretation is rather the opposite. Because the action envisaged in Deut 6:7 is taken to be the recital of the *Shema* itself, “at your lying down and at your rising up” are taken to be the exact points in time for the recital, and “at your sitting in your house” or “at your walking on the road” are taken to be possible circumstances under which the recital should take place anyway. See the material gathered in Str-B 4,1:196–203. The following *Mishnah* passage gives the gist of the rabbinic interpretation: “The School of Shammai say: In the evening all should recline when they recite [the Shema], but in the morning they should stand up, for it is written, ‘And when you lie down and when you rise up’ [Deut 6:7]. But the School of Hillel say: They may recite it every one in his own way, for it is written, ‘And when you walk by the way’ [Deut 6:7]. Why then is it written, ‘And when you lie down and when you rise up?’ It means the time when men usually lie down and the time when men usually rise up [whether you sit or walk at that time],” *m. Ber.* 1:3; translation adapted from Danby, *Mishnah*, 2.

¹³⁶ Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 70.

we have seen above, it seems most natural to interpret this as based on Deut 6:7. Believers sign themselves at every (significant) action in everyday life, and especially before reciting the Shema (the holy reading¹³⁷) and its accompanying prayers¹³⁸ (according to the rabbinic interpretation of Deut 6:7 to be said every morning and evening). This practice was probably common among the Jewish believers to whom Origen's informant belonged, and it had by his time partly been adopted by some Gentile believers like Tertullian and the community to which he belonged.

What is strikingly new about this Jewish Christian practice, compared with the Jewish precedent, is the combination of the “sign” (cross) motif of Ezek 9:4 with the “sign” motif contained in the *Shema* (Deut 6:8/11:18). In both cases a sign is to be put on the forehead (the cross and the forehead phylactery respectively); in both cases the sign represents the protective “seal” of God (and therefore protects against demons); in both cases the sign functionally represents the name of God (/his Messiah). Justin obviously takes Deut 6:8/11:18 to imply a concrete injunction to all Jews to wear phylacteries, and says Christians regard them (or the letters contained in them) as holy. This positive remark on the phylacteries could be due to Justin's acquaintance with Jewish believers in Jesus who still used them. The evidence in Origen would suggest that the Jewish believers known to him either accompanied the putting on of the forehead phylactery with the sign of the cross, or had substituted the forehead phylactery with this sign.¹³⁹

Whether this combination of Ezek 9:4 with the *Shema*'s words about a forehead sign had ever been made in Judaism prior to the combination evidenced by Origen's Jewish believers is unknown,¹⁴⁰ as there is no positive evidence to that effect. It should be noted that Ezek 9:4 is a strongly eschatological passage, and is clearly taken to be so by Tertullian. In order to combine the Ezekiel passage with the *Shema*'s commandment of a *daily* signing, one had to believe one was now living in eschatological times. This, and the very strong christological identification of the *taw*-sign, could explain why Jewish believers in Jesus, rather than other Jews, made this combination.

¹³⁷ On the constant use of “reading” [*qeriat shema*], not “saying” or “praying” for the recital of the *Shema*, see Str-B 4.1:189.

¹³⁸ Two benedictions preceded the *Shema*; one followed in the morning and two in the evening. See for details Str-B 4.1:192–195.

¹³⁹ In *t. Sabbath* 13.5 R. Tarfon is credited with a saying that it is better to enter the house of a pagan than the house of a *min*, because pagans deny God honestly, the *minim* have a mezuzah on their doorposts; but when you come inside, you see their “symbol” or “sign.” Could this be a reference to Jewish believers using the sign of the cross? See section 5 of chapter 21 of this book.

¹⁴⁰ There are vague indications in Philo that some Jews known to him may have had the *taw* tattooed on their foreheads. See references and discussion in Erich Dinkler, “Kreuzzeichen und Kreuz-Tav, Chi und Stauros,” in *Signum Crucis: Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament und zur Christlichen Archäologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), 26–54, esp. 32–34.

Origen's first report of a tradition reported to him from a Jewish believer thus provides us with a case-study of the way in which early Christian practices originated among Jewish believers. These believers enriched common Jewish practice with christological additions based upon typically Jewish midrashic exegesis of biblical texts. Gentile Christians took over such practices, forgetting the biblical foundation for them and accordingly seeing them as based on tradition alone (as Tertullian did, see above).

In all the remaining cases of reports on Jewish Christian interpretation of Scripture in Origen, it is very likely his situation *in Alexandria* that is mirrored. Common to these cases is that Origen calls his informant a “Hebrew” or a “Hebrew master.” I will review them in supposed chronological order.

(1) The first case is contained in *First Principles* 1.3.4:

My Hebrew master also used to say that those two seraphim in Isaiah, which are described as having each six wings, and calling to one another, and saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Sabaoth” [Isa 6:3], were to be understood of the only-begotten Son of God and of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴¹

While this passage has often been studied in great detail,¹⁴² here a few representative comments must suffice. In Philo (*On God*, 4–9), the Seraphim of Isa 6 are said to be *two* in number (the number is not specified in the biblical text), and are identified with the two highest powers of God.¹⁴³ There is thus precedent in pre-Christian Alexandrian Jewish tradition for the same general idea of the exegesis of Origen’s “Hebrew master.” There is a much closer parallel, however, in Irenaeus:

This God, then, is glorified by his Word, who is his Son for ever, and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father of all. And their Power (that¹⁴⁴ of the Word

¹⁴¹ Latin text in Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp, *Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien* (Texte zur Forschung; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 164–66; translation according to ANF 4:253. Origen seems to elaborate this tradition with the addition of a commented quote of Hab 3:2 LXX. He then repeats it in *Princ.* 4.3.14 (again attributing it to his *Hebraeus doctor*). This time he adds that the Hebrew doctor told him the meaning of the two seraphs covering the Lord’s face and feet with their wings. It means, he said, that they hid the knowledge of everything’s beginning and end from all the other heavenly beings. Only the Son and the Spirit have perfect, divine, knowledge of the beginning and the end. Only they share in God’s own knowledge.

¹⁴² The most extensive discussion to date is probably Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 21; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1956), 62–94. See further Joseph Barbel, *Christos Angelos* (Theophaneia 3; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1941; repr., 1964), 269–78; Emmanouel Lanne, “Cherubim et Seraphim. Essai d’interprétation du chapitre X de la Demonstration de Saint Irénée,” *RSR* 43 (1955): 524–35; Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 134–40; Gedaliahu Guy Stroumsa, “Le couple de l’ange et de l’esprit. Traditions juives et chrétiennes,” in *Savoir et salut* (Patrimoines; Paris: Cerf, 1992), 23–41.

¹⁴³ More often, Philo identifies these with the two cherubim, *On the Cherubim* 17–18; *QE* 2, 68; *On the Life of Abraham* 24.

¹⁴⁴ The Armenian on this point reads “power” in the singular, but most translators emend to plural “powers,” because the verbs are in plural.

and of Wisdom), which are called *Cherubim* and *Seraphim*, with unfailing voice glorify God, the Father of all.¹⁴⁵

Some interpreters take this to mean that the Seraphim and Cherubim are the heavenly hosts of angels ruled by the Word = the Son, and the Wisdom = the Spirit. But it seems closer to hand to assume that in this text the two *cherubim* of the Holy of Holies (Exod 25:17–22) are identified with the (two) *seraphim* seen by Isaiah (in itself a very plausible identification), and that Irenaeus used “the δύναμις of the Word” and “the δύναμις of Wisdom” in the Philonian sense¹⁴⁶ of “the divine δύναμις that is the Word” and similarly with Wisdom. In this case the Word and Wisdom are said to be the two δυνάμεις of God, and are identified with the two Seraphs/Cherubs of Isa 6:3 and Exod 25. This brings Irenaeus’s interpretation in line with the one reported by Origen and taken over by him. Does this mean Irenaeus should be identified with Origen’s “Hebrew master”? Hardly. It is much more plausible to assume that Irenaeus and Origen, independently of each other, both had access to the same Jewish Christian tradition. And in Origen’s case his choice of words strongly suggests that this source was indeed a Jewish believer in Alexandria with whom Origen had direct contact.¹⁴⁷

A third testimony to this piece of Jewish Christian interpretation of Isa 6:3 may be contained in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, especially in 9:27–10:6. Here Isaiah is allowed to see God the Father in his glory, enthroned with the Son on his right side and the Spirit on his left, and all three are worshipped by the heavenly hosts (which include angels and righteous people). At the same time the Son and the Spirit worship God the Father and his glory. This latter feature can be taken as an implicit identification of the Son and the Spirit with Isaiah’s seraphs. The same implicit identification may be indicated by this writing calling the Son as well as the Spirit *angels*.¹⁴⁸

The midrashic reasoning behind this tradition may be that, since nothing in Scripture is superfluous or redundant, the three-fold repetition of “holy” must mean that God is three-fold, and the only trinity found in Isa 6:3 is God and the two seraphs. These must therefore be powers (or, in Christian theological language, hypostases) of God himself. This makes the two seraphs the subjects as well as also the objects (together with God the Father) of the doxology of Isa 6:3. This double role is most explicitly expressed in the *Ascension of Isaiah*.

One should also notice the cultic framework of this piece of early Jewish Christian Trinitarian theology. Isaiah saw God in a vision *in the temple*, or more

¹⁴⁵ Epid. 10; translation according to Joseph P. Smith, *St. Irenaeus’ Proof of The Apostolic Preaching* (ACW 16; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1952), 54.

¹⁴⁶ As the Philonian passages (note 143) show, Philo identified the Seraphim and Cherubim with the two highest powers of God.

¹⁴⁷ Origen’s “Hebrew” was hardly Philo, as Lanne assumes, “Cherubim et Seraphim,” 527. Against this identification, see Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 135–36; followed by Stroumsa, “Le couple de l’ange et de l’esprit,” 27.

¹⁴⁸ See Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 139–40.

precisely, in the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies he saw a trinity, the invisible God enthroned on an invisible throne, flanked by the two cherubim of Exod 25. But Isaiah's vision was not limited to the earthly sanctuary. The Solomonic sanctuary was an earthly representation of the heavenly sanctuary, on the principle of Exod 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8. Moses was to construct the earthly sanctuary as a replica of the heavenly sanctuary shown to him. In the *Ascension of Isaiah* there can be no doubt that the vision of Isaiah in Isa 6 is taken to be a vision of the *heavenly sanctuary* in which God dwells. The Trinity of God and his two cherubs in the Solomonic Holy of Holies is here taken to depict the true Trinity in the heavenly sanctuary: God the Father and his Son and his Spirit.¹⁴⁹ Even the concept of heaven being sevenfold may have concrete basis in the symbolism of the Solomonic temple. According to Philo, who is probably dependent on older tradition,¹⁵⁰ the seven lamps of the *menorah* are said to symbolize the seven planets and the seven heavens. This idea recurs in Irenaeus, who in *Epid.* 9, before presenting his interpretation of the two Seraphim (or Cherubim) in *Epid.* 10, has a small tract on the seven heavens. According to him, the seven heavens correspond to the seven charismata of the Spirit that were to rest on the Messiah (Isa 11:2):

For after this pattern Moses received the seven-branched candlestick always burning in the sanctuary; since it was on the pattern of the heavens that he received the liturgy, as the Word says to him: "You shall do according to all the pattern of what you have seen on the mountain."¹⁵¹

Chapters 9 and 10 in the *Epideixis* ('Επίδειξις) of Irenaeus are singular, they have no parallel in *Adversus haereses* or in preserved fragments of his lost works. Irenaeus is probably following a source here that is very close to the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and also to the tradition transmitted to Origen by "the Hebrew."

It is evident that Irenaeus as well as Origen found this exegesis of Isaiah's Trinitarian vision helpful and theologically quite unobjectionable.¹⁵² When Origen used information from Jewish Christian sources he deemed theologically suspect, he was wont to insert a small apology for his procedure. In the case examined here, there is not the slightest indication that Origen has any qualms about the orthodoxy of his informant, nor that he expects his readers to have any misgivings about him. This would indicate that he did not belong to any brand of Christianity deemed sectarian or unorthodox by Origen.

(2) In his commentary on Psalm 1, Origen refers to "a very charming tradition transmitted to us by the Hebrew."

¹⁴⁹ An indication of Isaiah seeing the heavenly rather than the earthly sanctuary may have been found in the very fact that the two beings flanking God were called Seraphim in Isaiah, rather than the Solomonic Cherubim.

¹⁵⁰ Philo, *On the Life of Moses* 3.8; Philo presents this exegesis immediately after he has presented his exegesis of the two cherubim representing God's two highest powers. Cf. Lanne, "Cherubim et Seraphim," 531.

¹⁵¹ Translation according to Smith, *Proof*, 53, slightly modernized.

¹⁵² Origen repeats it and elaborates it as his own in *Comm. Rom.* 3.8.

[He said that] the whole of inspired Scripture resembles, because of its obscurity, a number of locked rooms in a single house. By each room is a key, but not the right one. The keys are distributed among the rooms, no key fitting the room by which it is placed, and it is a very difficult task to find the keys and fit them to the rooms which they can unlock. . . . [Likewise with the Scriptures:] the only way to begin to understand them is by means of the explanation dispersed throughout them.¹⁵³

What is striking about this tradition is that it does not correspond at all to Origen's stereotyped description of the Jewish understanding of Scripture, namely that it is over-literal and carnal, without any sense of the hidden senses in Scripture.¹⁵⁴ In this case a Jewish interpreter is lauded for his beautiful simile of the need to unlock the hidden senses of Scripture. This apparent contradiction is most easily understood if the "Hebrew" was a believer in Jesus, and the apparently self-explanatory way in which Origen refers to him—"the Hebrew"—can be taken to imply that he was supposed by Origen to be known to his readers.

(3) In a commentary on Exod 10:27 Origen reports an interpretation of the fate of Joab in 1 Kgs 2:6, where David orders Solomon that "you let his gray head go down to the grave in peace." How could Joab, sinner as he was, go down to the grave in peace? "The Hebrew" said, since he atoned for his sin by his death, and thus was sufficiently punished.¹⁵⁵ It should be noted that Origen's Alexandrian "Hebrew" is made to solve a problem that only exists in a deviant Greek text, not in the standard Septuagint nor in the Hebrew text. The Septuagint of 1 Kgs 2:6 reads οὐ κατάξεις, "you should *not* let . . . go down." Origen, however, knew a form of the text which read σὺ κατάξεις, "you should let . . . go down." This deviant reading could only arise by a misreading of the Greek text, not the Hebrew. Again, there is nothing specifically Christian about this interpretation, and one cannot have final certainty that we have to do with the same Jewish believer here as in the preceding cases. But there is nothing to exclude it.

(4) The last two cases come from Origen's Caesarean period, but seem to refer back to his experiences in Alexandria. In both cases, Origen clearly refers to a "Hebrew" who was a Jewish believer. His way of describing him is so similar in these two cases that there is great probability he is referring to the same person. Concerning Num 22:4 ("This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as a calf licks up the grass of the field") Origen quotes "a certain master who, from among the Hebrews, had come to believe." This master said, "Just as the calf [LXX

¹⁵³ *Philoc.* 2.3; translation according to Nicholas Robert Michael de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 25; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 111. As de Lange remarks (*ibid.*, and in note 48), this simile clearly makes the general point that the key to any specific passage in the Bible should be sought in other passages. If one Jewish rule of interpretation were to be named as the clearest example of this rule, it would be the *gezerah shawah* principle; indeed one could say that the Hebrew's simile was a "charming" way of stating it.

¹⁵⁴ For this, see, e.g., de Lange, *Origen*, 82–84.

¹⁵⁵ Commentary on Exodus according to *Philoc.* 27.7.

text] tears up the greenery with its mouth, so too the holy people, making war with its lips, have its weapon in its mouth, because of its prayers.”¹⁵⁶

(5) On Jer 20:7 (“You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived”) Origen reports “a Hebrew tradition which has come to us from a man who had fled because of his faith in Christ, [. . .] far away from the law and to where we resided.”¹⁵⁷ The meaning is probably that the man had fled from the land of Israel to Alexandria because of some problems due to his being a Jewish believer in Jesus. His comments on Jer 20:7 seem to apply a Pauline text in order to substantiate the right interpretation of Jer 20:7. God is not a tyrant, he is rather a good king who prefers persuasion to force, and does like his subjects to act “spontaneously” [*κατὰ ἐκούσιον*] (Phlm 14).

As I have said, there is no way to reach absolute certainty about the number of individuals to which Origen referred in these five cases. In principle any number from one to five is possible. On the whole, I am more inclined to think of one or two rather than a larger number. In favor of one and the same person being referred to in all the cases I will point to the fact that in cases 1–3, writing in Alexandria, Origen refers to him as well known; in case 5, writing later, in Caesarea, he introduces him to his (local) audience as one who had come to Alexandria as a fugitive. This may be the meaning of the shorter account in case 4 as well.

In any case, there is no clear difference between these traditions on internal grounds. Some of them clearly presuppose the Greek text of the Bible; none of them are based exclusively on the Hebrew text. Some of them look like traditional Jewish haggadic exegesis, with no specifically Christian coloring. Others are undoubtedly Christian, but probably are based on pre-Christian Jewish exegesis. If the “Hebrew” came from the land of Israel but taught for many years in Alexandria, we would expect him to have incorporated “rabbinic” as well as “Philonic” ideas in his exegesis, and this seems to be borne out by the very scanty evidence at our disposal.¹⁵⁸ His theology seems to have been unobjectionable to Origen, or at least unobjectionable with regard to ecclesiastical standards prevalent at the time. The only reason Origen names his source in these five cases must be that the “Hebrew” would add *authority* to Origen’s argument. It seems Origen, at least in his Alexandrian writings, takes this authority for granted and feels no need to argue in favor of it. In other words, there seems to be no stigma of sectarianism or heresy attached to the “Hebrew.” He exemplifies the Jewish believer well integrated in the “Great Church,” basically at one with it theologically, but with grounding and expertise in Scripture and Jewish tradition that made him an invaluable theological resource for people like Origen. What Origen valued especially in

¹⁵⁶ *Sel. in Num.* 22:4; PG 12:577B; translation according to de Lange, *Origen*, 131. In de Lange’s note 96, close rabbinic parallels are given.

¹⁵⁷ *Hom. Jer.* 20.2; PG 13:501C; translation de Lange.

¹⁵⁸ By analogy, the same holds true for Origen, only his transition was in the opposite direction. One would expect his Jewish material to reflect the influence of Philo in Alexandria, as well as more “rabbinic” inputs in Caesarea, although one should not make this a very clear-cut distinction. See in general de Lange, *Origen*, esp. chs. 9 and 10.

such people is spelled out in so many words at the beginning of the fragment with which we began: “We have inquired among the Hebrews to find out if they could report *any teaching of their Fathers* concerning [this] subject . . .” (italics mine).

But this quote also explains why Origen could sometimes prefer the authority of non-Christian Jews, when that suited his polemical purposes better. I shall conclude by briefly commenting upon two such cases.

(1) In his discussion with Julius Africanus about the authenticity of Susanna late in his Caesarean period, Origen had all interest in adducing all support he could from “Jewish” Jews against Africanus, since the latter had made Jewish non-recognition of Susanna one of his arguments. It therefore rings authentic when Origen reports that he “consulted with several Hebrews” about some of the difficulties raised by Africanus.¹⁵⁹ Likewise the following: “I recall having consulted on several topics a learned Hebrew, carrying among them the title ‘Son of a Sage,’¹⁶⁰ educated to succeed his father.”¹⁶¹ There is no indication here that this Son of a Sage was Christian. On the contrary, the force of Origen’s argument depends on this man’s standing in the *Jewish* community. The same remark applies to *Ep. Afr.* 12: “I know another Hebrew who transmitted to me the following tradition concerning ‘the Elders’ (of the Susanna story).”¹⁶² Any lingering doubt whether Origen here has non-Christian Jews in mind should be put to rest by the following remark in *Ep. Afr.* 13: “But naturally you will argue against my position: Why, then, is not this story included in their [the Jews’ version of] Daniel, if, as you claim, *their Sages transmit such traditions about it?*”¹⁶³ (italics mine)

(2) In his commentary on Psalms, Origen sometimes referred to traditions from “Ioullos the patriarch and one with the title of Sage among the Jews.”¹⁶⁴ Some more or less fanciful attempts have been made to identify these two individuals with known Patriarchs and Rabbis of the period, the main problem being that neither Ioullos¹⁶⁵ (?) nor Huillus (Hillel?) seems to match any known Patriarch of the period. Even more fanciful is the attempt to identify either Ioullos or “the Sage” with the “Hebrew” who had “come to our faith” and fled to

¹⁵⁹ *Ep. Afr.* 10; SC 302:536–38. Here and in the following, the translations are my own.

¹⁶⁰ On this title, as reflecting a dynastic principle among the Sages: the first-born son supposed to succeed his father as Sage, see Gedalyahu Alon, “The Sons of the Sages,” in *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World: Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple and Talmud* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 436–57; on Origen at 439.

¹⁶¹ *Ep. Afr.* 11; SC 302:538.

¹⁶² SC 302:540.

¹⁶³ SC 302:542.

¹⁶⁴ *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, PG 12:1056B. According to Jerome, *Ruf.* 1.13 (PL 23:408), Origen rendered traditions from this Patriarch “Huillus” more than once in his Psalms commentary, and also once in his Isaiah commentary. Concerning the Psalms, the information from the Patriarch seems to have concerned the meaning of technical terms in the Psalms’ superscriptions.

¹⁶⁵ If a misspelling of Judas, it could be Judah II.

Alexandria.¹⁶⁶ Here again we have to keep in mind that what matters for Origen, is that his informants should be well informed about *ancient* Jewish tradition, because this was most likely to have kept the memory of the original meanings of Hebrew terms. The standing of his informants in the *Jewish* community is therefore important to him.

If one synthesizes one or both of the figures of the last two fragments with Origen's sayings about his "Hebrew Master," a fascinating tale results of a famous rabbi, or even the Son of the Patriarch, who came to believe in Jesus and joined the church. The only problem is that Origen himself obviously is completely unaware of the enormous apologetic potential of this story. This fact is sufficient evidence to show that the story is a modern scholarly construct, unknown to Origen.

7. Nazoraean Fragments in Jerome

The story of how Jerome visited Antioch and the Syrian desert east of it in the 370s C.E. and how he learned about the "Nazoraean" believers in Beroea (modern Aleppo) is told elsewhere in this volume.¹⁶⁷ In some way or other, Jerome got access to a commentary on Isaiah—as a whole or in parts—that was in use among these Nazoraleans.¹⁶⁸ In his own commentary on Isaiah he quotes five fragments from the Nazoraean commentary. These fragments are the subject matter of the present section. They are translated in full in Wolfram Kinzig's chapter on the Nazoraleans in the present volume (chapter 15). I am therefore content here merely to paraphrase their main points. I treat them in the same sequence as they occur in Jerome's commentary.

7.1. Commentary on Isaiah 3.26

This fragment¹⁶⁹ is a comment on Isaiah 8:11–15. The crucial sayings of this passage for the commentator were the following: "... do not walk in the way of this people. . . [The Lord] will become [for you] a sanctuary, [but] . . . for both

¹⁶⁶ Perhaps the most well known of such attempts is that of H. Graetz. He thought Huillus was Hillel, a younger son of Gamaliel III and brother of Judah II. The father had wanted his younger son to succeed him, and educated him for this purpose, but when the rule of the eldest son succeeding his father made this impossible, Hillel apostatized in disappointment. ("Hillel, der Patriarchensohn," *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 30 (1881): 433–43.) I cannot but agree with de Lange, "This suggestion, which has been widely accepted, is hypothetical from beginning to end and is open to several serious objections" (*Origen*, 24).

¹⁶⁷ See chapter 17 of this book, pp. 541–46.

¹⁶⁸ It is not unlikely that Jerome knew of this commentary through Apollinaris of Laodicea and his commentary on Isaiah. See chapter 15 of this book, p. 465.

¹⁶⁹ VL 23:373.43–374.55. For English translation, see Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 221, and chapter 15 of this book. Verbatim quotations from the commentary in the following are according to Kinzig.

houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over—a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem . . .” (NRSV). In the Nazoraean commentary the “two houses of Israel” were taken to mean the two houses of Shammai and Hillel. “These are the two houses who did not accept the Savior who has become to them destruction and shame.”

One first notices the simple midrashic technique of the commentary. It consists in saying “X (in the biblical text) is Y (in our own days).” The “two houses of Israel” in the biblical text are “the houses of Shammai and Hillel” in our own days. This simple way of identifying people or groups in the Bible with present day people or groups is also present in the commentaries on prophetic books in the Qumran scrolls. In a fragment of a commentary on Isaiah, we read the following: “. . . The Lord YHWH of Hosts will rip off the branches at one wrench; the tallest trunks will be felled, the loftiest chopped . . . [Isa 10:33–34]. Its interpretation¹⁷⁰ concerns the Kittim [the Romans], who will be placed in the hands of Israel. . . . ‘The tallest trunks . . .’ they are the soldiers of the Kittim . . .”¹⁷¹

In the Nazoraean fragment the houses of Shammai and Hillel are identified as a succession of teachers of the law (from Johanan ben Zakkai [around 70 C.E.] to Meir [around 150 C.E.])¹⁷² who did two things. They defiled the Law by their many precepts, and they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. They did this from the beginning. Shammai’s name is derived from the Hebrew root *sh-m-m*, “dissipate,” and Hillel’s from *ch-l-l*, “desecrate.” Their first disciples, the Scribes and the

¹⁷⁰That is, the prophecy’s or the phrase’s interpretation, in Hebrew: *pishro*. This has given rise to calling this kind of commentary *pesher*.

¹⁷¹4Q161 (4QpIsa^a), col. III.1–5. Text and translation according to Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997–98), 1:314–17. I have left out the square brackets indicating which parts of the text are reconstructed, and inserted two explanations within square brackets instead.

¹⁷²The list is in chronological disorder, cf. section 7 of chapter 15 of this book. Akiba (Aquila’s teacher) and Meir (in correct order) are said to have “taken over” the schools of Shammai and Hillel. But Meir is said to have been *succeeded* (*cui successit*) by Johanan ben Zakkai, Eliezer (ben Hyrcanus), Telphon (=Tarfon), Joseph the Galilean, and Joshua (ben Hananiah). In actual fact, these five rabbis *preceded* rather than succeeded the two-some of Akiba and Meir. But since the five exhibit good chronological order among themselves, and are said, quite correctly, to have been active in the time leading up to the capture of Jerusalem (during the second Jewish war, 135 C.E.), there is good reason to think that the Nazoraean fragment was better informed about rabbinic succession than the present text indicates. A very simple emendation is sufficient to restore correct chronology. Instead of “*cui successit Ioannan*,” read “*cui processit Ioannan*.” If this was the original text, it is easy to imagine that a later copyist, ignorant of rabbinic succession, took offense at this unusual word in a list he took to be a plain list of successions. If my emendation is correct, the list began with the first and the last rabbinic authorities, Shammai and Hillel on the one hand, and Akiba and Meir on the other, and then filled in the gap between the two groups by enumerating five leading rabbis from the period between. I suggest this as a simpler hypothesis than the quite complicated one of Alfred Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den jüdenchristlichen Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Literatur und Geschichte der Judenchristen* (TU 37.1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), 123.

Pharisees, rejected Jesus and preferred their own traditions concerning the Law. Their latter-day disciples, Akiba and Meir, did the same. Akiba and Meir were known as leading figures in the process of codifying the “Mishna,” the “doubling” [of the Law] or the “second” Law. In Jerome’s fragment this term is woodenly rendered in Greek: they destroyed the Law “per traditiones et *deuteroseis suas*” (italics mine). *Deuteroseis* would correspond to *mishnaoth*. Apart from being known as great authorities within the process of developing rabbinic halakah, the two rabbis would also have been known among Jewish believers in Jesus as effective opponents against Jesus as Messiah. Akiba was known for his support of Simon Bar Kokhba as Messiah. Meir was known as an effective opponent of Jewish Christian arguments for the divinity of Jesus.¹⁷³

It is interesting to compare the interpretation of Isa 8:14 in the Nazoraean fragment with the interpretation of the same passage in Matt 21:42. Here the stumbling-stone and rock of offense of Ps 118:22–23 and of Isa 8:14 is said to be Jesus, and the ones caused to fall by it because of their unbelief are the Priests and the Pharisees. The comment on Isa 8:14 in the Nazoraean source of Jerome reads very much like an “update” of the Matthean use of the same passage, made at a time when Rabbi Meir was (or had recently been) the last and dominant representative of the “houses.” In the period after the Bar Kokhba war, the leading rabbinic academy was transferred from Yavne to Usha in Galilee. It is very likely that Jewish believers in Galilee felt more threatened than before by this closing in upon them by opposing rabbis. This may be reflected in the second comment quoted by Jerome.

7.2. Commentary on *Isaiah 3.29*

This fragment¹⁷⁴ comments on Isa 8:19–22: “When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? . . . To the *law* and to the *testimony!* If they do not speak according to this word, they have *no light* of dawn, . . . they will roam through the land . . .” (NIV, italics mine). The Nazoreans took the ones who “whisper and mutter” to be the Scribes and the Pharisees, so therefore no one should listen to them. “Rather God has given *us* the *Law* and the *testimonies* of the Scriptures.” Those who would not follow this light (the prophecies as interpreted by the Jewish believers, and their halakah) would be walking in utter darkness, and would, when they recognized that they had been deceived, curse those whom they mistook for being their kings and gods.

From a formal point of view this and the following fragments identify biblical data with present realities in a slightly different way than is done in the first fragment. Here the present realities are woven into a Targum-like paraphrase of the biblical text itself.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ *b. Sanh.* 38b. See quotation of and further comments on this passage below, chapter 13, pp. 400–401.

¹⁷⁴ VL 23:383.72–86; translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 221–23, and in section 3 of chapter 15 of this book. Verbatim quotations in my text are from Kinzig.

¹⁷⁵ As pointed out by Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 64.

A comparison with Matthew is relevant in this case also. The Isaiah passage commented upon is the one which precedes Isa 8.23–9:1, the passage quoted in Matt 4:15–16. Here the appearance of Jesus in Capernaum is taken to mean that the land of Naphtali and of Zebulun has seen, through him, the great light to Galilee promised by the prophet. Once again, the Nazoraean commentary can be seen to continue the exegetical work on Isaian passages begun by Matthew. The teaching of Jesus means light to Galilee, the teaching of the rabbis means that darkness will remain over its people.

7.3. Commentary on *Isaiah 3.30*

This fragment comments on Isa 9:1:¹⁷⁶ “. . . there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea . . .” (NIV). The following interpretation is given:

When Christ came and his preaching shone out, the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali first of all were freed from the errors of the Scribes and the Pharisees and he shook off their shoulders the very heavy yoke of the Jewish traditions. Later, however, . . . the preaching was multiplied, through the Gospel of the apostle Paul who was the last of all the apostles. And the Gospel of Christ shone to the most distant tribes and the way of the whole sea. Finally the whole world which earlier walked or sat in darkness and was imprisoned in the bonds of idolatry and death, has seen the clear light of the gospel.

The view of salvation history contained in this passage is interesting. One discerns a simple scheme: (1) liberation of God’s people in Galilee from the yoke imposed upon them by the Pharisees; (2) preaching by Paul to the Gentiles; (3) preaching to the ends of the world (by all the apostles?). It corresponds to the scheme met with in the *Epistula Apostolorum* (mid-second century), and also, roughly, to the perspective of Justin’s Jewish Christian source material in the *Apology*.¹⁷⁷ One notices with special interest the very positive portrayal of Paul and his mission by the Nazoreans.

The similarity between this fragment and Matt 4:12 is striking. In Matt 4:12 the prophecy of Isa 9:1–2 is said to have been fulfilled when Jesus “made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali” (NRSV).

7.4. Commentary on *Isaiah 9.13*

The fourth fragment¹⁷⁸ also seems to have a Matthean basis: In Matt 11:5 there is a clear allusion to Isa 29:18, “The blind receive sight.” In the fourth

¹⁷⁶ VL 23:388.71–81; translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 223, and section 3 of chapter 15 of this book. My translation adapted from Kinzig.

¹⁷⁷ On which see below, chapter 13. But here Paul is not singled out and explicitly given the prominent position he has in the *Epistula* and the Nazoraean fragment.

¹⁷⁸ VL 30:1067.81–1068.86; translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 223; and in section 3 of chapter 15 of this book. I use the latter.

Nazorean fragment, the whole of Isa 29:17–21 is interpreted as having been said “against the Scribes and Pharisees, because the δευτερωταὶ passed away, who earlier deceived the people with very vicious traditions . . . to deceive the simple ones and who made men sin against the Word of God in order that they should deny that Christ was the Son of God.”

Here it seems to be the Tannaim, named in Greek δευτερωταὶ (which evinces knowledge of the etymology of Aramaic Tannaim¹⁷⁹), who are seen as the ones who keep people in darkness and blindness. The fragment as a whole is very close to fragment 1. Pritz argues that since the term *tanna* was applied to mishnaic and pre-mishnaic sages only after the publication of the Mishnah around 200 C.E., this fragment should not be dated earlier than the first decades of the third century C.E.¹⁸⁰ This may indeed be so. On the other hand, if halakic sayings by pre-mishnaic sages were already called *mishnaoth*, as fragment 1 seems to indicate, there is nothing to exclude the possibility that the creators and transmitters of these *mishnaoth* were also called Tannaim prior to the publication of the Mishnah.

7.5. Commentary on Isaiah 10.6

The fifth fragment¹⁸¹ also seems like a development of something already begun in Matthew. In Matt 23:37 (par. Luke 13:34) there is an allusion to Isa 31:5. Jesus tried to shield Jerusalem like a bird sheltering its young but they refused. (“Like birds hovering overhead, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem,” Isa 31:5 NRSV). In the fifth Nazorean fragment, it is Isa 31:6–9 (the following text unit in Isaiah) that is given a contemporary application. The prophet says, “Turn back to him whom you have deeply betrayed, O people of Israel . . .” (Isa 31:6 NRSV). This means, says the Nazorean fragment, O sons of Israel, turn to the Jesus you denied, and all enemies will fall to your feet. All philosophy and heresy will flee the sign of the cross. Jerusalem will be the place of eschatological judgment (my paraphrase).

Pritz is right in pointing out that this fragment has a slightly different tenor, compared with the first four.¹⁸² In this fragment there is no criticism of the Scribes and Pharisees, but rather an intense appeal to fellow Jews that they should believe and be saved. In this, the fragment is partly in line with Matt 23:37.

In conclusion, the following points have emerged from this brief review of Jerome’s Nazorean fragments. (1) They were based on the Hebrew text of Isaiah,

¹⁷⁹ The verb *tana* in Aramaic corresponds to *sanah* in Hebrew, both of them meaning “to make double” or “to repeat.” In the latter sense the Aramaic verb became a term for receiving and transmitting tradition, and the pre-mishnaic and mishnaic rabbis were called Tannaim, literally “doubters,” but really “tradents.” See Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 66–68.

¹⁸⁰ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 68.

¹⁸¹ VL 30:1122.39–48; translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 223–24; and in section 3 of chapter 15 of this book.

¹⁸² Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 69–70.

and seem to have been written in Hebrew. (2) They exhibit the same interpretative techniques as are used in other Jewish literature from the period, that is, *pesher* format and targumic paraphrase. (3) They seem to derive from Jewish believers at home in Galilee in the latter part of the second century, possibly early in the third. (4) These Jewish believers clearly were not sectarian. They recognized the same theological authorities as the “Great Church”: Jesus; the Apostles, and Paul. This means that they endorsed a law-free mission among the Gentiles, and regarded themselves as part of the same church as the Gentiles. (5) In method as well as in substance, the fragments surveyed exhibit great similarity with the Gospel of Matthew in their approach to biblical prophecy. The book of Isaiah was a main source for biblical texts that were used as clues to contemporary events. (6) The fragments are extremely critical towards rabbinic halakah, advocating instead the enlightenment that comes through following Jesus the Messiah and obeying *his* teaching.

Jewish Christian Sources Used by Justin Martyr and Some Other Greek and Latin Fathers

Oskar Skarsaune

1. Introduction

As I wrote in the introduction to chapter twelve, that chapter and this present one are related. In the previous chapter, our task was to assemble scattered quotes from Jewish believers in Jesus that were presented as such. Our task in this chapter is to determine what Jewish Christian sources, both written and oral, were used by some early Greek and Latin Fathers in writing their own works. Unlike the direct quotations explored in the previous chapter, here we will examine the sources that the patristic writers wove into their own texts and made their own.

When I claim that the sources of the patristic writers were Jewish Christian, I mean that these sources expressed Jewish Christian theology in the sense that the creators of this theology were Jewish believers. In some cases I also assume that the authors of written sources used by later Gentile writers were in fact Jewish themselves. My reasons for claiming this will become apparent as we proceed.

I have singled out Justin Martyr as the main source to be “excavated.” This is because I believe his preserved writings are the richest source for reconstructing Jewish Christian sub-texts. One could also have chosen otherwise, and I must emphasize here, once and for all, the very selective nature of this chapter. Some, but by no means all, relevant material buried in other early writings will be brought into play as we study Justin. But much material is simply left out. I have, e.g., made no attempt at systematically presenting all the interesting and relevant material to be found in *The Epistle of Barnabas*. This has been done admirably by Pierre Prigent, however, and I here refer to his fine study once and for all.¹

¹Pierre Prigent, *Les testimonia dans le christianisme primitif: L'Épître de Barnabé I–XVI et ses sources* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1961).

2. Jewish Christian Sources in Justin

There is no doubt that Justin relied on earlier sources for much of his exegesis of the Scriptures, and also for the very text of many of his quotations from Scripture. Some of these sources are known to us. For example, he certainly used the Gospel of Matthew and Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians, and possibly some other New Testament writings as well.² These known sources all qualify as "Jewish Christian" by the definition of that term adopted in the present volume. But certainly Justin had other sources as well. Are there indications that these—or at least some of them—could be Jewish Christian, too?

I have argued elsewhere that Justin uses at least three different sources in addition to the known ones from the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers.³ Two of these are of special interest in our context. I have called one of them the "kerygma source." This is the main source Justin follows in his scriptural proof in the *First Apology* and in parallel passages in his *Dialogue*. The other, used in the *Dialogue* only, may be identical with the lost dialogue of Aristo of Pella, *The Controversy between Jason and Papiscus*.⁴ In any case, it embodies traditions characteristically different from the source Justin is following in the *Apology*. I will consider material derived from these two sources shortly.

First let me add a remark on method. One can easily observe that biblical quotations basically fall into two categories in Justin. Category one consists of long quotations according to a rather "standard" Septuagint text. Justin himself sometimes comments that the text of these long quotations is *the one recognized by the Jews*.⁵ I have argued elsewhere that these quotes were copied directly from complete Septuagint scrolls of whole biblical books, and that these scrolls came from Jewish scriptoria. That is why Justin is able to give such long excerpts, and also the reason why he brands this text as Jewish.⁶

Category two consists of shorter quotations which very often are strongly deviant, when compared with the standard Septuagint text. Justin often claims that the text of these shorter quotes is the authentic text of the Seventy (= The Septuagint), and that Jewish scribes have not tampered with this text.⁷ This probably means Justin had these quotes from Christian sources. The character of these sources is indicated by the observation that Justin's *interpretations* of the scriptural quotes also seem to have been presented in the same Christian sources from which he took the biblical quotes. This was well observed

²For a detailed analysis, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 92–131.

³Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 135–242.

⁴On this early Christian writing, see section 1.1 of chapter 19 of this book.

⁵Dial. 120.4; 124.2; 131.1; 137.3.

⁶Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 25–92.

⁷The same references for this as in note 5; in addition, Dial. 43.8; 71.3; 72.1–73.6.

by Wilhelm Boussel⁸ and Helmut Koester,⁹ who both characterized Justin's sources as *Schriftbeweistrakte*. As a rough description of the genre of these sources this seems apposite, but as I have indicated already, I believe one can be even more specific.¹⁰

The point that concerns me here is this: When Justin brings biblical quotes from these sources he is actually *quoting* verbatim from them. And when he brings interpretative remarks, he is often paraphrasing his sources very closely, sometimes bordering on verbatim quotation there as well. As to the Jewish Christian character of the sources I have posited as underlying Justin's writings, this is something best shown as we proceed with our analysis.

3. Material from the “Kerygma Source”

The reason I have called this hypothetical source the “kerygma source” is twofold. First, it shares some striking parallels with the lost writing *The Kerygma of Peter* (ca. 125 C.E.) of which a few fragments are quoted in Clement of Alexandria.¹¹ Second, it seems to have had a creed-like enumeration of Jesus' messianic career, a christological “kerygma,” as its basic structure. It is to this christological material I turn first.

3.1. *The Messiah's career*

In the *First Apology* (ca 150–155 C.E.) Justin is apparently using a source in which the career of Jesus is “proven” to be the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. The structure of this source is indicated in a passage (*1 Apol.* 31.7) within the introduction (chapter 31 as a whole) to the scriptural proof (given in chapters 32–53):

In the books of the prophets . . . we found Jesus our Christ foretold as

- (1) coming to us
- (2) born of a virgin,
- (3) reaching manhood,

⁸ Wilhelm Boussel, *Jüdisch-Christlicher Schulbetrieb in Alexandria und Rom: Literarische Untersuchungen zu Philo und Clemens von Alexandria, Justin und Irenäus* (FRLANT Neue Folge 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915), 282–308.

⁹ Helmut Koester, “Septuaginta und synoptischer Erzählungsstoff im Schriftbeweis Justins des Märtyrers” (Habilitationsschrift, Ruprecht-Karl-Universität: Heidelberg, 1956), 1–50.

¹⁰ See Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 228–42; and also Martin C. Albl, “And Scripture Cannot Be Broken”: *The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (NovTSup 96; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

¹¹ For this writing and its parallels with Justin's source, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 228–34.

- (4) curing every disease and ailment, raising the dead to life,
- (5) being hated, unrecognized, and crucified, dying,
- (6) rising from the dead, ascending into heaven,
- (7) and being called and actually being the Son of God, and that he would send certain persons to every nation to proclaim these things,
- (8) and that men from the Gentiles rather [than the Jews] would believe in him.¹²

This scheme is in fact followed in chapters 32–35 and 50–53. Also in chapters 36–49 (an insertion devoted to hermeneutical questions in interpreting the prophecies) we find some material belonging to this scheme, and in several passages in the *Dialogue*. The passages in the *Apology* may be tabulated as follows:

- (1) The coming of the Messiah: *1 Apol.* 32 (Gen 49:10–11; Num 24:17/Isa 11:1/Isa 51:5).
- (2) The virgin birth: *1 Apol.* 33–34 (Isa 7:14; Mic 5:1).
- (3) The hidden growing up: *1 Apol.* 35.1–2 (Isa 9:5).
- (4) The healings: *1 Apol.* 48.1–3 (Isa 35:5–6 etc.).
- (5) The passion, death [and resurrection] of the Messiah: *1 Apol.* 35.3–11 (Isa 65:2/58:2; Ps 22:17/19; Zech 9:9); *1 Apol.* 38 (Isa 65:2/58:2; Ps 22:19/17/Ps 3:6; Ps 22:8–9; Isa 50:6–8); *1 Apol.* 50–51 (Isa 52:13–53:12).
- (6) The ascension of the Messiah: *1 Apol.* 51.7 (Ps 24:7–8).
- (7) The present reign of the Messiah: *1 Apol.* 39–46 (Isa 2:3–4; Ps 19:3–6; Ps 1 and 2; Ps 96/1 Chr 16; Ps 110:1–3).
- (8) Gentiles believing rather than Jews: *1 Apol.* 53 (Isa 54:1; Isa 1:9; Jer 9:26).
- (9) The glorious return of the Messiah: *1 Apol.* 51.8–9 (Dan 7:13).
- (10) The resurrection of the dead to be judged: *1 Apol.* 52 (Ezek 37:7–8; Isa 66:24; Zech 12:10–12).

There are two features of this remarkable “proof from prophecy” that claim our attention. First, in its over-all structure there is no trace of a Christology of divine pre-existence. The story of Jesus begins, as in Matthew and Luke, with the Messiah’s human birth by the Virgin. Second is the strikingly Jewish profile of the scriptural testimonies, especially when compared with the dominant christological proof-texts in the New Testament. I have analyzed this in some de-

¹² Here and in the following I quote the *Apology* according to the translation of Thomas B. Falls, *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr* (FC 6; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948), this quote at 67. I have arranged the quotation and inserted numbers for the sake of the following discussion.

tail elsewhere,¹³ and am here satisfied to point out the general conclusion that, whereas the dominant biblical testimonies in the New Testament focus on the “unforeseen” and—compared with Jewish messianic expectations—“embarrassing” aspects of Jesus’ messianic career,¹⁴ the fuller dossier of proof-texts which Justin is using has been filled out with more traditional messianic texts according to Jewish tradition.

Let me illustrate this in some detail. Justin’s proof from Scripture opens with Gen 49:10–11 and an expanded version of Num 24:17 (Num 24:17a/Isa 11:1b/Isa 51:5b). These two testimonies were the most important messianic proof-texts *in the Torah* according to Jewish messianic expectations around the beginning of the Common Era.¹⁵ In *Targum Onqelos* they are the only two texts of the Torah taken to refer to the Messiah. The significance of this is strengthened by the observation that when Justin quotes Gen 49:10 directly from his Christian testimony source, the textform of the passage agrees with the Targum against the Septuagint text!¹⁶

The form and content of these two quotations in Justin also claim our attention. The following is an attempt to display in a synopsis how these two quotes and one more testimony in Justin seem streamlined to express a common idea:

1 Apol. 32.1 and 54.5:

- (a) The sceptre shall not be taken away from Judah,
nor the ruler from his thigh,
until he comes for whom it [the kingdom] is reserved;
- (b) and he shall be the expectation of the nations . . .
(Gen 49:10)

1 Apol. 32.12:

- (a) A star shall rise ($\alpha\omega\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$) out of Jacob, (Num 24:17)
and a flower shall spring from the root of Jesse, (Isa 11:1)
- (b) and in his arm shall nations trust. (Isa 51:5)

¹³ Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 260–82; “The Development of Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries—except Clement and Origen,” in *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300): Antiquity* (vol. 1.1 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*; ed. M. Sæbø et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 373–442; esp. 394–410.

¹⁴ Cf. especially the proof-texts implied in 1 Cor 15:3–5, and the fulfillment quotations in Matthew.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 260–66; William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 50–51; 92–95; and John J. Collins, *The Scepter and The Star: The Messiahs of The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 61–67. In Collins’s title, the scepter refers to Gen 49:10, the star to Num 24:17.

¹⁶ The Septuagint reads: “. . . until those things come, which are his [Judah’s—the Messiah’s?].” Justin reads: “until he [the Messiah] comes, to whom belongs (the kingdom).” *Targum Onqelos*: “until the coming of the king Messiah, to whom belongs the kingdom” (my translations).

Dial. 121.1:

- (a) His name shall endure forever,
it shall rise (*ἀνατελεῖ*)¹⁷ above the sun;
- (b) and all nations shall be blessed in him.¹⁸ (Ps 72:17)

It seems that as early as in the Septuagint translation, a connection was made between Gen 49:9–10, Num 24:17, and Isa 11:1 (central terms are imported from one text into the other on the Greek level).¹⁹ Later, right up to the time of Justin, the linking of these texts in Jewish messianic exegesis continues, and is hinted at in some late New Testament texts. For example, Heb 7:4 alludes to Gen 49:10 and Num 24:17 combined; Rev 5:5 paraphrases Gen 49:9–10/Isa 11:1; and Rev 22:16 paraphrases Isa 11:1/Num 24:17. There can thus be no doubt that Justin's testimonies in *1 Apol.* 32 derive from a source deeply imbued with Jewish messianic exegesis.

And we can probably take this argument a step further. In *1 Apol.* 31.6 Justin has a casual reference to Bar Kokhba and his revolt against Rome. This preoccupation with the Bar Kokhba war—along with its aftermath, the Hadrianic decree—recurs in the *Apology* (47.1–6) and often in the *Dialogue* (1.3; 9.3; 16.2–3; 40.2; 92.2; 108.3). In light of the way Justin stages his dialogue, one might well say that the entire dialogue between Justin and Trypho is conducted in the shadow of the Bar Kokhba war and its effects. Justin, writing his *Dialogue* some 25 years after the war, would hardly have given this event the significance he does were it not for the fact that it loomed large in one or more of his sources. His own anti-Bar Kokhba polemic very likely reflects something he found in his sources.

Among the three testimonies we reviewed above, Num 24:17 was the slogan of Bar Kokhba, the prophecy from which he took his messianic name, Son of the Star.²⁰ In Justin's source, this important text has been thoroughly modified, with

¹⁷ The verbal expression ἡπέρ τὸν ἥλιον ἀνατελεῖ is not in the Septuagint text, which instead has the idea of the eternal preexistence of the Messiah's name: "His name continued before the sun." It is interesting that to Justin's source it was more important to streamline this testimony to suit Gen 49:10 and Num 24:17 in form and content, than to exploit the possible proof of the Messiah's preexistence contained in Ps 72:17. Justin himself uses Ps 72:17 to this purpose in *Dial.* 64.5 and 76.7.

¹⁸ Here and in the following, I quote the *Dialogue* according to the translation in *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (ed. M. Slusser; trans. T. B. Falls; rev. T. P. Halton; Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), this quote at 181–82.

¹⁹ For example, the Hebrew of Gen 49:9 reads, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up" (NRSV). In the Septuagint this verse reads, ". . . from the shoot, my son, you came up." There is a change of metaphor. The hunting young lion rising from its prey has been substituted by a metaphor from the world of plants or trees: a fresh sapling growing up. This is taken from Isa 11:1. See more examples and detailed argument in Horbury, *Jewish Messianism*, 50.

²⁰ His original name seems to have been Shimon bar Koseba/Kosiba, either after a village Koseba, or (more likely) after his father's name. His opponents made a parody of it:

two additions. First, Isa 11:1 is added: the star from Jacob is from the root of Jesse, i.e., is from the house of David. (As far as we know, Bar Kokhba was not Davidic.²¹) Next, Isa 51:5 is added: “in his arm shall nations trust.” The star from Jacob is to be not only a national liberator for Israel; he is to be a Messiah for all the peoples.

The Bar Kokhba letters show him to have been ruthless against fellow Jews who did not obey or follow him. This tallies well with Justin’s saying that Bar Kokhba persecuted “Christians” unless they renounced Jesus Christ (*1 Apol.* 31.6). The only supposition one needs to make is that Justin by “Christians” has Jewish believers in mind. This is a likely supposition because Bar Kokhba would hardly bother about Gentile Christians in the Land any more than about other Gentiles there. But if Bar Kokhba persecuted Jewish believers in Jesus (because they would not back him as the liberating Messiah), these Jewish believers more than anyone else would by necessity try to disclaim him as a false Messiah right from the beginning. And they would have done this primarily by showing him not to correspond to the Messiah spoken of in the Scriptures (a Davidic Messiah for all peoples).

So far this analysis of Justin’s “kerygma source” has been conducted mainly according to criteria that are internal to Justin’s texts. I now want to strengthen my case by bringing in an external parallel. Elsewhere I have argued that Justin’s “kerygma source” has close parallels in the Christian interpolations (or the Christian redaction) of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and in the Jewish Christian source used in the Pseudoclementine *Recognitions* 1.27–71.²² Here I want to bring in a third external parallel.

3.2. Parallels in the Apocalypse of Peter

With regard to this writing, one can reasonably claim that not only does it contain whole blocks of Jewish Christian tradition, but also it was probably penned in its entirety by a Jewish believer.²³ Some arguments for this will be given as we proceed.

bar kozeba/koziba: “son of the lie.” See Peter Schäfer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand: Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom* (TSAJ 1; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981), 51–57.

²¹In rabbinic polemics against Bar Kokhba, some sayings from Isa 11:1–11 played a significant role. See Schäfer, *Bar Kokhba-Aufstand*, 57–58.

²²Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, esp. 252–55. See also the same point of view in Graham N. Stanton, “Aspects of Early Christian-Jewish Polemic and Apologetic,” *NTS* 31 (1985), 377–92.

²³This work is preserved *in toto* in an Ethiopic translation, which is considered quite reliable. Greek was probably the original language. Fragments of the Greek version have been preserved; one extensive fragment corresponding to chs. 7–10 and 15–16 of the Ethiopic text; and two quite small fragments corresponding to a part of ch. 10 and the whole of ch. 14 in the Ethiopic. For information on questions of text and editions see Ch. Maurer’s introduction in Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha* (trans. R. McL. Wilson et al.; 2 vols.; London: SCM, 1973–1974), 2: 663–68; and Richard Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from

The writing belongs to the category of literature in which the risen Christ instructs the disciples during the time between his resurrection and his ascension. The scene of this instruction is the Mount of Olives for chs. 1–14, and the Temple Mount (“the Holy Mountain”) for chs. 15–17. Jesus’ instruction of the disciples, first and foremost Peter, comes as straightforward teaching in chs. 1–2, then turns to a vision of the judgment and the punishment of sinners in chs. 3–14.²⁴ In the final chs., 15–17, the instruction mode is left altogether as the disciples accompany Jesus to the Temple Mount where they have a vision of Moses and Elijah, of the other righteous Patriarchs in Paradise, and finally of Jesus’ ascension.

In the middle section, chs. 3–14, we have “a guided tour of hell,” in which Jesus shows Peter the different types of sinners and the specific punishments they are suffering, often closely related to the type of sin they had committed. There is little that is original in this section. Most of the material can be paralleled in Jewish apocalypses of the period. As Richard Bauckham rightly points out, this section is good evidence that the distinction between “Jewish” and “Christian” apocalyptic is in part artificial because of the great extent of common traditions and material.²⁵

The Apocalypse of Peter has some close links, by way of themes and traditions, with some of the Jewish Apocalypses of its period: 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Parables of Enoch. If . . . the Apocalypse of Peter is a Palestinian Jewish Christian work, these links with contemporary Palestinian Jewish apocalypses are especially interesting. They help to explain the preservation of these Jewish works by Christians, by showing us the context of Palestinian Jewish Christian apocalyptic in which these Jewish apocalypses would have been of interest. It was doubtless in such Christian circles as those from which the Apocalypse of Peter comes that Jewish apocalypses such as 4 Ezra were read and then passed on to the wider Church which later preserved them.²⁶

The case for considering the *Apocalypse of Peter* a work written by Jewish believers in the land of Israel during the Bar Kokhba revolt has recently been stated extensively and, to my mind, convincingly by Richard Bauckham. I here give a short summary of his main arguments:²⁷

the Time of Bar Kokhba,” in Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 160–258; esp. 254–58. See also Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research,” ANRW 25.6:4712–50; and D. D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (SBLDS 97; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988).

²⁴ In the Ethiopic text described by Jesus, in the Greek fragment seen by Peter. The Ethiopic is probably more original.

²⁵ Bauckham, “Jewish Christian Apocalypse,” 161; 169–71.

²⁶ Ibid., 169.

²⁷ Ibid., 176–94. Bauckham’s view is not uncontested. I believe, however, that his arguments concerning an intense preoccupation with Bar Kokhba in this early Christian writing are valid even if one should not be convinced that the writing was penned by a Jewish believer. But I fail to see good arguments against this conclusion.

(1) In chapters 1 and 2 the disciples ask Jesus about his parousia: when and under what circumstances will it occur? He answers by using a narrow selection of the rich material in Matthew's apocalypse in Matt 24. But whereas Matt 24 talks about *several false Messiahs and false prophets*, in the *Apocalypse of Peter* this is narrowed down to *one false Messiah* only. The author is not interested in false prophets. Nor is he interested in any of the other many signs that precede the advent of the true Messiah in Matt 24:7–22. Instead, he is narrowly focused on the one false Messiah who will precede the parousia of Jesus.

Whereas in Matt 24 the parousia of the Messiah will be unmistakable, in the *Apocalypse of Peter* it will be unmistakably *that of Jesus*: the sign (Matt 24:30) “going before” him will be *the cross*. When the Messiah appears, there will be no possible doubt that he is Jesus.

The meaning of the parable of the sprouting fig tree is that immediately before the parousia of Jesus the tree of Israel will bear fruit. Israel bearing fruit is interpreted as Israel producing martyrs. The author is plainly aware that this is not the meaning of the parable as contained in Matt 24, where it refers to “all these things” (i.e., the signs in Matt 24:7–31). He therefore has Peter ask for a new and specific interpretation of this parable, and the new interpretation is that the parable refers to a persecution of the righteous ones within Israel by the false Messiah. “But this deceiver is not the Messiah. And when they reject him, he will kill with the sword and there shall be many martyrs. Then shall the boughs of the fig tree, i.e., the house of Israel, sprout, and there shall be many martyrs by his hand: they shall be killed and become martyrs.” Evidently, the persecution and martyrdoms have already begun, but are not ended; more are expected. The false Messiah is not yet exposed as a false one. He is a real threat to the faithful in Israel; they may be tempted to join him.

In chapters 3–14 most of the sins and punishments are, as said already, quite traditional in such literature. But in chapter 9 there are three sorts of sinners and punishments that are peculiar to the *Apocalypse of Peter*: (a) “These are the persecutors and betrayers of my righteous ones.” (b) Next come “the slanderers and those who doubt my righteousness.” (c) Last come “those who slew the martyrs by their lying.” Again, the subject of persecution, betrayal and martyrdom is of great concern to the author.

We have already seen the evidence in Justin Martyr which shows that Bar Kokhba persecuted Christians if they would not deny that Jesus was the Messiah (the reverse of recognizing Bar Kokhba as such), *1 Apol.* 31.6. The only Christians on whom Bar Kokhba could impose such a demand, and persecute those who refused it, must be the Jewish believers in the land of Israel. These are precisely the ones who are persecuted by the false messiah in the *Apocalypse of Peter*; their martyrdom represents the budding of *the tree of Israel*, hence they are Jewish believers.

The persecution of the believers, whose spokesman is the author of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, is obviously still in progress. Not only is the persecution expected to increase, but also there is no hint that the false messiah has been proven

false by being defeated. This means that the author must be living in the land of Israel during the Bar Kokhba war, before its end.

But what type of Jewish believer is he? His book seems to have been written in Greek, but his calling the false messiah a “liar” may indicate he already knew the hostile pun on Bar Kokhba’s original cognomen Bar Kosiba: it could easily be turned into Bar Koziba—“Son of the Lie.”²⁸ The author may therefore have known Hebrew and been bilingual.

The author’s primary concern is the fate of the Jewish believers in the land of Israel, and he exhorts them not to betray Jesus the true Messiah. Still, he takes a positive view of the mission to the Gentiles, making Peter (not Paul)²⁹ the main missionary to the Gentiles (and alluding to his martyrdom in Rome under Nero, 14.4–6). His near-quotations from and allusions to New Testament writings show a preference for Matthew, but in many places the Johannine writings—or an earlier form of the tradition embodied in them—are an important under-text.³⁰

Roughly the same may be said about the traditional christological material employed by Justin in the *First Apology*, and we have seen to what extent an intense anti-Bar Kokhba polemic runs through this tradition. This prompts the question of whether the author of the *Apocalypse of Peter* was close in time and milieu to the “kerygma source” employed by Justin. In the *Apocalypse of Peter* we should not expect a complete rendering of the story of the Messiah, because the apocalyptic genre means the focus is on the imminent parousia of the true Messiah. That fact that any mention of the birth, growth, and life of the Messiah is lacking in the *Apocalypse of Peter* comes with the genre. But this makes it all the more interesting to compare the relevant part of Justin’s creed-like rendering of the Messiah’s career with that of the *Apocalypse of Peter*. The relevant material in Justin occurs in 1 *Apol.* 51–52 and the table below roughly follows his sequence. In the *Apocalypse of Peter* the relevant material occurs in a passage on the ascension of Jesus in ch. 17, and in two partly parallel passages on his parousia in 1.6–8 and 6.1–6.

Justin, 1 *Apol.*

Apoc. Pet.

The ascension of the Messiah: Ps 24:7–8 (1 *Apol.* 51.6–7 and par.)

The ascension of the Messiah: Ps 24:6, 7–9 (17.2–6)³¹

²⁸ This later became the common name for Bar Kosiba in rabbinic literature. It may, however, have been coined already during the war by Jews who rejected Akiba’s calling Bar Kosiba by the messianic cognomen Bar Kokhba. See note 20 above and also Bauckham, “Jewish Christian Apocalypse,” 189–90.

²⁹ The significance of the silence about Paul should not be overplayed, since the fiction of the book requires Peter to be central, and excludes Paul from appearing directly in it. The fictional setting is a *pre-ascension* encounter between Jesus and the twelve original apostles.

³⁰ See especially Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 398–408.

³¹ For Jewish parallels to this exegesis of Ps 24, cf. Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 267–68, where it is argued that the *Apocalypse of Peter* is closer to the Jewish exegetical tradition than Justin’s parallel. On early Christian exegesis of Ps 24 in general, see Ernst

The enthronement of the Messiah: Ps 110:1 (45.1–4; 51.1)	The enthronement of the Messiah: Ps 110:1 (6.1)
The parousia of the Messiah <i>in glory</i> : Dan 7:13 (coming on the clouds of heaven, <i>his angels with him</i> ; 51.9 and par.)	The parousia of the Messiah <i>in glory</i> : Dan 7:13 (coming on a shining cloud, <i>accompanied by angels</i> ; ³² 1.6–7; 6.1)
The Messiah coming to judge <i>the living and the dead</i> (52.3)	The Messiah coming to judge <i>the living and the dead</i> (1.7)
The resurrection of all: Ezek 37:7–8/Isa 45:23 (52.5–6)	The resurrection of all: Ezek 37:7–10 ³³ (4.7–9)
Sinners punished by unquenchable fire: Isa 64:24 (52.8)	Sinners punished by unquenchable fire (6.2–5)
Lament of the sinners: Zech 12:10–12 (52.10–12)	Lament of the damned: [Zech 12:10–14] (6.2)

There is great variety of themes and scriptural testimonies chosen for creed-like summaries like these in the early second century, so the parallels shown here do not look accidental.

This Christology is clearly messianic in function: the “Son of God” concept is demonstrated functionally as the Messiah being enthroned at God’s right hand, ruling, and coming to judge the living and the dead, thus acting in a divine role. On the whole, this Christology is very close to that of Matthew, but also to the Christology in Justin’s source in *1 Apol.* 31–53.

The redemption of Israel plays a significant role in the *Apocalypse of Peter*. What Justin’s “kerygma source” had to say on this subject will be analyzed in section 3.4 below.

Kähler, *Studien zum Te Deum und zur Geschichte des 24. Psalms in der Alten Kirche* (Veröffentlichungen der Evangelischen Gesellschaft für Liturgieforschung 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958).

³² There are no accompanying angels in Dan 7:13 LXX or in the Theodotion text, so this feature is probably taken from Matt 25:31. It is nevertheless striking that Dan 7:13 should be modified by Matt 25:31 in the same way in two independent authors, Justin and the author of the *Apocalypse of Peter*. For detailed study of the textual modifications of Dan 7:13 in Justin, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 88–90.

³³ The textform of this quotation in the *Apocalypse of Peter* is probably dependent on the one in 4Q Second Ezekiel. This is another indication of the author’s knowledge of Hebrew (a Greek translation of this Qumran document is not known, and its existence unlikely). See R. Bauckham, “A Quotation from 4Q Second Ezekiel in the *Apocalypse of Peter*,” in *The Fate of the Dead*, 259–68.

3.3. *The Anointing of the Messiah*

It remains to add a few more traits to the picture of the Messiah as contained in the “kerygma source” we have posited in Justin. While this source was silent about the divine pre-existence of the Messiah, it clearly contained his virginal conception. It seems to have combined this, however, with the idea that Jesus did not enter his ministry as the Messiah until he was anointed as Messiah by John, who acted in the role of Elijah.³⁴ Justin himself is careful to avoid this conclusion, since he feels that Trypho is right to object:

How can you prove that the Messiah already existed [before his human birth], since he is endowed [at his baptism] with those gifts of the Holy Spirit which the above-quoted passage of Isaiah [11:2–3] attribute to him as though he had lacked them? (*Dial.* 87.2).³⁵

Accordingly, Justin is forced to argue that Christ received nothing during his baptism by John, since he had the Spirit from the beginning (*Dial.* 87.3–88.2). But this was clearly not the idea of the source Justin is using here, since in the source John is actually anointing Jesus to become the Messiah. This is not full-fledged adoptionism (since it is combined with the idea of the virginal conception), but it accords the baptism of Jesus by John, in fulfillment of Isa 11:2–3, a much greater significance than is common in the Gentile Christian writers of the period. That this is tuned to Jewish Messianism is made evident by the fact that Trypho mentions this as his first objection against the Messiahship of Jesus: “If the Messiah has been born and exists anywhere, he is not known, nor is he conscious of his own existence, nor has he any power until Elijah comes to anoint him and to make him manifest to all” (*Dial.* 8.4). “We Jews all expect that the Messiah will be a man of merely human origin, and that Elijah will come to anoint him. If this man [Jesus] appears to be the Messiah, he must be considered to be a man of solely human birth, yet, from the fact that Elijah has not yet come, I must declare that this man is not the Messiah” (*Dial.* 49.1). It seems Justin’s source contained a well-directed rejoinder to these objections, but that Justin himself had difficulties in following his source here, because he found it too adoptionist in its tendency. We now also see the Jewish character of one feature of Justin’s proof that he himself almost makes nothing of: “It was foretold that, after his birth, Christ should escape the notice of other men until he reached the age of maturity, and this also took place” (*1 Apol.* 35.1). This is hardly emphasized or made explicit in any early Gentile Christian version of the Jesus story, but the significance of this Jewish motif is clearly echoed by the very structure of the synoptic Gospels (and also

³⁴ See the source analysis of *Dial.* 49–51 and 87–88 in Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 195–99 and 273–77.

³⁵ Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 135–36. The following translations also from Falls.

of John). All taken together, one might perhaps say that the structure of the Christology of Justin's source here is close to Matthew.³⁶

For Justin's source, the significance of Jesus' baptism by John is not only that the Spirit anoints him and, so to speak, takes up a permanent "residence" in him; Jesus also, after his baptism, becomes the spender of the Spirit upon others. From now on, he transfers the gifts of the Spirit (*Dial.* 87.5). The parallel to this understanding of Jesus' baptism in *T. Levi* 18 is striking: "The Spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water] . . . The Spirit of holiness shall be upon them [who believe in him] . . ."³⁷

Thus, once more, we see the close parallelism between Justin's "kerygma source" and other documents expressing Jewish Christian Messianism.

3.4. The Messiah and his people, salvation for Gentiles and Jews

The main "problem" for Jewish believers in Jesus during the Bar Kokhba war would be that they—facing the "Messiah" Bar Kokhba who was successful where Jesus had failed, in liberating Israel—believed in a Messiah rejected by most of his own people but accepted by the Gentiles. Their main challenge in vindicating Jesus as the Messiah would correspond exactly to the punch line in Justin's summary of the christological proof from prophecy in *1 Apol.* 31.7. Justin here claims that it is foretold in the Scriptures that *the Gentiles rather than the Jews would believe in him*. This concern shines through not only in that part of the Apology in which the scriptural proof of this is brought to light (*1 Apol.* 53), but also, and precisely, in the very rendering of Bar Kokhba's scriptural warrant for his name, Num 24:17. In Gen 49:10 and Ps 72:17 this motive was present already in the Septuagint text.

The point is that a Messiah who turns out to be a Messiah for the Gentiles rather than for the Jews would have been an even more vital concern for Jewish believers than for Gentile believers. The fact of Jesus being this kind of Messiah would always have been used by non-believing Jews as an argument against Jewish believers' faith in him. I find support for this view in the fact that the most explicit defense of the theology implicit in Justin's quotation material on this point is to be found in a Jewish Christian document, i.e., the source employed in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27–71.³⁸

But since it was necessary for the nations to be called in the place of those who remained unbelievers [among the Jews] so that the number that was shown to Abraham might be filled, the saving proclamation of the kingdom of God was sent out into all the world. (1.42.1 Latin)³⁹

³⁶I have shown in chapter 14 of this book that Justin also knew another Jewish Christian Christology that valued the Davidic lineage of Jesus through Joseph so much as to deny the virginal conception.

³⁷Translation according to *OTP* 1:795.

³⁸See the treatment of this document in chapter 11 of this book.

³⁹Translation according to F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71* (SBL Texts and Translations

Much more explicit is another passage whose provenance, however, is more uncertain:

It was logical for Christ to be accepted by the Jews to whom he came and to be believed as the one who was expected according to the tradition of the fathers for the salvation of the people; but for the Gentiles, to whom nothing about him had been promised or announced but rather to whom he had not ever become known by name, to be hostile to him. Yet the prophets said contrary to order and the logic of things that he would be the hope of the Gentiles [Gen 49.10] and not of the Jews. Accordingly, then, it also happened. For when he came he was not at all recognized by those who seemed to await him on the basis of the tradition of the ancestors. But those who had not heard anything whatsoever about him both believe that he has come and watch for him coming in the future. Thus in all these matters that prophecy has proved faithful that said that he would be a hope of the nations. . . . His coming is especially confirmed in the fact that not all [Jews] believe in him. (1.50.1–7)⁴⁰

This passage occurs within an editorial insertion (roughly 1.44–53) into the source, so its provenance is uncertain. But there is general agreement among scholars that some material within this insertion may also derive from the source.⁴¹ The tendency of this passage is a strong apology for the mutually dependent credibility of the prophets and of Jesus as Messiah, and this is intimately bound up with the teaching of the two parousias, which no doubt belongs to the source (cf. 1.69). The close parallel between Justin and *Rec.* 1.50 is rightly emphasized by Strecker, who thinks that the author of *Rec.* 1.44–53 rather faithfully reproduces the ideas of the Jewish Christian source here.⁴²

Everything, then, seems to indicate that Justin's summary of his scriptural proof in *1 Apol.* 31, and the first part of it in *1 Apol.* 32, derive from a Jewish Christian source with a tendency very similar to the one being employed in *Rec.* 1.27–71. A main point is the contention that the Messiah announced by the Torah (Gen 49:10 and Num 24:17) is to be believed, and his return expected, by Gentiles rather than Israel.

This makes one curious to know what Justin's source might think about the eschatological role of Israel. Is Israel ultimately to be saved? In the *Apology*, Justin's most extensive testimony on Jesus' return is an expanded version of Zech 12:10–12 (52.10–12), into which lines from Isa 43:5–6, 29:13, 63:17, 64:10; and Joel 2:12–13 have been inserted:

I will order the four winds to collect together the scattered children; I will command the north wind to carry them, and the south wind not to strike against them. And

37; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 72. See also *Rec.* 1.64.2: “[After the destruction of the temple] the gospel will be proclaimed to the nations as a testimony of you, so that your unbelief might be judged on the basis of their belief” (Stanley Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 99).

⁴⁰ Translation according to Stanley Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 81–83.

⁴¹ See especially Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (2d ed.; TU 70; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), 236.

⁴² Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 236 and 248–49.

then there shall be great lamentation in Jerusalem, not the lamentation of mouths or of lips, but the lamentation of the heart; and they shall tear not their clothing, but their thoughts; they shall lament tribe by tribe, and then they shall look upon the One whom they pierced, and they shall exclaim: “Why, O Lord, have you made us wander from Your way? The glory which our fathers blessed has for us become a shame.”⁴³

When Justin himself alludes to Zech 12:10–12 (*Dial.* 14.8; 32.2; 64.7; 118.1), he seems to think that Jewish repentance at the confrontation with the returning Messiah is too late and in vain—it will not save them (this is explicit in *Dial.* 118.1). In introducing the long composite version of this text in *1 Apol.* 52.9, he is also explicit about this: “Then shall they repent when it will avail them nothing.” But this understanding of Israel’s eschatological lament at the Messiah’s return is not easy to apply to the composite quotation in *1 Apol.* 52. All the added elements emphasize the care and compassion with which God brings home his people from the Diaspora, and the sincerity of Israel’s repentance. It therefore seems likely that the composite quotation envisages a saving repentance by the Jews as a people (“tribe by tribe”) at (or immediately before) the Messiah’s return.

The resultant picture of the salvation of the Gentiles and Israel is strikingly and perhaps surprisingly in line with Paul in Rom 11. At present, the Messiah is received by Gentiles rather than Jews, the majority within Israel being “hardened” with regard to him. But eschatologically “all Israel” will repent and believe.

It is impossible to say whether the source in *Rec.* 1.27–71 could have contained this eschatological vision of salvation for all Israel, since it clearly is not fully preserved in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. But there is another, probably Jewish-Christian, parallel to Justin’s proof from prophecy, namely, the Christian interpolations (or redaction[s]) of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Jacob Jervell has made the good point that the Christian interpolator would prefer that his readers not take his interpolations as the only message he wanted to convey. In fact, he would rather that his readers not “detect” his interpolations at all. Instead, he would have them read the *entire text as a whole* and acquire the meaning of the entire text through the interpolations. The same would hold true, only to a greater extent, if we should prefer to speak of a Christian author of the Testaments using Jewish sources.

With this in mind, let us turn first to the passage *T. Jud.* 24–25. Here Judah announces that a Star from Jacob [Num 24:17] and a man from Judah’s seed [Gen 49:10] will arise. He will be anointed with God’s Spirit [cf. Isa 11:2]; he will be God’s “shoot” [Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15]; and he will be a “scepter of righteousness” for the nations, saving all those who call upon the name of the Lord. Thereafter the twelve patriarchs will rise and all tribes of Israel be saved with them, and there will be one people of the Lord, comprising all Israel and the Gentiles. Next, in *T. Levi* 18, we find a parallel passage with mostly the same motifs, only more

⁴³ Falls, 89–90. See the detailed textual analysis of this composite text in Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 76–78.

extensively developed. Here it is explicitly said that the new priest will enlighten the Gentiles, whereas Israel will be darkened. In the end, however, the patriarchs will rise and the holy ones in Israel will join in the eternal jubilation. Similar sayings about the Messiah saving Israel and the nations occur in shorter version in *T. Sim.* 7.2 and *T. Reu.* 6.11–12. One should add to this the many passages in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* in which the deuteronomistic sin-exile-return pattern is applied to Israel, and in which the Christian interpolator/author betrays his concern for the final salvation of all Israel. All this serves to highlight the close parallels between Justin's messianic proof from prophecy in the *Apology* and the Christianly redacted *Testaments*, and the Jewish Christian character of both.

3.5. *The Messiah, baptism, and the Law*

Again, the Jewish Christian source in *Rec.* 27–71 is the most interesting external source for comparison of the theme of the Messiah, baptism, and the Law.

In *1 Apol.* 50–51 Justin quotes Isa 52:12–53:12 (cut in two by an interpolated comment between Isa 53:8a and 8b); in *Dial.* 13 he quotes the whole of Isa 52:10–54:6. Behind such long quotations (from complete scrolls of biblical books) there usually lurk some shorter proof-texts from his testimony sources, and these crop up in his shorter, non-LXX quotations, as well as in allusions. He has several allusions to Isa 53:5 (“we were healed by his stripes”: *Dial.* 17.1; 32.2; 43.3; 63.2; 95.3; 137.1) and Isa 53:7 (“he was led as a sheep to slaughter”: *Dial.* 32.2; 72.3; 89.3; 90.1; 111.3; 114.2). These exact phrases from Isa 53 are used as a major testimony on Christ’s suffering in *Barn.* 5.2: “He was wounded because of our lawless acts and weakened because of our sins. *By his bruising we were healed [Isa 53:5]. He was led like a sheep to slaughter;* and like a lamb, silent before the one who shears it [Isa 53:7].”⁴⁴ The introduction to this testimony in *Barnabas* contains clear allusions to baptism and the forgiveness of sins in baptism: Christ delivered his flesh to corruption “that we should be sanctified by the remission of sin, that is, by his sprinkled blood” (5.1).⁴⁵

This connection between Isa 53 and baptism recurs in a striking way in Justin. The long quotation of Isa 52:10–54:6 in *Dial.* 13 is introduced in the following, somewhat surprising, way:

Indeed, Isaiah did not send you to the [Jewish ritual] bath to wash away murder and other sins, which all the water of the ocean could not cleanse, but, as expected, it was of old, that bath of salvation which he mentioned and which was for the repentant, who are no longer made pure by the blood of goats and sheep, or by the ashes of a heifer, or by the offerings of fine flour, but by faith through the blood and death of Christ who suffered death for this precise purpose. (*Dial.* 13.1)⁴⁶

Having finished his long quotation, Justin goes on to comment:

⁴⁴ Translations from *Barnabas* according to Ehrman, LCL.

⁴⁵ For baptismal allusions in this phraseology, see Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 234–36.

⁴⁶ Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 22.

Thus it is that we have believed through the baptism of repentance and knowledge of God, which was instituted for the sins of the people of God, as Isaiah testifies, and we recognize that that same baptism which he announced, and which alone can purify penitents, is the water of life. (*Dial.* 14.1)⁴⁷

Two motifs are held together here: (1) the expiation of sins achieved by Christ's death on the cross is applied to the believer in baptism; and (2) therefore Christian baptism is the final substitute of all earlier means of purification from sins, especially sacrifices.

The most striking parallel to this concept is to be found in the Jewish Christian source in the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*, 1.27–71. Here we read the following:

[The prophet like Moses] would first of all admonish them . . . to cease with sacrifices; lest they think that with the ceasing of the sacrifices remission of sins could not be effected for them, [he] instituted for them baptism by water, in which they might be absolved from all sins through the invocation of his name, . . . [so that] henceforth following a perfect life they might remain in immortality, purified not through the blood of animals but through the purification of God's wisdom. (1.39.1–2)⁴⁸

The last words here are suspiciously close to the gnostic leanings of the redactor of the *Grundschrift*, and may conceal an original contrasting of Christ's blood with the blood of the sacrificial animals. In any case the passage is remarkably close to the idea underlying Justin's material reviewed above. And the parallel extends further. If the law (about sacrifices) was only temporary and to be abrogated with the advent of Christ, why was this law given at all? Justin's answer is that the ceremonial laws were given as a temporary concession to Israel's hardness of heart (*σκληροκαρδία*), a hardness of heart consisting in a peculiar propensity for idolatry, demonstrated in the episode of the golden calf.⁴⁹ A clear statement occurs in *Dial.* 19.5–6:

[The patriarchs were righteous without observing the Mosaic ceremonial commandments, and so were their descendants] down to the time of Moses, when your people showed itself wicked and ungrateful to God by molding a golden calf as an idol in the desert. Therefore, God, adapting his laws to that weak people, ordered you to offer sacrifices to his name, in order to save you from idolatry.⁵⁰

Compare this with the following from the Jewish Christian source in *Recognitions* 1.27–71:

When the faithful and wise steward Moses perceived [by the people having made the golden calf] that the vice of sacrificing to idols had become deeply ingrained in the

⁴⁷ Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 24.

⁴⁸ Translation according to Stanley Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 69.

⁴⁹ This motif is stated or hinted at in the following passages: *Dial.* 18.2; 19.5–6; 20.4; 22.1; 27.2; 43.1; 44.2; 45.3; 46.5,7; 47.2; 67.4,8,10; 73.6; 102.6; 131.4; 132.1; 133.1; 136.3.

⁵⁰ Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 32.

people owing to the association with the Egyptians and that it was not possible for the root of this evil to be taken from them, he allowed them to sacrifice, but he permitted this to be done to God alone, in order that he might eliminate, so to speak, half of the deeply ingrained vice [viz. sacrificing to idols. The other half, teaching them to cease with sacrifices altogether, was left to the True Prophet, Jesus]. (*Rec.* 1.36.1–2)⁵¹

No doubt this is strikingly similar to Justin, but there is also no doubt that in *Recognitions* the basic idea is preserved in a more original version than in Justin. In *Recognitions* the “problem” is Israel’s habit of sacrificing to idols, acquired during the stay in Egypt, and the remedy is the laws about sacrifice in the Mosaic law. There is a clear correspondence between illness and remedy, and exactly the same idea is contained in a rabbinic midrash on Lev 17:3.⁵² Referring to Lev 17:7 (“they shall no more slay their sacrifices for satyrs”), this midrash lets Moses institute the sacrificial service in order to divert Israel’s propensity for sacrificing into a legitimate outlet. God is portrayed as saying, through the laws on sacrifice: “Let them offer sacrifices to me at all times in the Tent of Meeting, and thus they will be separated from idolatry and saved from punishment.”

In Justin this clear and logical reason for the sacrificial laws is made to “explain” things other than those for which it was constructed. Justin knows that the temple has disappeared and that the Jews of his day no longer brought the sacrifices required by the laws. Instead, he focuses on the ceremonial laws the Jews of his day could still practice: circumcision, Sabbath, new moons, dietary laws, etc. If he is to explain the necessity of all these laws on the basis of the golden calf episode, he can no longer regard that event as a manifestation of a bad habit of sacrificing, due to bad Egyptian influence (as in *Rec.* 1.36), but rather as the prime manifestation of an essential trait in Israel’s nature as a people. This trait would then necessitate the other laws as well. All of them were necessary to discipline this stubborn people.

In this case, therefore, we can observe not only how Justin employs an idea that seems to be of Jewish/Jewish Christian origin, but also how he modifies it to suit his own polemical situation. In the original post-70 situation the idea served to justify the disappearance of the temple service, and this disappearance was exploited as an argument in favor of Jesus being the true Mosaic Prophet. In Justin’s writings it has become a polemical weapon against ritual observances—circumcision, Sabbath, etc.—that may well have been taken for granted by his Jewish Christian sources.

There is one more motif in Justin that seems closely related to the christological material here reviewed. It is found in *1 Apol.* 47–49; *Dial.* 16–17; 108:2–3; 133; 136–37, and ascribes the Jews’ loss of their land and their city and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple to the fact that they had killed the Just One

⁵¹ Translation according to Stanley Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 65–66.

⁵² *Lev. Rab.* 22.8. The midrash is ascribed to the Amora Rabbi Levi of the third century C.E.

(along with the prophets before him and Christians after him). This motif is very likely a reference to the decree by Hadrian after the Bar Kokhba war, banning Jews from the new Aelia Capitolina. This theological interpretation of recent events in the land of Israel is woven into composite quotations of Old Testament texts, very much in the same way as we have seen in the christological proof-texts already. Some examples:

Their land is desolate,
and their enemies consume it before them (Isa 1:7 non-LXX and selective),
and none of them shall dwell therein (Jer 50:3b).⁵³

In his comments on this text (*1 Apol.* 47.5–6), and in his allusion to the same combined text in *Dial.* 16.2, Justin explicitly takes the text to refer to Hadrian's post-war decree: "You [Romans] are fully aware that it [the city] was guarded by you, lest anyone should dwell in it, and that a death penalty was decreed for any Jew caught entering it" (*1 Apol.* 47.6).

Woe to you, because you have forsaken the living fountain, and have dug for yourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer 2:13).

Is there not a wilderness where Mount Sion is? (Isa 16:1)

For I have given Jerusalem a bill of divorce in your sight (Jer 3:8).

The combination of Jer 2:13 and Isa 16:1 is present in *Barnabas* also (11.2–3), but *Barnabas* is hardly Justin's direct source for this part of Justin's composite quotation (the text of *Barnabas* deviates from the LXX text where Justin agrees, and vice versa). The version *Barnabas* quotes could refer to the situation after 70 C.E.: ". . . this people has committed two evils: they have deserted me, the spring of life, and they have dug for themselves a cistern of death (Jer 2:13). Is my holy mountain Sinai [= Sion?] a desert rock? For ye shall be as fledgling birds, fluttering about when they are taken away from the nest" (Isa 1:16–17). *Barnabas* introduces this with the following interesting words: "Concerning the water it has been written with regard to Israel that they will not receive the baptism that brings the remission of sins, but will build for themselves" (11.1). All of this makes excellent sense when seen together with the Jewish Christian source in *Rec.* 1.39: Jesus came to abolish sacrifices, and instead provide forgiveness of sins through the baptism which he instituted. If the Jews rejected this baptism (and continued with sacrifices), they should "be made exiles from their place and kingdom." But whereas *Barnabas*'s composite quotation has the post-70 situation in mind, Justin's quotation has been "updated" by adding Jer 3:8 as an allusion to Hadrian's decree after 135 C.E. It seems very likely that *Barnabas* as well as Justin are here drawing on modified Old Testament testimonies deriving from the same Jewish Christian milieu, situated close to the events in Jerusalem/Israel, and responding to them with creative re-combinations of Old Testament texts.

⁵³ *1 Apol.* 47.5, translation Falls, 85.

4. Material from the Other Source behind the *Dialogue*

The christological proof-text tradition that Justin employed in the *Apology*, the so-called “kerygma source,” focused upon the task and the work, but not the person of the Messiah. It was not explicitly concerned with his nature; for example, his divine pre-existence. It is otherwise with the christological testimonies we encounter in parts of the *Dialogue*. Here the question of the more-than-human, divine nature of the Messiah is brought to the fore. The main Jewish objection to the testimonies brought forward by Justin is that they speak of a human-only king, and that many of them did in fact refer to Hezekiah (or Solomon). This objection is never stated by Trypho, but always by Justin himself, who informs Trypho that “your teachers” say this.⁵⁴ These Jewish objections stated by Justin himself are well integrated into the flow of his argument, whereas it is otherwise with the objections stated by Trypho. As a rule they side-track the argument. I think the simplest explanation of this is that the objections stated by Justin himself were contained in the source he is following; hence this source ought to be a *dialogue*. The objections stated by Trypho are probably questions not contained in the source, and Justin’s answers to them are his own additions to the source. This explains the many side-tracks and excursions in Justin’s dialogue. I have argued elsewhere that the source we are concerned with here was Aristo of Pella’s *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*.⁵⁵ It was written in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt (let us say around 140 C.E.), and according to later reports, the Jewish participant advanced several objections against the Christian position that Jesus, or the Messiah, was divine. All of this matches Justin’s second source in the *Dialogue* perfectly. This source argued against a Jewish view which historicized the messianic prophecies of the Bible by applying them to Solomon or Hezekiah or some other historical king of Israel. This exegetical strategy would be very understandable among the rabbis of the land of Israel, when for the second time they had experienced the terrible consequences of wars instigated by messianic pretenders. At a later period we see this strategy being advocated by Rabbi Hillel: “There shall be no Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah” (*b. Sanh.* 99a).⁵⁶ If we assume that some rabbis, in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba war, downplayed messianism as much as possible, emphasizing the human-only nature of the Messiah and reserving the more

⁵⁴ For details of this and the following, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 240–42.

⁵⁵ Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 234–42.

⁵⁶ Translation according to Isidore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nezikin, Sanhedrin* (London: Soncino, 1935), 669. Hillel’s saying could well be prompted by disappointment among the rabbis when nothing happened at the beginning of the 2,000 “days of the Messiah” which, according to the 6,000 years’ scheme of the duration of the world, were to be inaugurated in 240 C.E. See Str-B 4.2:989–94. This Hillel may have been the brother of Patriarch Judah II, whose period may have been ca. 230–270. See footnote 4 in the Soncino translation.

exuberant messianic texts for the great historic kings of the past—Solomon, Hezekiah—we seem to face exactly the kind of Jewish position which Justin's source in the *Dialogue* is out to refute.

4.1. *The divine Son of God*

According to this source in Justin, the messianic texts portray a Messiah greater than human limits, a divine Messiah who accomplishes a truly divine task. The Messiah's task is not to liberate Israel from her human oppressors, but rather to liberate Israel and all humankind from their supernatural oppressors, the Devil and his hosts, the evil spirits. This divine power was manifested right from Jesus' birth, when the Magi coming to worship the baby had been liberated by him from the power of evil spirits, even before he could say “father!” and “mother!” (Isa 8:4; Matt 2:1–12; *Dial.* 77–78). His baptism and subsequent temptation was his first major confrontation with the devil, but so was his entire life, and especially his death, descent to Sheol, ascent to heaven, and enthronement at the Father's right hand.⁵⁷

In Justin's source, the Messiah is presented as God's pre-existent Wisdom who has descended to earth, and ascended again to his heavenly glory. We shall have more to say about this Wisdom Christology in the next section of this chapter. Here I add another aspect of great significance in Justin's source, namely that Jesus is portrayed as the second and antitypical Adam. He reverses the fall of Adam by conquering where Adam was conquered. He “recapitulates” in his own story the story of Adam, but with the opposite point of departure, the opposite direction and the opposite result. It must suffice here to quote two passages in which this “recapitulation” theology is clearly expressed.

... the Devil himself, ... [was] called serpent by Moses, the Devil by Job and Zachariah, and was addressed as Satan by Jesus. This indicated that he had a compound name made up of the actions which he performed; for the word “Sata” in the Hebrew and Syrian tongue means “apostate,” while “nas” is the word which means in translation “serpent”; thus, from both parts is formed the one word “Sata-nas.” It is narrated in the Memoirs of the Apostles that as soon as Jesus came up out of the River Jordan and a voice said to him: “You are My Son, I have begotten you this day,” this Devil came and tempted him, even so far as to exclaim: “Worship me”; but Christ replied: “Get behind me, Satan, the Lord your God shall you worship, and Him only shall you serve.” For, since the Devil had deceived Adam, he fancied that he could in some way harm him also. (*Dial.* 103.5–6)⁵⁸

The very point of the (pseudo-)etymology given for Satan in this passage is to identify the Tempter addressed by Jesus in Matt 4:11 (conflated with Matt

⁵⁷ In several respects, the Christology of this source is close to the Christology of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, another Jewish Christian work with much material from roughly the same period. See in particular chapter 10 of this book.

⁵⁸ Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 156–57, somewhat modified.

16:23) with the serpent that tempted the first man. In this way the parallelism between the first and the second Adam is made plain. Since Justin knew no Hebrew and probably no Aramaic, there is every reason to think he got this midrashic etymology from a source—very likely the same source from which the anti-Hezekiah and anti-Solomon polemic derives.

The name *Israel* . . . means a man who overcomes power, for *Is-ra* is “a man who overcomes,” and *El* is “power.” That Christ would do this when he became man was thus foretold by the mystery of Jacob’s wrestling with him who appeared to him . . . For after he became man . . . Christ was approached by the Devil (that power which is also called Serpent and Satan), who tempted him and tried to overcome him by demanding that he worship him. But he was utterly crushed and overcome by Christ, who convicted him of his wickedness when . . . he asked to be adored as God, thus becoming an apostate from the will of God. This was his reply: “It is written: The Lord your God shall you worship and him only shall you serve.” Defeated and rebuked, the Devil then departed. (*Dial.* 125.3–4)⁵⁹

There can hardly be any doubt that Justin is here drawing a second time on the same source he was using in the previous passage. That he is inserting material from this source at this point of the *Dialogue* is actually beyond doubt, because the idea of the quoted passage is utterly at odds with Justin’s own ideas in the context. According to Justin, the man fighting with Jacob was Christ—according to Justin’s general principle that all the theophanies of the Bible were really appearances of the Son. But in the passage quoted here, the man is a type of the Devil, or perhaps identical with the Devil, and it is Jacob who plays the role of Christ. Justin’s struggles to unite these entirely different interpretations of Gen 32 are written all over *Dial.* 125.

I mention one final passage that very likely derives from the same source:

Christ, indeed, is the Lord who was commissioned by the Lord in heaven, that is, the creator of all things, to inflict those dreadful punishments upon Sodom and Gomorrah, which are described in the Scriptures in this fashion: “The Lord [on earth, speaking with Abraham] rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord [in heaven] out of heaven.” [Gen 19:24] (*Dial.* 56.23)⁶⁰

Justin is here in the middle of his long tract on the biblical theophanies, which he takes to be epiphanies of the Son, Christ. After quoting Gen 19:24 in which there appear to be two divine Lords, not one (*Dial.* 56.12), he goes on to quote Ps 110:1 and Ps 45:6–7 to the same effect: two Lords, not one (56.14). This argument simply cannot be without any connection to a debate between Jewish believers and the rabbis in the land of Israel at approximately Justin’s time:

A min [Jewish heretic] once said to Rabbi Ishmael ben Jose [ca 180 C.E.]: “It is written, ‘Then the Lord caused to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire

⁵⁹ Falls, *Dialogue*, 188, somewhat modified.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

from the Lord' [Gen 19:24]; but 'from him' should have been written!" A certain fuller said, "Leave him to me, I will answer him: It is written, 'And Lamech said to his wives, Ada and Zillah, hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech' [Gen 4:23]; but he should have said 'my wives!' But such is the scriptural idiom—so here too, it is the scriptural idiom." "Whence do you know that?" asked he [Rabbi Ishmael].—"I heard it in a public discourse of Rabbi Meir." (*b. Sanh.* 38b)⁶¹

Rabbi Meir was active in the years around 150 C.E., and may have taken part in public disputes of this kind some years before Justin's writing of the *Dialogue*—in fact, early enough for Aristo of Pella to have included arguments of this kind in his *Dialogue*. In the *Talmud*, the only subject of controversy is the duality of Lords in Gen 19:24; there is no question of the theophanies as such. In the preceding context in *Sanhedrin*, several scriptural passages are quoted which the *minim* take as proof of more than one Lord or God: Gen 1:26; Gen 11:7; Gen 35:7; Deut 4:7; 2 Sam 7:23; Dan 7:9; Exod 24:1. In several of these instances, the arguments of the *minim* are based on the *Hebrew* text and seem to be at home in the context of the land of Israel. This parallels Justin's practice in *Dial.* 56:12–14, where also texts testifying to a plurality of Lords are quoted, with no concern for the general theory of theophanies. It seems as if Justin is drawing on a Jewish Christian source quite parallel to the Talmudic passage, but building it into his tract on the theophanies. And there is more: Justin's very extensive exegetical argument concerning the whole passage Gen 18–19 seems almost tailor-made to refute the argument of the fuller in the Talmudic passage: there is no question of scriptural idiom here; the whole context shows that one of the Angels visiting Abraham was called Lord, and that he was different from the Father in heaven (the argument of *Dial.* 56 as a whole).

What we face in this source in Justin is a high Christology apparently developed in the land of Israel by Jewish believers in intense dialogue and controversy with leading rabbis in the years immediately following the Bar Kokhba war. If we are right to assume that Justin's source is identical with Aristo of Pella's *Dialogue*, it means that contact between the Syrian land east of Jordan and the land of Israel west of Jordan was close in this period, and it gives some credence to the "flight to Pella" tradition, at least in the sense that Jewish believers in Pella might have been fugitives from the land of Israel, or at least have had some such people among them (perhaps from both wars, 66–70 and 132–135 C.E.). In any case, the Talmudic evidence confirms that there were debates between leading rabbis and Jewish believers in the land of Israel during the period of the Tannaim in which the Jewish believers represented a high Christology rather than an Ebionite variety.

This may come as a surprise to anyone accustomed to think that all Jewish believers were Ebionitic in their Christology. In order to substantiate that such was not the case, the next section of this chapter will present the Jewish background to, and the early development of, a high Christology that can be documented from other Jewish Christian sources.

⁶¹ Translation according to Epstein, *Sanhedrin*, 246.

4.2. Parallel material in other writers: The Son's mediatorship in creation

In Jewish literature before and around the beginning of the Common Era, it had become a commonplace that God created the world by His Wisdom, the latter being understood as a personified or hypostasized (female) divine attribute. The biblical basis for this was found in texts like Prov 3:19 and 8:29–30 (as part of Prov 8:22–31); and the thought is already treated as self-evident in Wis 8:4 and 9:2–9. In Philo we also meet this Wisdom, mediating in creation (*On Flight and Finding* 109; *That the Worse Attacks the Better* 54), sometimes personified as the Mother of the universe (*On Drunkenness* 30–31; 61; *On the Confusion of Tongues* 49). But more often Philo substitutes Logos for Wisdom in the active role as God's “tool” (ὅργανον) in creating the world.⁶² Philo offers the following midrash: Like a master architect, God first made a mental plan of the world in his mind, i.e., in his Logos, and then proceeded to create the visible world after its pattern.⁶³ Basically the same midrash recurs later in rabbinic interpretations of Gen 1:1, but here the pattern according to which, or by the help of which, God created the world, is identified as the Torah. We thus have a Wisdom/Torah equation.⁶⁴ The rabbis bolstered this by a *gezera shawa* exegesis of *reshit* (“Beginning”) in Gen 1:1 and Prov 8:22:

The Law says, “I was the instrument of the Highest [Prov 8:30] . . .” As a rule, when a human king builds a palace, he does not build it by himself, but calls in an architect, and the architect does not plan the building in his head, but he makes use of rolls and tablets . . . Even so the Holy One . . . looked in the Torah and created the world. And the Torah declares, “With *reshit* God created,” and *reshit* means none other than Torah, as it is said “The Lord begat me [Wisdom/Torah] as *reshit* of his way. [Prov 8:22]”⁶⁵

In *Targum Neofiti* the *bereshit* of Gen 1:1 is given a double translation, according to the idea in the midrash: “In the beginning, by Wisdom, the [word] of Yahweh created . . .”⁶⁶ The idea is attested in a well known saying by Rabbi Akiba: “Beloved are Israel, for to them was given the precious instrument; still greater was the love, in that it was made known to them that to them was given the pre-

⁶² See, e.g., Gottfried Schimanowski, *Weisheit und Messias: Die jüdischen Voraussetzungen der urchristlichen Präexistenzchristologie* (WUNT 2.17; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985), 85–94.

⁶³ Philo, *On the Creation of the World*, 17–20. Cf. the comments on this passage in Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (trans. Israel Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 1:199–200.

⁶⁴ This equation is prepared already in Sir 24:23.

⁶⁵ *Gen. Rab.* 1.1, trans. according to Urbach, *The Sages*, 1:198–99.

⁶⁶ Similarly in the *Fragmentary Targum*, see Hans-Friedrich Weiß, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinensischen Judentums* (TU 97; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 197–99; Gary Anderson, “The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 21–29. The added word “word” in brackets is a modern conjecture by the editor. The Aramaic text requires a noun here because of the following “of Yahweh.”

cious instrument by which the world was created, as it is written, ‘For I give you good doctrine; forsake ye not my Law’ [Prov 4:2]” (*m. ’Abot* 3:15).⁶⁷

In early Christian writings, this idea of the mediatorship of Wisdom in creation is transferred, not to the Torah, but to God’s Son. He is identified with σοφία as well as with the sapiential λόγος: Col 1:15–16; Heb 1:2–3; John 1:1–3. The Jewish character of this Wisdom Christology shines through most clearly in Hermas, who directly identifies God’s Son with the Torah:

This great tree that overshadows plains and mountains and the entire earth is the law of God that has been given to the world. And this law is the Son of God who is proclaimed to the ends of the earth. (*Sim.* 8.3.2; Ehrman, LCL)

The Wisdom background of this is obvious in that the identification of Wisdom or Torah with the Tree of Life is commonplace in Jewish literature since Prov 3:18.⁶⁸ But so is the identification of Wisdom with God’s Spirit (in Wis 7:7, 22, 27 it is taken for granted), and Hermas is therefore propounding the same Wisdom Christology in *Sim.* 5.6.5:

God made the Holy Spirit dwell in the flesh that he desired, even though it preexisted and created all things. (Ehrman, LCL)

In Jewish tradition, this concept of Wisdom’s mediatorship in creation was also particularly applied to the creation of the first human beings; hence the idea that the “we” and “us” in Gen 1:26 reflect a dialogue between God and his Wisdom: “And on the sixth day I commanded my Wisdom to create man . . .”⁶⁹

On this background, it is easy to see the continuity of the development of this Jewish Wisdom concept in early Christian sayings about God and his Logos (or Wisdom, or Son).

The idea of God consulting his Wisdom (= his Son) when he was about to create humankind is contained clearly in *Barnabas*:

... [Our Lord Jesus] was the Lord of the entire world, the one to whom God said at the foundation of the world, “Let us make a human according to our image and likeness.” (*Barn.* 5.5 [Ehrman, LCL], cf. the parallel in 6.12)

In the *Dialogue between Jason and Papiscus*, written ca. 140 C.E. by the Jewish believer Aristo of Pella, the Hebrew text of Gen 1:1 was read like this, according to Jerome: *In Filio fecit Deus caelum et terram* (“God made heaven and earth through the Son”).⁷⁰ This is clearly based on the same identification of *reshit* in

⁶⁷ Translation according to Danby, *Mishnah*, 452.

⁶⁸ See rich material gathered in Lage Pernveden, *The Concept of the Church in the Shepherd of Hermas* (Studia theologica Lundensia 27; Lund: Gleerup, 1966), 52–57.

⁶⁹ 2 En. 30.8, long recension, OTP 1:150. The same idea is contained already in Wis 9:2. See esp. Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1,26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (FRLANT 76; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1960), 46–50.

⁷⁰ Jerome, *Qu. hebr. Gen.* 1.1.

Gen 1:1 with the Wisdom of Prov 8:22 as in the Jewish texts surveyed above, only here the Wisdom of Prov 8:22 is identified with God's Son (Jesus the Messiah), not God's daughter Torah, as in the rabbinic texts.

There is reason to doubt, however, the precision of Jerome's report on how Aristo understood the Hebrew text of Gen 1:1. In the same context, Jerome says that Tertullian also had this reading of the biblical text; this is imprecise at best. What Tertullian wrote was *in principio Deus fecit sibi filium* ("in the beginning God made for himself a Son").⁷¹ This reading of Gen 1:1 clearly has the Son mediating in creation, but does not identify the Son with the *reshit/ἀρχή* of Gen 1:1. Tertullian's source for this reading could well be Irenaeus's [Greek] translation of a curious Hebrew version of Gen 1:1 in *Epid.* 43: "A Son in the beginning God established then heaven and earth."⁷² Modern scholars are divided as to how this sentence should be divided. Some read it: "A Son [was] in the beginning, God then created heaven and earth". Others read it: "A Son in the beginning God established,—then heaven and earth." If Irenaeus was Tertullian's source, Tertullian's reading would be based on the latter understanding.⁷³

It is interesting that Tertullian himself refuses to read Gen 1:1 as "in the beginning God made for himself a Son," even though it would suit his argument in *Against Praxeas* admirably. He says, "As there is no ground for this [reading of the text], I am led to other arguments . . ." (*Prax.* 5.1). Later, Jerome has the same criticism. There is no *baben* (Hebrew: "through the Son") in the Hebrew text, he says, therefore the translation "By the Son God created . . ." may be correct theologically, but not according to the language.⁷⁴ This means, quite simply, that these Latin Fathers were no longer familiar with the Jewish *gezera shawa* exegesis which (by juxtaposing Gen 1:1 and Prov 8:22) could read *reshit* in Gen 1:1 as referring to the person of Wisdom (identified in its turn either with a female Torah or a masculine Son of God). We see Gentile Christian theologians rejecting a piece of Jewish Christian exegesis that is entirely Jewish in method.

⁷¹ *Prax.* 5.1.

⁷² Translation according to Joseph P. Smith, *St. Irenaeus: Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (ACW 16; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1952), 75. Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* is only extant in an Armenian translation. Irenaeus wrote in Greek, and the Armenian text is probably translated directly from his Greek original. In *Epid.* 43 there is first a transcription in Armenian characters of an obviously Hebrew text of Gen 1:1, then an Armenian translation, probably a very wooden one, of Irenaeus's Greek translation of the Hebrew text. Irenaeus probably knew no Hebrew, and would very likely have written down the Hebrew text with Greek characters.

⁷³ In an interesting discussion of these passages in Irenaeus and Tertullian, Pierre Nautin thinks the word-order in Tertullian, which corresponds closely to the Hebrew in Irenaeus, shows that Tertullian based his version directly on the Hebrew preserved in Irenaeus (or rather his source, which Nautin thinks is *Jason and Papiscus*), cf. Pierre Nautin, "Genèse 1,1–2, de Justin à Origène," in *In Principio: Interprétations des premiers versets de la Genèse* (CNRS 152; Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1973), 61–91; esp. 83–86. This is possible, but one cannot exclude the possibility that Tertullian "improved" the somewhat awkward order of words in Irenaeus.

⁷⁴ Jerome, *Qu. hebr.* Gen. 1.1.

It is now time to turn to the Hebrew version of Gen 1:1 preserved by Irenaeus. In the Armenian characters of the *Demonstration* it reads as follows:

baresit bara elovim basan benuam samentares

The three first and the last word correspond roughly to the Hebrew text of Gen 1:1, and may be restored accordingly:

bereshit bara' 'elohim . . . [et?]⁷⁵ [ha]shamaim [we-⁹e]t [ha]⁹arets

Two corruptions typical of Irenaeus and/or later copyists and translators can be gauged from this: (1) a tendency to contractions, and (2) substituting n for m. Supposing this “targumic” version of the text was once written in Hebrew characters, Irenaeus would have to have it read aloud to him, and to write it down in Greek characters based on what he heard, or thought he heard. This would easily explain the corruptions. The degree of corruption may have increased in the translation and copying process after Irenaeus. Several proposals towards full restoration of the original Hebrew text behind Irenaeus’s garbled quote have been made. I will mention two of them and then propose a third on my own.

(1) Joseph P. Smith has proposed the following restoration of the Hebrew:^{⁷⁶}

beresit bara' 'elohim (ba[ruch] shemo] ben, weachar hashamaim we-et haarets.

“In the beginning God (Blessed be His Name!) made a Son and afterwards heaven and earth.”

This reconstruction of Irenaeus’s Hebrew text has the advantage of remaining close to Irenaeus’s Greek translation—except for his order of words. It should have been “In the beginning God created a Son . . .” as in Tertullian. But the interjection “Blessed be His Name” was rather unusual in biblical texts of this period, and Smith’s reconstruction therefore does not satisfy everyone.

(2) Dominique Cerbelaud has proposed another restoration:^{⁷⁷}

beresit bara' 'elohim bachozen ben im hashamaim we-et haarets.

“In the beginning God created in [His] bowels a Son with heaven and earth.”

This is ingenious, and makes *basan ben uam* appear almost uncorrupted. There are considerable difficulties with this restoration, however. Cerbelaud

^{⁷⁵}There is absolutely no trace of the first *nota accusativi* before *hashamaim* in Irenaeus’s text. On the other hand it is difficult to understand why the original Hebrew underlying Irenaeus’s quote should leave out the first *nota accusativi*, but keep the second. Irenaeus or someone after him is obviously contracting a Hebrew text they did not understand. It is therefore not surprising if the first *nota accusativi* fell prey to this process of contraction.

^{⁷⁶}Joseph P. Smith, “Hebrew Christian Midrash in Irenaeus Epid. 43,” *Bib* 38 (1957): 24–34.

^{⁷⁷}Dominique Cerbelaud, “La citation ‘hébraïque’ de la Démonstration d’Irénée (Dém., 43): une proposition,” *Muséon: Revue d’études orientales* 104 (1991): 221–34.

believes the idea of God creating the Son in his “bowels” or “bosom” is derived from Psalm 110:3 (which is quoted immediately after the Hebrew quotation). But if so, why did the composer of the Hebrew text choose the very rare *chozen*⁷⁸ instead of the *rechem* of Ps 110? Besides, the presence of a “*t*” before *arets* in Irenaeus’s text indicates that his text had the *nota acussativi* (*et*) before *arets*. This is hardly possible if the two last objects were linked to the first (*ben*) by the preposition *im*.

(3) I therefore propose a third possibility here:

bereshit bara elohim beshem beno [et?] hashamaim we-et haarets

“In the beginning God created through His Son’s Name heaven and earth.”

This involves reading *basan* as *beshem* and *benu am* as *beno ha[m]*.⁷⁹ My main argument for this restoration is that right after this quotation, Irenaeus adds another reference (from some testimony source, no doubt), a combined text from Ps 110:3 and Ps 72:17: “Before the daystar I begot you, *your name* exists before the sun.” The whole of *Epid. 43* has the Son’s pre-existence, his existence before the created world, as its theme, and Ps 72:17 had become an important testimony for the Son’s preexistence. His Name existed before the sun was made. This presupposes that the name and the person stand for each other, so that there is no difference in saying the Name pre-exists, or the person pre-exists. And this corresponds precisely to the state of affairs in Jewish comments on this particular verse in Psalm 72. On the basis of this Scripture, the Messiah’s name is said to exist prior to creation, and this very likely implies a personal pre-existence of the Messiah himself. Or if not, it would easily lend itself to such an interpretation by Jewish believers who applied this to God’s Son Jesus.⁸⁰ On this background, saying in Gen 1:1 that God made the world by His Son’s Name would be equivalent to saying he made the world by His Son. In this way, Irenaeus’s Hebrew “Targum” of Gen 1:1 could be paraphrased as follows: “By *reshit* [the Wisdom of Prov 8:22] God created, viz. by His Son’s Name [Ps 72:17], heaven and earth.” The meaning of Irenaeus’s translation “A Son in the Beginning” could then be: “The Son of

⁷⁸ Attested only three times in the Hebrew Bible: Ps 129:7; Isa 49:22 and Neh 5:13.

⁷⁹ Supposing a mistake in the hearing: *ha-shamaim* being heard as *ham-shamin*.

⁸⁰ There are traces of such an exegesis of Ps 72:17 (also combined with Ps 72:5) in combination with Ps 110:3 in Justin also, suggesting he might have access to Irenaeus’s source for *Epid. 43. Dial. 45.4*: “Now he [Christ the Son of God] was also before the Morning Star [Ps 110:3 LXX: “I begat you from the womb before the Morning Star”] and the moon [Ps 72:5 LXX], and endured to be made flesh and be born by this Virgin who was of the race of David . . .” The whole context here clearly indicates use of the “recapitulation” source, which I have surmised might be *Jason and Papiscus*. Cf. also the very similar *Dial. 76.7*: “And David proclaimed that he would be “born of the womb” [Ps 110:3] before sun and moon [Ps 72:17 and 72:5] . . .” There is the same emphasis on pre-temporal birth and divine pre-existence here as in *Epid. 43*, based partly upon the same Psalm testimonies. For details, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 235–36.

God is ‘in’ the word *reshit* in the biblical text.”⁸¹ If he took this—the Hebrew text as well as the explanation of its meaning—from *Jason and Papiscus*, it would explain why Jerome could later summarize this writing’s understanding of Gen 1:1 by *in filio deus creavit*. It would also explain why Jerome objects there is no *baben* in the biblical text. He would immediately recognize *beshem beno* as an interpolation.

In any case, the Hebrew text in Irenaeus, very likely produced by a Jewish believer familiar with the Hebrew text and Jewish techniques of exegesis, exhibits a will to take one step further than the traditional combination of Prov 8:22 and Gen 1:1. Not satisfied to find Wisdom in the *reshit* of Gen 1:1, the author of this text adduces Ps 110:3 (the pre-temporal birth of the Messiah), and Ps 72:17 (the pre-creation existence of the Messiah’s Name) to equate pre-existent Wisdom with pre-existent Messiah, and interpolates this idea from Ps 72:17 into Gen 1:1, thus amplifying the christological exegesis of *reshit*. We do not know for certain who this Jewish believer—Irenaeus’s source for his testimonies in *Epid. 43*—was, but little tells against the hypothesis that he might be Aristo of Pella.⁸²

As one observes in Tertullian and Jerome, Gentile Christian scholars soon turned skeptical towards this kind of midrashic reading of Gen 1:1, and reading *reshit/ἀρχή* as a reference to God’s Son was abandoned among most Gentile authors. It seems that Justin already was hesitant to take the *ἀρχή* of Gen 1:1 as a reference to Christ. In his comments on *ἀρχή* as a christological title, he only connects it with Prov 8:22 (*Dial. 61.1–5; 62.4*).⁸³ There is one writer later than Justin, however, in whom we still see the creative *gezera shawa* exegesis of Gen 1:1 in full swing—Theophilus of Antioch (in the 180s C.E.). In his *Autol. 2.10*, there appears an extended midrash on Gen 1:1 and some other texts speaking about creation. In it, he partly seems to identify the Logos (Son of God) with the Wisdom spoken of in Prov 8:22 and elsewhere, but partly also to identify Wisdom with the Spirit of God, or quite simply to call it Wisdom, speaking as if Wisdom and Logos were two entities. This results in a certain vacillation in Theophilus’s text. What we observe here should probably best be understood as an early attempt at reading traditional christological testimonies in a trinitarian way,

⁸¹ Alternatively, Irenaeus’s Hebrew text could render *bereshit* twice, as in *Targum Neofiti*: (1) In the beginning, (2) by his Son’s Name, God created . . .

⁸² Another very likely indication of the use of Aristo’s dialogue in Irenaeus’s *Evideixis* is his short treatise on the seven heavens in *Epid. 9*, cf. about this theme in Aristo, chapter 19 of this book, section 1.1.

⁸³ In his immediate follower Tatian, *Orat. 5.1*, we find an echo of the *gezera shawa* exegesis of *ἀρχή* in Gen 1:1, but completely without scriptural references: “God ‘was in the beginning’ and we have received the tradition that ‘the beginning’ was the power of the Logos. . . . God with himself and the Logos which was in him established all things through the power of the Logos. By his mere will the Logos sprang forth . . . and became the ‘firstborn’ work of the Father. Him we know as the *ἀρχή* of the universe.” A further echo is found in Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis 10.1–4*, but here the predicate *ἀρχή* for the Logos is based on Prov 8:22 only, as in Justin.

identifying Wisdom with the Son *as well as* the Spirit of God. Immediately after Theophilus, Irenaeus was to develop this into much greater consequence and clarity. Here is Theophilus's midrash in excerpts:

Therefore God, having his own Logos innate in his bowels [Ps 110:3], generated him together with his own Wisdom, vomiting him forth [Ps 45:2] before everything else. He used this Logos as his servant [Prov 8:30 Heb. *amon?*] in the things created by him, and through him he made all things [John 1:3]. He is called "Beginning" [Gen 1:1; Prov 8:22] because he leads and dominates everything fashioned through him. It was he, Spirit of God [Gen 1:2] and Beginning [Gen 1:1], and Wisdom [Prov 8:22] and Power of the Most High [Luke 1:35], who came down into the prophets and spoke through them about the creation of the world and all the rest [Wis 9:9–18; 7:27]. For the prophets did not exist when the world came into existence; there was[, however,] the Wisdom of God which is in him and his holy Logos who is always present with him. For this reason he speaks thus through Solomon the prophet: 'When he prepared the heaven I was with him, and when he made the strong foundations of the earth I was with him, binding them fast' [Prov 8:27–29 LXX]. And Moses, who lived many years before Solomon—or rather, the Logos of God speaking through him as an instrument—says: "By the 'Beginning' God made heaven and earth" [Gen 1:1].⁸⁴

Many commentators have noticed the strikingly Jewish character of Theophilus's entire treatise, and have suggested he might be a Jewish believer himself. It is hardly possible to give proof of this, but in any case he seems dependent on Jewish-Christian exegetical work here.

The tradition surveyed in this paragraph was to have a long life in patristic writings as the theologoumenon that the Father created the world through his Logos or Son. But the exegetical underpinning of this doctrine soon receded into the background, and later writers were often satisfied to quote Prov 8:22(–31) in isolation as biblical basis for it, or simply to base it on New Testament sayings like John 1:1–3; Col 1:15–17 or Heb 1:2–3. It was only when living dialogue with Judaism was still the setting that Christian authors of later centuries kept the exegetical debate alive, as in the dialogues of *Timothy and Aquila*, *Athanasius and Zaccaeus*, *Zaccaeus and Apollonius*, and *Simon and Theophilus*.⁸⁵ Here the exegetical debate on how to read ἐν ἀρχῇ/in principio was still a live issue.

4.3. Millennialism from Justin onwards

When treating the millennial traditions in Papias, I meant to discover two different types of millennial ideas, one type in Papias and a different type in the New Testament book of Revelation. In Revelation there is no doubt

⁸⁴ *Autol.* 2.10, translation according to Robert M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 39–41. For extensive comments on Theophilus's exegesis of Gen 1:1–3, see Nautin, "Genèse 1,1–2, de Justin à Origène," 69–79.

⁸⁵ See A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 67–78, 117–23, 295–305. See also chapter 19 of this book.

that *the New Jerusalem*, Rev 21–22, is the scene of the realization of most biblical prophecies about a paradisiacal renewal of this earth—not the millennium, Rev 20:1–6. The latter is clearly said to be an intermediary state, followed by the apparent anticlimax of a renewed attack by the forces of Gog and Magog (Rev 20:7–10).⁸⁶

In Papias, however, it is apparently the millennium which is the scene of such fulfillment of prophecies, and particularly those which speak of a paradisiacal abundance of “earthly” blessings.

This is of interest when we turn to Justin. In his writings, too, there is a clear tendency to locate the scene of the realization of paradisiacal blessings in the renewed Jerusalem on this earth. There is a remarkable absence of any far-reaching spiritualization of such prophecies in Justin. He clearly envisages that all believers in Jesus—Jewish or Gentile—are to be gathered into a new and rebuilt Jerusalem, there to enjoy the blessings promised by the prophets.

In passages where Justin follows the “kerygma source,” there is no clear indication of a two-step eschatology.⁸⁷ The most natural reading of his sayings is that paradisiacal blessings in the New Jerusalem represent the final stage of salvation. It is only in *Dial.* 80–81 that Justin explicitly leaves this scheme behind and instead insists on a two-step model.⁸⁸ In *Dial.* 80.1–81.3 he develops the idea that Isa 65:17–25 is a crucial prophecy about the millennium, and that one saying within this prophecy (Isa 65:22) contains the secret of the millennium’s duration. Before commenting further on this, let me briefly remark that Isa 65:17–25 can be seen in the background of Papias’s millenarian thinking.⁸⁹ This would indicate that Justin is following a distinctive tradition in making Isa 65:17–25 such a crucial prophetic testimony.

This impression is strengthened when one studies his argument more closely. In the long quotation of the Isaiah text in *Dial.* 81:1–2, Justin follows his habit of quoting directly from a rather standard Septuagint text. In this text, Isa 65:22 reads: “For as the days of the tree of life, so shall be the days of my people.” When he singles out this phrase for special comment in *Dial.* 81:3, however, he quotes it in a different reading, corresponding exactly to the Hebrew text: “For as the days of the tree, so shall be the days of my people.” In Justin’s Greek text, as in the

⁸⁶ Revelation here clearly follows the sequence of Ezechiel, in which the eschatological battle with Gog/Magog (chapters 38–39) precedes the realization of the New Jerusalem (chapters 40–48). Obviously, Revelation took Ezek 40–48 to correspond to Rev 21–22, not Rev 20:4–6.

⁸⁷ See, e.g., *Dial.* 24.3; 25.1–26.1; 51.2; 85.7; 113.5; 123.6; 136.1; 138.3. For an analysis of this one-step eschatology in Justin, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 334–45.

⁸⁸ I therefore believe this differently oriented eschatology comes from the other source Justin is employing: the *Controversy of Aristo of Pella*. See Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 401–9.

⁸⁹ Papias’s fragment on a superabundance of vinegrapes in the millennium could echo Isa 65:21 (LXX), “. . . they shall plant vineyards, and eat their fruits, and drink the wine” (trans. according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 126).

Hebrew, it says simply “tree,” not “tree of life”. This is more significant than it seems, because it is essential to Justin’s argument that the tree in question is the tree of knowledge, not the tree of life. This is how Justin exploits this point:

Now, by the words, “For as the days of the tree, so shall be the days of my people, and the works of their hands shall be multiplied,” [Isa 65:22] we understand that a period of one thousand years is indicated in symbolic language. When it is said of Adam that “in the day that he eats of the tree [of knowledge], in that he shall die,” [Gen 2:17], we knew he was not a thousand years old. We also believe that the words, “The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,” [Ps 90:4] also led to the same conclusion. (*Dial.* 81:3)⁹⁰

This argument is entirely Jewish, set forward for the first time in *Jubilees* 4:30, frequent in rabbinic literature.⁹¹ Adam reached the age of 930, which means he actually died on the very “day” he ate of the tree, since this day was one of the Lord’s days lasting one thousand years.

It is only after Justin has argued for the existence of a millennium along these lines, apparently in close touch with a Jewish Christian tradition attested in Papias, that he also introduces the book of Revelation as supplementing evidence: “Moreover, a man among us named John, one of Christ’s apostles, received a revelation and foretold that followers of Christ would dwell in Jerusalem “for a thousand years” [Rev 20:4,6], and that afterwards the universal and, in short, everlasting resurrection and judgment would take place” [Rev 20:11–15] (*Dial.* 81.4).⁹² Justin simply leaps over Rev 20:7–10, the Gog Magog episode, because for him the transition from millennium to eternal life is only one of gradation within continuity. He may indicate *one* difference between the two stages, however. After the general resurrection human beings shall no longer marry [Luke 20:35–36], *Dial.* 81.4. This probably means they did so in the millennium, as the biblical prophecies indeed indicate they would.

In this way there is a certain vagueness, and perhaps tension, within Justin’s works with regard to the final fulfillment of biblical prophecies. They will be realized in the New Jerusalem, and this seems to be the scene of the millennium *as well as* life eternal.

Turning to Irenaeus, we do not find a similar vagueness or indecision with regard to this issue in his writing. In the greater part of his fifth book of *Against Heresies* he argues in great detail that the prophecies of the Bible, in all their earthly concreteness, will be realized on this earth during the millennium, and nowhere else and in no other stage in the eschatological drama. It is only towards the end of the book, however, that Irenaeus comes out in the open with what he

⁹⁰ Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 127.

⁹¹ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 19.8; *Numbers Rabbah* 5.4; 14.2. See for these and further references Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–1938), 1: 75–76 with note 72 in 5:98–99.

⁹² Translation according to Falls, *Dialogue*, 127.

thinks about the relation between the biblical prophecies and the eternal life in the world to come after the millennium.⁹³

In all these things, and by them all, the same God the Father is manifested, who

(1) fashioned man, and

(2) gave promise of the inheritance of the earth to the fathers, [He] who brought it [the creature] forth [from bondage] at the resurrection of the just [Rev 20:4–6], and fulfils the promises for the [millennial] kingdom of his Son;

(3) subsequently bestowing [in the world-to-come] in a paternal manner those things “which neither eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor has arisen within the heart of man” [1 Cor 2:9; Isa 64:3].⁹⁴

According to Irenaeus, all the promises of blessing in the Bible and all the visions of the prophets are to be realized on this earth in the millennial reign of Christ. But this millennium is limited—it has an end. Thereafter follows life eternal, but concerning this Isa 64:3 is valid (Irenaeus quotes it in the form Paul has given it in 1 Cor 2:9⁹⁵): no human eye, *not even the prophet's eye*, has seen the blessings of the eternal life in the world-to-come.

This interpretation of Irenaeus's dense passage is substantiated by a rabbinical parallel. Some of the rabbis entertained a similar two-step eschatology. First there will be a messianic kingdom on this earth, “the days of the Messiah,” then an eternal life on the new earth, “the world to come.” Which of these stages was the object of the prophecies of the Bible? A minority (it seems) among the rabbis of the second century, Rabbi Akiba among them, referred the prophecies to the world to come. But most rabbis seem to have done the opposite by taking the prophecies to refer to the interim kingdom on earth, the “Days of the Messiah.”⁹⁶ In the third century Rabbi Johanan formulated this position the following way: “All the prophets prophesied [all the good things] only in respect of the Messianic era; but as for the world to come, “the eye [even of a prophet] has not seen, O Lord, beside you, what he has prepared for him that waits for him.”⁹⁷ As one can

⁹³I have treated this more fully in Skarsaune, “‘Hva intet øye så . . .’ Litt om strukturen i tidlig kristen og jødisk eskatologi,” *Florilegium patristicum: FS Per Beskow* (ed. G. Hallonsten et al.; Delsbo: Åsak, Sahlén & Dahlström, 1991), 201–13.

⁹⁴*Haer.* 5.36.3; Latin text in SC 153:464; translation adapted from ANF 1:567. I have inserted numbers to structure the text, and have added some of the interpretative words in brackets.

⁹⁵The reason Irenaeus quotes the saying in its Pauline rather than in its original form in Isaiah may have to do with his polemical front against the gnostics. The *Gnostics* made much of this Pauline logion, and took it to mean that the entire career of Christ and the salvation wrought by him was completely unknown to the prophets of the Jews.

⁹⁶On this whole issue, see “Exkurs: Diese Welt, die Tage des Messias und die zukünftige Welt” in Str-B 4:799–976. Cf. also Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 45–68.

⁹⁷b. *Sanh.* 99A, translation according to Epstein, *Sanhedrin*, 670.

see, this corresponds exactly to the structure of Irenaeus's eschatological model, and the scriptural reference proving that the prophets saw the Messiah's reign but not beyond it is the same. This can hardly be accidental. It rather suggests that there were cross-connections between Jewish and Christian eschatological speculation in the days of Irenaeus. As we have seen, neither Revelation nor Justin can serve as Christian predecessors of Irenaeus in this regard. One therefore suspects that Irenaeus has received input on this point from contemporary Jewish debates, either directly from non-Christian Jews, or via Jewish believers in Jesus. I find the latter alternative to be most likely.

Having surveyed the material in Justin and Irenaeus in this brief fashion, it remains to add some words on the development of the millennial tradition more generally. I use "millennial" here in a rather loose sense, and should perhaps rather talk about "literal fulfillment of the messianic prophecies on this earth" as the topic of primary interest in our context. Whether this fulfillment is conceived to take place according to a one-step eschatological model (life eternal taking place on earth, and being inaugurated at Christ's return), or a two-step model (a millennial period on earth prior to life eternal) is of less importance. According to both models, fulfillment of messianic prophecies is taken to be both literal and earthly, with a renewed (earthly) Jerusalem in its center.

From Origen onwards, this way of thinking about the realization of the biblical prophecies was branded "Jewish." Such was the influence of Origen that most of the Fathers followed him in his denunciation of "Jewish" eschatology. "Millennialism" was gradually marginalized. It did not disappear, however, and may have been stronger "on the ground" than our rather selective sources will make us believe. After Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus stand out as outspoken millenarians. Late in the third century, millennialism still ran strong in Lactantius and Victorinus of Pettau, as though Origen had made little impact. We do not know when Commodianus wrote his eschatological scenarios, although it was probably after Origen. Commodianus expects the ten lost tribes of Israel to return from the East and join Judah and Benjamin. In the latter half of the fourth century, Jerome quoted and combatted a strikingly Jewish interpretation of messianic prophecies that amounted to a remarkable millenarian scenario in which the millennium would be the messianic reign of Christ among a restored Jewish people in Jerusalem. Jerome's unnamed source for this is probably Apollinaris of Syrian Laodicea.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ For this paragraph, see Wolfram Kinzig, "Philosemitismus angesichts des Endes? Bemerkungen zu einem vergessenen Kapitel jüdisch-christlicher Beziehungen in der Alten Kirche," in *Kaum zu glauben: Von der Häresie und dem Umgang mit ihr* (ed. A. Lexutt and V. von Bülow; Arbeiten zur Theologiegeschichte 5; Rheinbach: CMZ, 1998), 59–95. Especially on the Jewish Christian eschatology in Apollinaris, see Wolfram Kinzig, "Jewish and 'Judaizing' Eschatologies in Jerome," in *Jewish Culture and Jewish Society under The Christian Roman Empire* (ed. R. Kalmin and S. Schwartz; Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 3; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 409–29.

It would be rash to conclude that since the opponents of this tradition branded it as “Jewish” it should be characterized as “Jewish-Christian” *tout court*, if by “Jewish-Christian” is meant that these authors reproduce texts or ideas produced by Jewish believers. The authors we have referred to were all (to our knowledge, at least) Gentile Christians. It is immediately evident that much of what they say is based directly upon biblical texts (including some pseudepigraphical, like 4 Ezra) along with earlier Christian writers such as Papias, Irenaeus, etc. It is hard to produce anything like undeniable proof that they had Jewish believers as direct sources for their personal version of “Jewish” millennialism. One could imagine that the input from Jewish believers was most pronounced in the very beginnings of this tradition—as in Papias and Justin—and later was reproduced in Christian writers mainly as a literary heritage.

But there is evidence that indicates, if not proves, the contrary. For one thing, the historical referents of the eschatological figures of the prophetic texts are constantly being “updated.” For example, Gog and Magog are identified with the attacking Goths and Huns in Apollinaris’s eschatological scenario, which allows a rather precise dating of his material.⁹⁹ This indicates an ongoing process of interpretation behind this material, not just the purely literary transmission of a petrified piece of old tradition. Secondly, the tradition does not become “less Jewish” as time passes. Instead, the contrary is the case. In Justin (ca. 150–160 C.E.), for example, Jewish believers are included in the millennial kingdom. In Irenaeus (ca. 185 C.E.), they are at most not excluded. In Commodianus (ca. 250 C.E.?), however, the return of the lost nine and a half tribes of Israel is explicitly confirmed, and in Victorinus (ca. 300 C.E.) “the 144,000 mentioned in Rev 7:4–8 are Jews who will be converted under the preaching of Elijah just prior to Antichrist’s advent. These evidently will all be slaughtered, for they rise in the first resurrection of Rev 20:4–6 and stand with Christ on Mount Zion. . . . Of life in the millennium, we learn that the godly [Jews] will reign with Christ ‘over all the Gentiles.’”¹⁰⁰ The most Jewish of all, in this respect, is Apollinaris (370s C.E.). He proounds the following scenario: before the millennial reign, Elijah comes as the forerunner of Jesus the Messiah. He rebuilds the temple of Jerusalem. The Antichrist also comes before the millennium. He comes from Assyria and will occupy Egypt and Ethiopia. Many believe his lies but are saved at the coming of Christ. Before the millennium there is a resurrection of the just, who will then rule with Christ. “The coming of Christ is described as an act of liberation. Here we find clear indications of a tradition critical of the Roman Empire. God will eventually hand the Romans over to the Jews who will then sell them into

⁹⁹ Apollinaris’s commentaries on the prophets have not been preserved. They are quoted throughout the commentaries of Jerome, however, and fragments of them are also preserved in Greek catenae. Wolfram Kinzig has painstakingly pieced together the Jewish Christian eschatology that may be reconstructed from these scattered fragments. See Kinzig, “Jewish and ‘Judaizing’ eschatologies.”

¹⁰⁰ Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 36.

slavery to the Sabeans.”¹⁰¹ The millennium will take place in a rebuilt and vastly expanded Jerusalem. Christ will reassemble the Jewish people, even the ten lost tribes will return and all peoples on earth will be subject to Israel. Even the other major cities of the land of Israel will be rebuilt. All details in Isaiah 60:6–13 will come true. All Christians will practice a sacrificial cult in the rebuilt temple and practice Sabbath and circumcision. In the rebuilt Jerusalem Paradise has returned, with paradisiacal bounty of all natural products.¹⁰² In short, the biblical prophecies literally will come true. With good reason, Wolfram Kinzig points to Apollinaris’s geographical proximity to the Nazoreans of Berea and suggests them as a possible influence on his theology.¹⁰³ If one denies every influence of Jewish believers upon this tradition and its development, one does so on principle and not because there is anything in the sources that speaks against such influence.

The Greek sources for this millennial tradition appear to derive either from the land of Israel, Syria, or Asia Minor. There seems to be something like a “millennial axis” from Jerusalem to Ephesus/Smyrna and many of these traditions seem to be part of a Johannine trajectory. The Elders, whose millennial *midrashim* on prophetical and Johannine texts Papias so eagerly collected when some of their followers visited him in Hierapolis, seem to have had Jerusalem and Ephesus as their main bases. It is tempting indeed to view them as early representatives of the Quartodeciman Jewish Christian leadership of Asia Minor, which comes into the daylight of history in the mid-second century. An offshoot of this Asian millennialism may then be seen in the writers of the Latin West who reproduce and enrich it: Tertullian, Victorinus, Commodianus, Lactantius. Thus, when Origen branded this tradition “Jewish,” it is not merely malicious invective against fellow Christians. It is, at a certain level, historically accurate.

5. Conclusions to Chapters 12 and 13

In these two chapters we have surveyed fragments of the literature of Jewish believers, preserved in fragments quoted or in short and sometimes extensive paraphrases in some Greek and Latin Fathers. These different sources, although scattered and scarce and only partially recoverable, present, when taken together, a surprisingly rich picture of the theology contained in this literature. One may legitimately ask, however, if there is any justification for taking this scattered material as expressing one unified theology. As we have seen, there is considerable

¹⁰¹ Kinzig, “Jewish and ‘Judaizing’ eschatologies,” 414. Kinzig states, “A closer analysis shows that the scenario presented here is soaked in Jewish exegetical tradition” (*ibid.*).

¹⁰² After the millennium Gog and Magog will attack the saints. It appears that these peoples are identified with the Goths and Huns who represented a military threat in the last decades of the fourth century C.E. The Roman emperor’s defeat by them in 378 is unknown to the creator of this scenario, however, which means we should situate him at least some years before. See Kinzig, “Jewish and ‘Judaizing’ eschatologies,” 415.

¹⁰³ Kinzig, “Jewish and ‘Judaizing’ Eschatologies,” 421.

variation in theological ideas in this material, but at the same time there is a striking unity in exegetical and narrative methods as well as a distinct commonality when one considers the material's provenance. Most of it derives from the land of Israel and seems to be based on work with the Hebrew text of the Bible. The only obvious exception is the "Hebrew master" of Origen who had fled from the land of Israel to Alexandria and who based his biblical exegesis on the Septuagint text.

The narrative and exegetical techniques of these fragments were quite familiar to believers with a Jewish education, but were under-appreciated and poorly understood by later Gentile authors. No doubt the prime example of this is the Wisdom exegesis of *bereshit* in Gen 1:1. By identifying the *reshit* of Gen 1:1 with the *reshit* of Prov 8:22, Jewish exegetes could take the first word of the Bible to mean that God created the world "by [his] Wisdom." In rabbinic exegesis this Wisdom of God was identified with the Torah. In the Alexandrian theology of Philo it was identified with the Logos. Among early Jewish believers this Wisdom or Logos of God was identified with the Son of God, having become flesh in the man Jesus. Later Gentile authors, like Tertullian and Jerome, adopted the theological idea, but doubted that this was actually contained in the wording of Gen 1:1. The exegesis by which this theologoumenon had been underpinned had become unfamiliar to them. It was Jewish through and through. A similar high Christology combined with the typology of the first and second Adam is found in one of Justin's sources (possibly Aristo of Pella's *Controversy between Jason and Papiscus*), and is also to be seen in some of the fragments from the Elders quoted by Irenaeus.

The high Christology exemplified by these cases was not the only type of Christology we meet in the Jewish Christian sources or fragments. In one of the sources used by Justin (I have called it the "kerygma source") we find a strikingly Messiah-oriented Christology that focused on the Davidic descent of Jesus and his messianic career, but not explicitly on his ontological status as God's Son by nature. An even more intense engagement with the Davidic sonship of Jesus is to be seen in the traditions from the relatives of Jesus handed down in Africanus. Here this theologoumenon is underpinned with rather sophisticated genealogical constructs in which family traditions may have been combined with very learned use of different biblical or extra-biblical genealogies for the Messiah.

In Justin's "kerygma" material one encounters the idea that the Messiah has put an end to atoning sacrifices of animals by his own sacrificial death. A similar idea is emphasized in Hegesippus's narrative material about James and the early community. Jesus was the Messiah who transformed the temple—for the rest of its existence—from a house of sacrifices into a house of prayer only. In the Holy of Holies James the Just served as an eschatological high priest, averting God's wrath from Israel by his intercessory prayer.

If we look outside the material treated here (chapters 12 and 13), we find ideas similar to those mentioned in the last two paragraphs above in the Jewish Christian source used in *Rec. 1.27–71* and in the Christian editing of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Parallel material concerning Christology is also to

be found in the possibly Jewish Christian work of *The Apocalypse of Peter*. Another concern shared by the latter work and Justin's "kerygma source" is an intense polemic against the messianic claims of Bar Kokhba. This is a significant indication about the time, the scene, and the milieu in which this theology originated.

In the eschatological material we have studied there is one common trait—a very concrete understanding of the eschatological blessings portrayed in the biblical prophecies. In some sources a literal fulfillment of such prophecies in a renewed Jerusalem on this earth is seen as the final stage of eschatology, in others, this is the penultimate stage, a millennial messianic kingdom to be followed by eternal life in heaven or on a new earth. Such concrete eschatology was subjected to severe criticism by Origen and his followers. They found it much too Jewish to their taste. For them, "Jewish," "carnal," "simpleminded," and "literal" were interchangeable concepts. For the Jewish believers with whom this eschatology originated, however, this was the supreme expression of the biblical heritage and the hope of the Jewish people. Therefore, it is also no surprise that in their eschatological scenarios, the salvation of the Jewish nation had a secure place.

This also seems to be true of the (possibly) latest fragments we have studied here—the "Nazoraean" comments (in Jerome) on selected prophecies in Isaiah. Intense polemic against the emerging rabbinic halakah is combined with an equally intense appeal to the Jews of Galilee to embrace the one true light promised for this region—the light of the one true Messiah Jesus. The exegetical work with biblical prophecies begun in Matthew is carried on and actualized some one hundred years later.

In this perspective, all of the Jewish-Christian literary heritage treated in this part of the book (chs. 9–13) can be seen to belong together with a kind of family resemblance, and most of it having a common place of origin, the land of Israel (sometimes extending to Syria). When the history of Jewish believers in the land of Israel in the late first and in the second century is to be written, the material here surveyed will be of great importance.

P A R T F O U R

*Jewish Christian Groups according to the
Greek and Latin Fathers*



The Ebionites

Oskar Skarsaune

1. Preliminary Considerations

Most of our information on the Ebionites and other groups of Jewish believers comes from heresiological surveys in the church fathers, beginning with Irenaeus in the late 180s C.E.¹ At times, the character of these sources has not been taken sufficiently into consideration when it comes to evaluating the information they contain.

In their heresiologies the church fathers usually employ a rather stereotyped pattern: they describe “sects” or “schools” (*αἱρέσεις* or *sectae*), which are formed by a number of people who follow the sect-founder. The sect is normally named for the founder: Marcionites, Valentinians, Cerinthians, etc.

Justin Martyr may have been the originator of this practice in his now lost *Syntagma against Heresies*. In *Dial. 35:4–6* he has the following to say:

My friends, there were, and still are, many men who, in the name of Jesus, come and teach others atheistic and blasphemous doctrines and actions; we call them by the name of the originator of each false doctrine. . . . Some of these heretics are called

¹On Ebionites, see the following: Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Judentum und Judenchristentum: Eine Nachlese zu der Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums* (Leipzig: Altenburg, 1886; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1966), 31–115; Georg Strecker, “Ebioniten,” RAC 4:487–500; A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (NovTSup 36; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 19–43; J. M. Magnin, “Notes sur l’Ébionisme,” *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 23 (1973): 233–65; 24 (1974): 225–50; 25 (1975): 245–73; 26 (1976): 293–318; 27 (1977): 250–76; 28 (1978): 220–48; Simon Claude Mimouni, “La documentation judéo-chrétienne ‘hétérodoxe’: la littérature ébionite,” in Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Patrimoines; Paris: Cerf, 1998), 257–86; Richard Bauckham, “The Origin of the Ebionites,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry; WUNT 158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 162–81.

Marcionites (Μαρκιανοί), some Valentinians (Οὐαλεντινιανοί), some Basilidians (Βασιλειδιανοί), and some Saturnilians (Σατορνιλιανοί)², and others by still other names, each designated by the name of the founder of the system.³

For the early Fathers, heresy was almost equivalent with different types of *gnosis*,⁴ and in this field the stereotype with sect named after sect-founder was often to the point. Following the model of the philosophical αἵρεσεις, the various gnostic schools were often founded by a leading exponent of *gnosis*, as with the Valentinian school. In most cases, philosophical schools would be characterized by certain *doctrines* peculiar to the school, in many cases also by a distinctive *ethos* and certain ritual practices. All of this recurs in the description of the different gnostic sects in the church fathers, and they themselves often refer to the well-known analogy of the philosophical schools—how one original truth was split up and became “many-headed” (πολύκρανος, Justin, *Dial.* 2.2). Instead of there being “philosophers” plain and simple, there came Platonists, Stoics, Pythagoreans, etc. The passage quoted from Justin above, continues like this:

[Each heresy was designated by the name of the founder of the system], just as each person who deems himself a philosopher . . . claims that he must bear the name of the philosophy he favors from the founder of that particular school of philosophy. (*Dial.* 35:6; Falls, 55)

It is easy to see that the short reports on Jewish believers contained in the early heresiologists do not really fit into this framework. The early Fathers show very little interest in these groups, and hardly bother to refute them (the exception is Epiphanius, on whom see below). Indeed, it seems as though they only included these reports on Jewish believers for the purpose of completing their survey of the heresies. This inclusion, however, has had one striking consequence: the Jewish believers were made to conform to the usual heresiological

² These names are Latinisms, using a Greek adaptation of the Latin ending -ianus. The same formation is present in Χριστιουός/-οί, which is also a Latinism, meaning “the follower(s) or supporter(s) of Christos or Chrestos.” See on this Elias Bickerman, “The Name of Christians,” *HTR* 42 (1949): 109–24; repr. in Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (3 vols.; *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 9; Leiden: Brill, 1976–86), 3:139–51; P. Chantraine, *La Formation des noms en grec ancien* (Collection linguistique 38; Paris: Édouard Champion, 1933), 197.

³ Here and in the following I use the translation of Thomas B. Falls, *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3; rev. by Thomas P. Halton, ed. by M. Slusser; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003); this quote at 54–55.

⁴ See Adelbert Davids, “Irrtum und Häresie,” *Kairós New Series* 15 (1973): 165–87. He demonstrates that in Justin the term αἵρεσις is exclusively reserved for gnostic schools and for heretical sects within Judaism. Justin does not use this term for Jewish believers whom he considers defective in their doctrines. Cf. also Oskar Skarsaune, “Heresy and the Pastoral Epistles,” *Them* 20 (1994): 9–14.

pattern.⁵ In this survey, the Fathers fashioned the Jewish believers into distinctive sects, each following a sect-founder. This pattern necessitated identifying a sect wherever a supposed sect-leader was detected (e.g., the Cerinthians). The converse could also apply: since some Jewish believers were known as Ebionites, there had to be a sect-founder Ebion.⁶

The Ebionites, however, are the best example to show the misleading nature of this heresiological pattern when it was applied to Jewish believers. The name no doubt is based on the biblical Hebrew term *ebionim* (probably via Aramaic *ebionaye*). This was not a sect-name and was not a derogatory designation by outsiders. In the Hebrew Bible, *ebion* and *ebionim* are very frequently occurring terms, and they generally refer to those in Israel who are looked down upon by the rich and powerful, and who expect to be delivered by the God of Israel in the present time or in the eschaton. The *ebionim* are those within the people of Israel who are the primary addressees of God's salvation, now and in the future. In other words, *ebionim* is a positive term, and it is easy indeed to imagine that sub-groups within the Jewish people who felt oppressed by the powerful elite—say the rabbis—would gladly identify themselves as the *ebionim* spoken of in the Prophets and the Psalms. They would also use this name to identify themselves as those whom Jesus had blessed and to whom he had promised God's recompense in Luke 6:20: "Blessed are you poor." In the Epistle of James this positive identification with the biblical *ebionim* is continued.⁷

This means that there are no a priori reasons to think that *ebionim* was a sect-name or a term of contempt; on the contrary, it could have been a name by which several groups and kinds of Jewish believers liked to refer to themselves. Origen, who knew enough Hebrew to understand the meaning of the name, seems to have used it as a general term for Jewish believers.⁸

If the Greek Fathers had appreciated this positive and biblical meaning of the term, they ought to have rendered it by πτωχοί, thereby allowing Greek-speaking

⁵Cf. Marcel Simon's very pertinent remarks on this in *Verus Israel: étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'empire romain* (135–425) (2d ed.; Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1983), 282. Commenting on Irenaeus's characterization of the Ebionites, he says: "Du fait d'un principe défectueux de classification . . . il lui a échappé 'qu'il ne s'agit pas ici d'une hérésie proprement dite, comme celle de Cérithe ou de Carpocrate, mais de la survivance, à l'état arriéré, du judéo-christianisme des premiers temps' [Duchesne]."

⁶Nouns and adjectives of the form Ἐβιών-αῖος/-αῖοι were quite common in classical Greek as names of peoples, where -αῖος is added to the place-name, as in Ἀθηναῖος, Θεοβαῖος etc., and in Jewish *koine*: Γαλιλαῖος, Ιουδαῖος. It was also used in Jewish *koine* for followers or supporters of a party or a party-founder, as in Φαρισαῖος, Σαδδουκαῖος, Ἔσσαῖος etc. In all such words, the first element would be understood as a name of a place, a person or a party. In the very formation of the word Ἐβιώναῖος the element *Ebion* is therefore surely (mis)understood to be a name. On words ending with -αῖος, see Chantraine, *La formation des noms*, 46–49.

⁷See David Hutchinson Edgar, *Has God not Chosen the Poor?: The Social Setting of the Epistle of James* (JSNTSup 206; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

⁸See the discussion of Origen's use of the term in section 4.2 below.

Bible readers to understand the theological implications of the term. Instead, by rendering *ebionim* by Ἐβιωναῖτοι, they cast the term in a completely different mold. By doing so, they probably also created the sect of the Ebionites, and a sect had to entertain heretical doctrine or ethos. In order to explain Irenaeus's pioneering notice on the Ebionites, it is sufficient to assume two things. (1) He knew that some (or most) Jewish believers were known as *ebionim*, and (2) He knew that some Jewish believers denied the virgin birth and derived Jesus' Messianic lineage through Joseph. The other points of doctrine and practice he ascribes to them could be taken as typical of Jewish believers in general, and probably were so.

Once Irenaeus's picture of the Ebionites had established itself as the authoritative one, later Fathers would compare their own encounters with Jewish believers with his picture—and if their own experiences did not square with the established truth, they would often conclude that there had to be more than one branch of Ebionites, as we see clearly, for example, in Origen. There are two types of Ebionites, he says: those who declare Jesus a mere man, son of Joseph; and those who seem to embrace a different type of Christology. In other words, Origen knows from his own experience that not all Jewish believers conform to the picture painted by Irenaeus.

The same could be said for Epiphanius in the late fourth century. He had come across Jewish believers with whose doctrine there seemed to be no wrong, except that they continued to observe the Law. Since this did not square either with the traditional picture of the Ebionites or with his own "learned" expansions of this picture, Epiphanius concluded that these Jewish believers were not Ebionites at all, but rather were a different sect altogether. What should he call them? If he knew that non-Christian Jews called these people *Nosrim* or *Naṣoraye*,⁹ and possibly that they had adopted this name themselves, he would naturally call them Nazoraeans, and describe them as another Jewish-Christian sect, albeit different from the Ebionites. If our surmises above are near the truth, he would be both right and wrong. He would be right insofar as there were, in his day as well as in other periods, Jewish believers who did not conform to the traditional picture of the "sect" of the Ebionites. He would be wrong, insofar as neither *ebionim* nor *nosrim* were sect names by which Jewish believers were distinguished, either by themselves or by informed outsiders. One could easily imagine that the same people would prefer to call themselves *ebionim*, an honorific biblical term, but were called *nosrim* by outsiders, very much as in our day, when those who call themselves the Latter Day Saints are called Mormons by outsiders.

If these considerations have a point, it would be that in using the heresiological descriptions of Jewish believers by the church fathers, we should be aware that this material comes to us through a lens with a very strong refraction. And

⁹On this name for believers in Jesus, see section 2 of chapter 15 of this book and literature listed there, and also Richard Bauckham, "Why were the Early Christians Called Nazarenes?" *Mishkan* 38 (2003): 80–85.

when we know in what ways that refraction has modified the picture, we should also be able to correct it, at least to some degree.

But this also leaves us with a terminological problem. If we have reason to think that *ebionim* was originally used among Jewish believers of various groups as a self-designation and that outsiders also used this term to describe Jewish believers in general—as in Origen—then what should we call the specific group that Irenaeus and his successors called the Ebionites? For the sake of convenience and clarity, I shall in the rest of this chapter use *Ebionite* in the conventional way, i.e., as the Fathers use it most of the time. But in reviewing the Fathers' material on "Ebionites," we shall all the time be on the alert for information on Jewish believers who were not Ebionites of Irenaeus's type.

2. The Sources

What we know—or think we know—about the "sect" of the Ebionites, is mainly based on four categories of sources:

(1) There are short notices about the Ebionites of a heresiological nature in early Fathers like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Pseudo-Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, and frequently in later Fathers, primarily Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome. Among these Origen and Eusebius stand out as apparently having more firsthand information than the others. Epiphanius (of Salamis, Cyprus) is in a class by himself, due to the apparent richness of his information. While the information in the early Fathers is scanty at best, Epiphanius's chapter on the Ebionites in the *Panarion* (ch. 30), contains a bewildering wealth of material, some of it rather contradictory, as Epiphanius himself admits. As it turns out, most of Epiphanius's information is derived from some version of the so-called Pseudo-Clementine romance, which we now possess in the two versions of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*. Epiphanius claims that Clement's work has been interpolated and modified by Ebionites.

(2) If Epiphanius is right that the *Pseudo-Clementines* contain Ebionite material, then these should be reckoned our main sources for Ebionite theology and history. Hans Joachim Schoeps's work on the history and theology of Jewish Christianity¹⁰ is based on this assumption, as were also the works of the Old Tübingen school, beginning with F. C. Baur. There is no reason, however, to accept this view. Alfred Schmidtke has convincingly shown that Epiphanius's identification of the group expressing themselves in the *Pseudo-Clementines* with the Ebionites of Irenaeus was entirely without foundation and should be discarded.¹¹

¹⁰ Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949).

¹¹ Alfred Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den judenchristlichen Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Literatur und Geschichte der Judenchristen* (TU 37.1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), 175–241.

The evidence for Jewish believers in the *Pseudo-Clementines* must be evaluated on its own terms, without any a priori assumption about this evidence being “Ebionite” in the Irenaean sense of this term.¹²

(3) Epiphanius had access to a *Gospel* he claimed was used by the Ebionites, and he quotes fragments from it. If he is correct in attributing this gospel to Ebionites, these fragments should be considered primary sources for Ebionite theology. It is very uncertain, however, if the author or group behind this gospel had anything to do with the group called Ebionites by Irenaeus. This can only be ascertained by a closer examination of the gospel fragments themselves.

(4) Jerome claims that the Bible translator *Symmachus* was an Ebionite, and some other Fathers speak of a sect of Jewish believers called the Symmachians. Hans Joachim Schoeps has followed this up in an attempt to discover Ebionite *theologoumena* in Symmachus’s translation.¹³ This theory has received little assent (even little notice) in later research; I believe rightly so. Nevertheless, I will examine it briefly below.

This leaves us with the following conclusion: Irenaeus speaks about a group of Jewish believers whose peculiar characteristic is that they claim Joseph as the physical father of Jesus. He calls this group “followers of Ebion.” In so doing, he may have misunderstood and misapplied a common Jewish-Christian self-designation, “the Poor Ones,” using it only for a particular group among them. Reports on “Ebionites” in later heresiologists may refer to the same group, either in total dependence on Irenaeus, or based on direct and independent knowledge of it. But later use of the term “Ebionites” may also sometimes refer to Jewish believers in a more general sense. The *Pseudo-Clementines* should not be used as sources of “Ebionite” theology in either sense of the term, until proven to be so independently of Epiphanius’s portrait of Ebionite doctrine, so as to avoid circularity of argument. Epiphanius’s portrait is itself dependent upon the *Pseudo-Clementines*. The same remark applies to Epiphanius’s fragments of a Jewish Christian Gospel. I will argue below that Symmachus was not an Ebionite, and should also be excluded as a source on Ebionitism.

3. The Term *Ebionim*

There is no reasonable doubt that behind the Greek term Ἐβιωναῖτο (in a few cases Ἐβιωνεῖς) stands ultimately the Hebrew term *ebionim*, “The Poor Ones” or “The Needy Ones,” probably mediated via Aramaic *ebionaye*.¹⁴ Origen knew this meaning of the term, but gave it a (surely secondary) pejorative meaning: those among the Jews who have believed in Jesus are called “the poor”

¹² On the *Pseudo-Clementines*, see chapter 11 of this book.

¹³ Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit: religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950), 82–89.

¹⁴ See Bauckham, “Origin of the Ebionites,” 177.

“because of their hanging on to the poverty of the Law. Because among the Jews Ebion means poor and those of the Jews who accepted Jesus are named Ebionites.”¹⁵ “The Ebionites . . . [are] called by this very name ‘poor ones’ (for Hebrew means ‘poor’ in Hebrew) . . . The Ebionites [are] poor of understanding, so-called after their poverty of understanding (because Ebion signifies ‘poor’ with the Hebrews) . . .”¹⁶ Epiphanius and Jerome echo Origen on this point, but they also try to combine this etymology with another one, which we meet for the first time in Tertullian. According to Tertullian, the Ebionites are called so because they adhere to the teaching of Ebion. When *ebionim* was transformed into a sect-name Ἐβιωναῖοι, it also demanded, according to the standard pattern for these names, a sect-founder. So, while Hebrew *ebionim* was almost certainly a self-designation, Greek Ἐβιωναῖοι (“followers of Ebion”) was not.

What could be the origin, and what could be the original meaning of this name? Many scholars have pointed to Gal 2:10 and Rom 15:26, and take these passages to imply that the “Poor Ones” was already an established name for the Jerusalem community in the days of Paul.¹⁷ Closer reading of these passages, however, reveals that they warrant no such conclusion. They are not naming the Jerusalem community in general as the “Poor Ones,” but are quite simply speaking of the poor ones, in the ordinary sense of the word, within this community. Paul’s collection of money was for the benefit of those who were poor in the Jerusalem community of believers.¹⁸

Some scholars suggest that the term is a re-translation back into Hebrew of the Gospel word πτωχοί, which in the words of Jesus—not least the Beatitudes—is a very positive word, describing the true disciples. While this is certainly a factor to be considered, I find it unlikely that the term should lack a basis in the Hebrew Bible. A survey of the fifty-four occurrences of the term *ebion(im)* in the Hebrew Bible yields the somewhat surprising result that in only a few cases in Exodus and Deuteronomy does the word refer to poor people, in the plain and simple sense. All the remaining cases occur in the Prophets, the Psalms and the Wisdom books, and here the term is theologically loaded (for examples, see below). In some instances *ebionim* refers to those within Israel who are suppressed and oppressed by other Israelites—those who have their legitimate rights taken away from them by the rich and powerful—and because of this they are

¹⁵ Cels. 2.1; A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (NovTSup 36; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 135.

¹⁶ Princ. 4.3.8, (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 125); cf. also the same explanation of the name in Hom. in Luc 1.1 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 127); Hom. in Gen. 3.5 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 127); Comm. Matt. 16.12 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 129–31).

¹⁷ This is argued, e.g., by J. M. Magnin, “Notes sur l’Ébionisme,” esp. *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 23 (1973): 248–65.

¹⁸ See Leander E. Keck, “The Poor among the Saints in the New Testament,” ZNW 56 (1965): 100–129; Keck, “The Poor among the Saints in Jewish Christianity and Qumran,” ZNW 57 (1966): 54–78.

precisely those on whom the eye of the Lord rests in a special way. They are poor because they have been faithful to the Lord, while the rich are apostates. In other instances it is the other way round: because they are poor, all rights are taken away from them. Accordingly they are thrown back on the Lord's support and sustenance. Either way, their existence as poor is theologically qualified. The poor are a not clearly delimited subgroup within Israel, whose poverty throws them back to the way of life that ideally should be all Israel's.

Any subgroup within the Jewish people, especially if oppressed by the majority and the people's leaders, would easily find the *ebionim* of the Psalms and the Prophets to be the ideal object of identification. If we assume that *ebionim* was originally a self-designation for some or most Jewish believers,¹⁹ this would suggest that this name would be found in periods when the relationship with the non-believing majority of the people, and to the powerful in particular, was especially strained and painful. This would lead to the hypothesis that Jewish believers began to apply the *ebionim* terminology about themselves in the years that followed Judaism's intensified self-definition in the years around the turn from the first to the second century, with the introduction of the *Birkat Haminim* and other measures directed against *minim*. This conflict may have come to a head in the years around the Bar Kokhba uprising.

There are, in fact, quite a few *ebionim* passages in the Hebrew Bible that take on a striking actuality in the situation we have just envisaged. To quote some examples: "He raises up the poor [*dal*] from the dust; he lifts the needy [*ebion*] from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor" (1 Sam 2:8 = Ps 113:7–8). "The knaveries of the knave are evil; he devises wicked devices to ruin the poor [*anivim*] with lying words, even when the plea of the needy [*ebion*] is right" (Isa 32:7). "The people of the land have practised extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy [*ani we-ebion*], and have extorted from the sojourner without redress" (Ezek 22:29). "For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy [*ebionim*] in the gate" (Amos 5:12). "They thrust the poor [*ebionim*] off the road; the poor of the earth [*anive-aretz*] all hide themselves" (Job 24:4). "There are those whose teeth are swords, whose teeth are knives, to devour the poor [*'ani'im*] from off the earth, the needy [*ebionim*] from among men" (Prov 30:14).

Corresponding to this, there are even more passages in which the *ebionim* is that group within the people whom the Lord delivers, often at the expense of the rich and powerful: "For thou hast been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat . . ." [continuing in verses 6–8 with the eschatological meal on Zion] (Isa 25:4). "Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy [*ebion*] from the hand of evildoers" (Jer 20:13). "For the needy [*ebion*] shall not always be

¹⁹ Epiphanius in *Pan.* 30.17.2 says that the Ebionites were *proud to call themselves by this name*.

forgotten and the hope of the poor [*anivim*] shall not perish for ever” (Ps 9:19). “Because the poor [’ani’im] are despoiled, because the needy [*ebionim*] groan, I will now arise,” says the Lord; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs” (Ps 12:6). “O Lord, who is like you? You deliver the weak [’ani] from those too strong for them, the weak [’ani] and needy [*ebion*] from those who despoil them?” (Ps 35:10). “For the Lord hears the needy [*ebionim*], and does not despise his own that are in bonds” (Ps 69:34). “For he delivers the needy [*ebion*] when he calls, the poor [’ani] and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak [*dal*] and the needy [*we-ebion*], and saves the lives of the *ebionim*” (Ps 72:12–13). This last passage is of special interest, since it occurs in the very important messianic Ps 72, and describes how the royal savior figure saves his people. In two verses *ebion(im)* occurs three times to describe the recipients of the king-Messiah’s redemptive works.

An even more specific background is pointed out by Richard Bauckham,²⁰ Psalm 37:11, which forms the background for the third Matthean Beatitude, promises the land to the poor rather than the rich, and this is the overall theme of the entire psalm. In the Qumran *pesher* on Ps 37 the Qumran community identifies itself with the Poor Ones of Ps 37, and calls itself *edat ha-ebionim*, the congregation of the poor (4Q 171; 2:9–12; 3:10). In the Gospel of Matthew, the community of believers in Jesus read about themselves for the first time in the Beatitudes, and by combining the first and the third, they would read the authoritative interpretation of Ps 37:11: *The poor shall inherit the Land*.

The theory proposed here rests on the basic observation that in the Hebrew Bible *ebionim* is a positive, even honorific word, describing the chosen recipients of divine salvation, because they are an unjustly persecuted sub-group within the people. With regard to the Ebionites: a honorific term is most likely a self-given name, and the situation after the Birkat Haminim would seem to fit as a situation in which this type of self-identification would be very opportune for many Jewish believers.

4. Ebionitic Doctrines and Practices according to the Fathers

As was pointed out above, the patristic sources on the Ebionites may conveniently be sorted into different groups: (1) Irenaeus and those who depend on him; (2) Origen and Eusebius, who seem to have direct information about the “Ebionites”; and (3) Epiphanius, who collects a wealth of relevant and apparently irrelevant material on them. I shall treat the material in the same order.

4.1. Irenaeus and his successors

In Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.2 we read the following summary on the Ebionites:

²⁰ Bauckham, “Origin of the Ebionites,” 178–80.

Those who are called Ebionites, then, agree that the world was made by God; but their opinions with regard to the Lord are [not] similar to those of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They use the Gospel according to Matthew only and repudiate the apostle Paul, saying that he was an apostate from the Law. As to the prophetic writings, they do their best to expound them diligently; they practice circumcision, persevere in the customs which are according to the Law and practice a Jewish way of life, even adoring Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.²¹

Before commenting further on this passage, there is a text-critical problem to be dealt with. In the preserved Latin text Irenaeus says that the christological opinions of the Ebionites are “*not similar*” to those of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. But Hippolytus, quoting this passage in *Haer.* 7.34.1, apparently read it without the negation: “concerning Christ, they fabulate like Cerinthus and Carpocrates.” The question of which reading is authentic cannot be decided on purely text-critical grounds; both readings have good attestation.²² In their authoritative treatment of this passage, Klijn and Reinink have argued that the “*not*” should be retained.²³ Their arguments are hardly convincing, however, and the following considerations make a deletion of “*not*” a practical certainty. In his context Irenaeus is out to characterize different heresies concerning God the Father. In this respect the Ebionites should not be included, since with respect to God the Father they are entirely orthodox. They are mentioned, however, as an appendix to Irenaeus’s report on Cerinthus and Carpocrates, because their doctrine concerning Christ is *similar* to that of these heretics. If it were not similar, there is no reason why Irenaeus should mention the Ebionites here at all. Compare the following two paraphrases of Irenaeus’s text: (1) The Ebionites do not teach like Cerinthus and Carpocrates concerning the Father, but concerning Christ, they also teach differently. (2) The Ebionites do not teach like Cerinthus and Carpocrates concerning the Father, but concerning Christ, they teach something similar to these. The second half of the statement is introduced with an adversative “but” (Latin *autem*). It is only in alternative (2) that the latter half of the statement is adversative to the first half.

Having clarified this important textual question, we move on to look somewhat more closely at Irenaeus’s information on Ebionites, supplementing his picture with whatever additional information we can extract from his successors, and which seems credible. Irenaeus’s report clearly falls into three statements: (1) on theology and Christology; (2) on use of New Testament writings; and (3) on basing a Jewish way of life on the Old Testament. I shall treat the passage in three corresponding rounds.

²¹ Latin text and the English translation used here: Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 104–5.

²² One could argue, of course, that Hippolytus’s paraphrase of Irenaeus reflects the shape of Irenaeus’s text in the 220s, while the Latin translation was probably made later, and can be seen to contain several conscious alterations in Irenaeus’s text.

²³ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 19–20.

4.1.1. Christology of the Ebionites

If we are right in deleting the “not” in the Latin text and sticking to the Greek text in Hippolytus, we are left with the important information that Irenaeus’s Ebionites did not find the Messiahship of Jesus on his virginal conception and birth but on his descent from Joseph and baptism. They favored the reading *veāvīç*, “young woman” in Isa 7:14 and said explicitly that Joseph was Jesus’ father (*Haer.* 3.21.1). This made them emphasize all the more the significance of Jesus’ baptism, and in this the Ebionites’ doctrine resembled somewhat that of Cerinthus and other gnostics. It would seem very likely that this similarity was not only due to a common denial of the virgin birth, but also to a similar way of understanding the import of Jesus’ baptism. Let us look at the way Irenaeus describes Cerinthus’s doctrine concerning this:

He suggested that Jesus was not born of a virgin . . . but that he was the son of Joseph and Mary in the same way as all other men but he was more versed in righteousness, prudence and wisdom than other men. After his baptism, Christ descended upon him from that Principality that is above all in the form of a dove. And then he proclaimed the unknown Father and performed miracles. . . .²⁴

The only modification necessary to turn this into a very Jewish interpretation is to say that at his baptism, God’s Spirit descended upon Jesus, making him the Messiah. Indeed, one could suggest that since Irenaeus has the intention of saying that the Christology of the Ebionites is “similar” to that of Cerinthus, the picture of Cerinthus’s Christology might already contain features that were taken from Ebionite doctrine.

The righteousness of the candidate for Messiah could be such a feature. Let us compare this with two passages in Justin. In *Dial.* 49:1 he has Trypho say:

It appears to me that they who assert that he [Jesus] was of human origin, and was anointed as the Messiah only by election, propose a doctrine much more credible than yours. We [Jews] all expect that the Messiah will be a man of merely human origin, and that Elijah will come to anoint him. (Falls, 74, slightly altered)

In *Dial.* 67.2 Trypho follows this up by saying:

You Christians should be ashamed of yourselves . . . to repeat the same kind of stories [as the Greeks in their myths of virginal births] . . . , and you should . . . acknowledge this Jesus to be a man of mere human origin. If you can prove from the Scriptures that he is the Messiah, confess that he was considered worthy to be chosen as such because of his perfect observance of the Law. . . . (Falls, 103)

Here Trypho affirms three important things: (1) that Jews expected a human-only Messiah, who would become the Messiah by election, based on his perfect obedience towards the Law; (2) that the Jews expected him to be anointed as the Messiah by the-prophet-like-Elijah; and (3) that there were believers in

²⁴ *Haer.* 1.26.1 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 103–5).

Jesus who had the same [Jewish] ideas about Jesus as Messiah. The third point is also made by Justin himself in *Dial.* 48:4: “There are some of your race, who acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah, but claim that he has a merely human origin.” According to the manuscript reading, they who claim this are “of your race,” i.e., Jews, and there seems to be no reason to emend this, as some scholars do, into “our race.” There is no doubt in any case that Justin (and Trypho) is here speaking of believers in Jesus who have Jewish ideas about the Messiah, and there is no reason to doubt that these believers were Jewish.

It is interesting to note that the Gospel of Matthew, the only gospel used by the Ebionites according to Irenaeus, is the one gospel that most emphatically casts John the Baptist in the role of the-prophet-like-Elijah, Matt 11:14; 17:12 (cf. Mark 9:13; Matthew adds: “and they did not recognize him”). It is also interesting to note that Justin seems to know a tradition that portrays the Baptist as the-prophet-like-Elijah who anoints Jesus to be the Messiah, according to the prophecy in Isa 11:2–3 (Justin himself does not think in these terms about Jesus’ baptism by John) (*Dial.* 49–54 and 87–88).²⁵

If we assume that the Ebionites thought of Jesus’ baptism along these lines—as a Messianic anointing with the Spirit, making Jesus Messiah and God’s (adoptive) Son—it would explain Irenaeus’s choice of words in the only passage in which he explicitly takes issue with Ebionite doctrine:

Vain are also the Ebionites who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but who remain in the old leaven of the (natural) birth; and who do not wish to understand that *the Holy Spirit came into Mary*,²⁶ and *the power of the Most High did overshadow her: therefore* also what was generated, is holy and the Son of the Most High God the Father of all, who wrought his incarnation and displayed a new generation. . . . (*Haer.* 5.1.3)²⁷

This paraphrase, combining ideas in John 1:13 and Luke 1:35, clearly transposes the role of the Spirit from Jesus’ baptism to his birth: It was *then* that the Spirit played a decisive role, therefore the son of Mary was Son of God from his birth, not from his baptism. For Irenaeus, the ideas of virginal conception/birth and divine preexistence and subsequent incarnation belong inseparably together. He seems to presuppose that when the Ebionites deny one, they also deny the other—which, actually, they probably did.

²⁵ See the detailed analysis of these passages in Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (NovTSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 195–98.

²⁶ The Latin has: *S.S. advenit in Mariam;* which the SC Greek retroversion renders Πνεῦμα Ἀγίου ἐπήλθεν ἐπὶ τὴν Μαριάμ, echoing Luke 1:35: πνεῦμα ἄγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ. There is no doubt that Irenaeus is paraphrasing Luke 1:35 here, as the continuation of his text demonstrates: *et virtus Altissimi obumbravit eam. . . .*

²⁷ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 106–7; SC 153: 24–27. The juxtaposition of old (carnal) and new (spiritual) manner of generation probably has John 1:13—John’s version of the virgin birth of Jesus/Christians—in mind.

It should be noted that Irenaeus blames the Ebionites for not *wanting* to understand the true nature of Jesus' birth: *neque intellegere volentes*. This accusation is common in early patristic polemic against Jewish non-understanding of the Scriptures and of the Messiahship of Jesus: the Jews did not understand because *they did not want to*.²⁸ One could say this polemic begins in the Q logion Matt 23:37/Luke 13:34: καὶ οὐκ ἥθελήσατε, “you did not want.” It echoes passages like Isa 28:12; 30:14; 65:2. By using this motif in his polemic against the Ebionites, Irenaeus casts them in the same role as other non-believing Jews: They do not believe or understand due to lack of will.

After this survey of Irenaeus's evidence on the Christology of the Ebionites, we turn to his successors. Tertullian seems to depend on Irenaeus in everything he says about Ebionite Christology, except that he ascribes it to “Hebion” in the singular rather than to Ebionites in the plural. It is often stated that Tertullian is the first to invent the sect-founder Ebion. We should be cautious, however, since (1) Tertullian might have known Irenaean works not known to us, in which Irenaeus also spoke of Ebion, and (2) a sect-founder Ebion may well be implied in Irenaeus's name for the sect: “followers of Ebion.” Be that as it may, Tertullian says that Hebion denied that Jesus was the (divine) Son of God,²⁹ denied that Mary mothered Jesus as a virgin,³⁰ and was “answered” by the evangelist John in John 1:13.³¹

On one point, however, Tertullian seems to go beyond Irenaeus. He seems to attest an Ebionite Christology of the end-time-prophet type:

So then, to the same extent that he is made less than the angels while clothed with manhood, to the same degree, clearly, he cannot be so while clothed with an angel. This opinion could be very suitable for Hebion who asserts that Jesus is mere man and only of the seed of David, that means not also the Son of God; although he is obviously more glorious than the prophets—so as to say that an angel is in him in the same way as in Zachariah. (*Carn. Chr.* 14)³²

In order to understand the meaning of this passage, a consideration of the context is in place. Tertullian is engaged in polemics against gnostics who deny that The Son took on or clothed himself with (real) human flesh, and claim he clothed himself with angelic nature instead. Tertullian therefore—in the passage quoted above—does *not* endorse the statement that Christ clothed himself with an angel; this is a Christology he combats. It seems like an afterthought when he adds that while the angel option may seem like a “higher” Christology than the fully human option, this is not really so. The angel option might in fact suit Ebion! In Zech 1:14 LXX the prophet says: “The angel speaking in me

²⁸E.g., Justin, *Dial.* 37.2; 85.1.

²⁹*Praescr.* 30.11 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 108–9).

³⁰*Virg.* 6.1 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 108–9).

³¹*Carn. Chr.* 24 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 110–11).

³²Translated according to Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 109, slightly altered.

said to me . . .”³³ This means that an Old Testament prophet could be said to be clothed with an angel, and speaking about Christ in these terms would cast him in the role of an end-time prophet, only more glorious than the former ones. This would “suit” Ebion. It is difficult to infer whether this means Tertullian actually knew that “Ebion” propounded such an idea, or merely assumed that such an idea would suit him, since he denied the incarnation and the virgin birth of Christ. Tertullian may have had information additional to what is contained in the preserved writings of Irenaeus, but we cannot be sure.

In *Carn. Chr.* 18 he comes back to the issue, but again it is not entirely clear if Tertullian knew Ebion to propound a prophet-only Christology, or merely assumed he would do so: “[If Christ was only Son of Man], he might not be the Son of God, and he would be nothing more than Solomon and Jonah, as in Hebion’s opinion one had to believe.”³⁴

There is one more feature in Tertullian’s report on “Ebion,” however, that should claim our attention. He says that Ebion insisted that Jesus was of “David’s seed only,” and therefore not at the same time Son of God in such a way that it competed with his descent from David. It could well be that this gives us the *reason* for Ebionitic denial of the virginal conception of Jesus: for them the Davidic lineage of Jesus through Joseph was indispensable for his Davidic Messiahship. In other words, for the Ebionites, the story of Jesus’ baptism was the story of how Jesus was anointed Messiah and thereby made God’s Son, while the story of his birth was the story of how he was born as David’s son through Joseph, the descendant of David.

There is no doubt that in early Christianity a tension was perceived between the Davidic descent of Jesus on the one hand, and his virginal conception by Mary on the other.³⁵ The genealogies in Matthew and Luke both trace Jesus’ Davidic descent through Joseph, not Mary, and thereby only make the tension more acute. We can already observe in Ignatius an attempt to relieve the tension by making Mary also an offspring of David.³⁶ But this “solution” to the problem only serves to emphasize that it was a very real one, and it would by no means be surprising if others solved it by making Jesus the physical son of Joseph.

There is material in Justin’s discussion with Trypho that may be of relevance here. In *Dial.* 68 Justin presses Trypho to acknowledge that since (1) Christ is spoken of in Scripture as preexistent God, and (2) his human birth as miraculous, Jesus is “not the seed of human parentage” but born by virginal conception with-

³³ Quoted by Tertullian in *Carn. Chr.* 14, immediately after the passage quoted above.

³⁴ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 110–11.

³⁵ For this theme, see Heikki Räisänen, *Die Mutter Jesu im Neuen Testament* (2d ed.; Souomalaisen tiedeakatemian toimituksia. Sarja B 247; Helsinki: Souomalaisen tiedeakatemian, 1989).

³⁶ Ign. *Eph.* 18:2; Ign. *Trall.* 9:1; Ign. *Smyrn.* 1:1. This tradition is followed up in many second century writers, e.g., *Ascen. Isa.* 11:2; Justin, *Dial.* 43.1; 45.4; 100.3; *Protevangelium of James*. See the review in Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 26–27.

out a human father's seed. Against this, Trypho says, "How, then, does the Scripture say to David that *of his loins* God would take to himself a Son, would establish his kingdom, and would install him upon the throne of his glory?" (*Dial.* 68.5; Falls, 106).

Trypho is referring to Nathan's prophecy to David in 2 Sam 7:12–16 and 1 Chr 17:13–14—probably in the latter version³⁷—but seems to presuppose a version of the text in which it is combined with material from other, partly parallel, passages in 1 Chr 28:5–7 and 2 Chr 6:9. From the latter passage comes the words "of his loins" [ἐκ τῆς ὁσφύος], whereas the 2 Samuel text has "from his bowel" [ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας]. This very conscious modification of the Nathan prophecy no doubt serves to emphasize the motif of the Messiah coming from David's *seed*. When Justin alludes to or quotes modified biblical texts, he has never modified these texts himself, but normally refers to modified texts he has found in *Christian* writers before him.³⁸ Accordingly, what we can discern in Trypho's words is an allusion to a Christian version of Nathan's prophecy (1 Chr 17:11–14), in which an *adoptionist* understanding of the Messiah as God's Son ("take to himself a Son") is combined with heavy emphasis on the Messiah's patrilineal Davidic descent. It seems Trypho is once more made the spokesman for Jewish believers who had an adoptionist Christology. In his answer, Justin reluctantly recognizes that if Mary had not been of David's house, they would have a good point: "If this prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive," did not refer to the house of David, but to some other house of the twelve tribes, then the problem would, perhaps, be difficult . . ." (*Dial.* 68.6). In the Nathan prophecy God spoke metaphorically and mysteriously, in the Isaiah prophecy he later explained in clear terms *how* the Messiah was to be born of David's seed, i.e., through the Davidic virgin. In the context Justin also adduces one of his favorite testimonies on the virginal conception, Isa 53:8: "His γενέα who shall declare?" It is easy to imagine that this testimony was chosen precisely in the polemical context of anti-Ebionite debate, in which Ebionites stressed Jesus' Davidic γενέα through Joseph.

If we are right in illustrating Tertullian's report on Ebionite doctrine with this Justinian material, it might also throw some light on one aspect of Irenaeus's evidence that we have not considered so far. Let me repeat the crucial passage and extend the quotation somewhat beyond the quote brought above:

Vain are also the Ebionites who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but remain in the old leaven of (human) *generatio*; and who do not wish to understand that the Holy Spirit came in Mary . . . therefore also what was generated [*generatum*], is . . . the Son of the Most High God . . . , who wrought his incarnation and displayed a new generation [*novam ostendit generationem*]; that as by the former *generation* we inherited death, so by this *generation* we might inherit

³⁷In *Dial.* 118.2 he quotes a part of Nathan's prophecy in the 1 Chronicles rather than the 2 Samuel version.

³⁸For extensive argument to this effect, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 17–138.

life. Therefore do these men reject the commixture of the heavenly wine and wish it to be water of the world only, not receiving God so as to have union with him. . . . (*Haer.* 5.1.3)³⁹

It leaps to the eye that the essential catchword in this little polemic against the Ebionites is *generatio*, with a meaning close to English terms like origin, birth, descent, ancestry, parentage, and genealogy. The Ebionites want a human-only ancestry of the Messiah; they fail to recognize the necessity of the Messiah's divine ancestry. It is like refusing the wine from above to be poured into the water from below, insisting on drinking water only.⁴⁰ Again, the only reason one can find for this insistence by the Ebionites on a human-only *generatio* of the Messiah would be the Davidic ancestry through Joseph.

Coming next to Hippolytus, one observes that he depends on Irenaeus to the extent that he is a prime witness to Irenaeus's (now lost) Greek text.⁴¹ He has, however, one point that is not contained in our texts of Irenaeus:

They [the Ebionites] live conformably to Jewish customs saying that they are justified according to the Law. Therefore it was that he was named both the Anointed of God and Jesus, since not one of the (rest) kept the Law. For if any other had practiced the commandments of the Law, he would have been the Anointed. And they themselves also, having done the same, are able to become Anointed Ones; for they say that he himself was a man like all. (*Haer.* 7.34.2)⁴²

There are good reasons to think that the gist of this passage is authentic information concerning the Ebionites: they justified their own practice of the Law by pointing to the example of Jesus, who also practiced the Law. If so, this would be an argument developed in an inner-Christian debate, not vis-à-vis the non-believing Jews. In an interesting passage Pseudo-Tertullian confirms Hippolytus's report, and apparently he does so independently of Hippolytus:

Cerinthus' successor was Ebion, not in agreement with Cerinthus in every point,⁴³ because he says that the world was made by God, not by angels; and because it is written, "no disciple is above (his) master, nor a servant above (his) Lord," [Matt

³⁹ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 106–7.

⁴⁰ Some scholars take this to be a veiled hint at an Ebionite custom of celebrating Holy Communion with water only. This is possible, but by no means certain. One would, perhaps, expect Irenaeus to have mentioned it in his summary of heretical traits among the Ebionites in *Haer.* 1.26.2.

⁴¹ See esp. *Haer.* 7.34.1 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 112–13); 10.22.1 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 120–21).

⁴² Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 112–13.

⁴³ As the preceding context makes plain, the two points concerning which "Ebion" deviates from Cerinthus, are (1) world made by God, not angels; and (2) Law given by God, not an angel. That is, according to Pseudo-Tertullian, Cerinthus did not recognize nor practice the Old Testament commandments, hence he would hardly be considered a Jewish believer by Pseudo-Tertullian.

10:24] he brings to the fore likewise the Law, of course for the purpose of excluding the gospel and vindicating Judaism. (*Haer.* 3)⁴⁴

These two testimonies serve to underline the importance of Jesus' righteousness [= perfect observance of the Law] in Ebionite Christology. We deduced this motif from Irenaeus's report above, by combining his words about Ebionites with his words about Cerinthus. It seems now we can be quite certain that Ebionite doctrine claimed that Jesus was elected to be anointed as Messiah because of his perfect observance of the Law.

There is a remarkable consistency in the portrayal of Ebionite Christology in the patristic testimonies we have surveyed here. And in the very few instances where later Fathers supplement Irenaeus, on whom they depend to a very large extent, their information seems credible and in line with Irenaeus's picture. To what extent their information is based on literary sources only (Irenaeus plus unknown ones) or based (also) on personal knowledge is difficult to gauge. But would they be so dependent upon Irenaeus and add so little to him, if they had firsthand knowledge?

4.1.2. The “New Testament” of the Ebionites

Basically, Irenaeus's writing on this boils down to two assertions: (1) among the Gospels, the Ebionites use only Matthew; and (2) they repudiate Paul, which would imply that they do not consider his letters authoritative.

First, concerning Matthew: Irenaeus does not blame the Ebionites for having falsified or otherwise altered the text of Matthew in any way. On the contrary, he says that the adoptionist Christology of the Ebionites can be refuted from the very Gospel they recognize. “For the Ebionites, who use the Gospel according to Matthew only, are confuted of this very same book, when they make false suppositions with regard to the Lord” (*Haer.* 3.11.7).⁴⁵

In the text following this passage, Irenaeus accuses Marcion of having mutilated Luke, which means that his silence about any similar mutilation of Matthew among the Ebionites should be considered very significant. If he had known of any, he would surely have mentioned it, and he could not have said that the Ebionites can be confuted by their “own” Gospel. Any mention of an altered Matthew is also missing in the other Fathers surveyed above. In fact, they say nothing at all on this point, which makes one believe that they did not find any serious heresy in what Irenaeus says concerning the Ebionites’ use of Matthew.

In order to grasp Irenaeus's meaning here, one has to emphasize the word *only*: the Ebionites use Matthew *only*, i.e., they reject, at least they do not use, the other gospels. Irenaeus is the first father to establish as an indispensable criterion of orthodoxy that one recognizes *four* Gospels, no more and no less. God in his providence authorized four Gospels, just as there are four zones of the world, and the Cherubim were four-faced (*Haer.* 3.11.8; immediately following the passage

⁴⁴ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 124–25.

⁴⁵ Text and translation, Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 104–5.

on Ebionites and Matthew quoted above). In his comments on John and Matthew following this statement, Irenaeus says that John most clearly brings out the Son's divine, eternal birth by the Father, while, on the other hand, Matthew emphasizes his birth as man, especially by providing Christ's human genealogy. In this way John and Matthew complement each other. This should make plain why the Ebionites' use of Matthew only and their implicit rejection of the others, first and foremost John, correspond to the basic characteristic of their heresy: their rejection of Christ's preexistence and subsequent incarnation, their making Christ human only, and not also divine.

Justin also takes the Matthean genealogy as the main testimony on Jesus being (also) Son of Man, not only Son of God. (All church fathers take Son of Man to signify Jesus' truly human nature and human birth, and use it as the "opposite" complement to Son of God. The modern idea that Son of Man is a code word for a divine or semi-divine figure is unknown to them.)

He [Jesus] called himself Son of Man . . . either by his birth by a virgin who was . . . of the family of David and Jacob and Isaac and Abraham, or because Abraham himself was the father of those above-mentioned patriarchs, from whom Mary traces her descent. It is clear that the fathers of girls are also considered the fathers of the children born to their daughters (*Dial.* 100.3; *Falls*, 151).

Justin here explains why Jesus calls himself Son of Man. Jesus does so either because he was the son of Mary (= man!), or, through her, the son of Abraham (= man).⁴⁶ After this explanation of the Son of Man designation from Matthew's genealogy, Justin continues to explain the "opposite" title, Son of God, by referring to Christ's birth of God before the creation of the world. Justin does not refer to John as gospel evidence for this Christology. He does, however, refer to the same "Wisdom" Christology presented in John's prologue. In other words, he anticipates Irenaeus to a very large extent.

It should be added that what we saw above concerning Ebionite emphasis on Jesus' Davidic genealogy through Joseph goes a long way in explaining why they would concentrate on Matthew. Mark has no genealogy at all; Luke has a less "royal" genealogy in that he traces it all the way back to Adam and follows a non-royal line from David. John again has no human genealogy for Jesus, and his prologue would probably be unacceptable to people with an adoptionist understanding of God's Son.

⁴⁶ Since Thirlby, most editors and translators of Justin correct the manuscript reading "Abraham" into "Adam," because "Abraham is himself among those enumerated" (Thirlby), and so cannot be his own father. But this is pedantic and overlooks Justin's point that the Son of Man can either be explained by immediate parenthood (i.e., with reference to Mary), or by the first father in Jesus' genealogy, Abraham. Justin always seems to have Abraham at the beginning of Jesus' genealogy, most clearly in *Dial.* 23.3: He was born of the virgin who was of the seed of Abraham; cf. also *Dial.* 43.1: He was born of "the Virgin who was of the race of Abraham and the tribe of Judah and David . . ." There is no hint in Justin to Luke's genealogy from Adam.

Second, concerning Paul: “They repudiate the apostle Paul saying that he was an apostate from the Law [*apostatam legis*],” says Irenaeus. The wording here may reflect Acts 21:20–21:

[James said to Paul:] You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses [ἀποστασίαν διδάσκεις ἀπὸ Μωυσέως], and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs (NRSV).

If one were to read Irenaeus’s report in a very critical, minimalist way, one could speculate that it derives entirely from three factors: (1) Irenaeus’s (mistaken) interpretation of Paul would be that he advised Jewish as well as Gentile believers not to practice the Law any longer; (2) Irenaeus’s knowledge that some Jewish believers continued to practice the Law (and the resultant conclusion that they repudiated Paul); (3) Irenaeus’s conviction that the opponents attacking Paul (according to Acts and Paul’s letters) must be identical with these Jewish believers. Irenaeus identified these opponents with the Ebionites, hence one can see the anti-Paulinism of Irenaeus’s Ebionites as Irenaeus’s own construction, based on Acts and the Pauline letters.

Tertullian’s report concerning this point in Ebionite doctrine could be seen the same way, i.e., as based on Pauline polemics. “Writing also to the Galatians, Paul blazes out against those who observe and defend circumcision and the Law: This is Hebion’s heresy” (*Praescr.* 32.5).⁴⁷

But this minimalist analysis of the evidence in Irenaeus and Tertullian overlooks that we do in fact have evidence other than in New Testament writings, evidence that certainly or probably derives from Jewish believers, and is anti-Paul. Here I only refer to the material in the Pseudo-Clementine literature, especially the evidence in *Rec.* 1.27–71 treated elsewhere in this volume.⁴⁸ In any case, there is a strong a priori probability that some Jewish believers would be anti-Paul, considering the strong opposition he met from some such circles already during his lifetime. There is no good reason to doubt that Irenaeus is right on this point. The Ebionites repudiated Paul because they disagreed with him (at least) concerning the Law. The exact nature of this disagreement, however, is not that easy to pinpoint. We will return to this below.

4.1.3. A Jewish way of life based on the Law, Prophets, and Writings

Let us repeat Irenaeus’s statement on this point: “As to the prophetic writings, they do their best to expound them diligently; they practice circumcision, persevere in the customs which are according to the Law and practice a Jewish way of life, even adoring Jerusalem as if it were the house of God” (*Haer.* 1.26.2).

I think this passage should be taken as one connected statement. The Ebionites stick to a Jewish way of life *because* they interpret the prophetic writings

⁴⁷ Text and translation according to Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 108–9.

⁴⁸ See esp. chapter 11 of this book.

“diligently.” This may not be the best translation of *curiosius*. The basic meaning of *curiose* is “scrupulously, conscientiously,” and this should be taken to imply that the scriptural material the Ebionites interpret over-scrupulously is *rules of conduct* rather than kerygmatic material. “The prophetical [writings]” may well be short for the Old Testament as a whole,⁴⁹ including the entire Law of Moses. “As to the prophetical writings, they excel in interpreting them over-scrupulously.” That is, they practice more Old Testament law than Christians should, according to Irenaeus’s understanding. They practice circumcision and other (non-ethical) commandments of the Law, and they follow (non-scriptural) Jewish halakah (e.g., praying towards Jerusalem).⁵⁰

Why would Irenaeus deem any of this heretical? He probably (mis)took Paul (e.g., in Gal 3:19–29) to mean that continued practice of the Law by Jewish believers was wrong.⁵¹

Irenaeus gives us no hint as to how the Ebionites justified their continued practice of a Jewish lifestyle. Here the evidence in Hippolytus and Pseudo-Tertullian comes to our help:

They [the Ebionites] live conformably to Jewish customs saying that they are justified ($\delta\imath\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\theta\alpha\iota$) according to the Law, and saying that Jesus was justified ($\delta\epsilon\delta\imath\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\theta\alpha\iota$) by practicing the law. Therefore it was that he was named both the Anointed of God and Jesus, since not one of the (rest) kept the Law. For if any other had practiced the commandments of the Law, he would have been the Anointed. And they themselves also, having done the same, are able to become Anointed Ones; for they say that he himself was a man like all. (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.34.2)⁵²

They live, however, in all respects according to the Law of Moses saying that they are thus justified ($\delta\imath\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\theta\alpha\iota$). (*ibid.*, 10.22.1)⁵³

Cerinthus’ successor was Ebion, not in agreement with Cerinthus in every point, because he says that the world was made by God, not by angels, and because it is written, “no disciple is above (his) master, nor a servant above (his) Lord,” [Matt 10:24] he brings to the fore likewise the Law, of course for the purpose of excluding the gospel and vindicating Judaism. (Ps. Tertullian, *Haer.* 3)⁵⁴

⁴⁹This is clearly the sense of *prophetae* and *dictiones propheticas* in *Haer.* 1.8.1. In 1.18.1 Irenaeus introduces a discussion of gnostic interpretation of Gen 1 with the words: *de propheticis autem quaecumque transformantes coaptant . . .* Cf. also 1.7.2; 1.7.3; 1.10.1.

⁵⁰This seems to be the most likely interpretation of Irenaeus’s report on Ebionite reverence for Jerusalem. As scriptural precedent, see 1 Kgs 8:29–30; Dan 6:11, and several Psalms in which God dwelling on the Temple Mount is the focus of the attention of the person praying. Irenaeus’s disapproval of this could imply that the eastwards orientation of Christian rooms for worship was already well established in his time.

⁵¹In *Haer.* 4.15–16 he has an extensive treatment of the Law, saying that the ethical commandments of the Decalogue are eternal and to be obeyed by all Christians, but not any of the ritual commandments. “These things . . . which were given for bondage, and for a sign to them, he cancelled by the new covenant of liberty” (4.16.5; ANF 1:482).

⁵²Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 112–13.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 120–21.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 124–25.

As we noted when discussing these passages from a christological point of view, it seems that the argument contained in them is developed with (other) believers in Jesus in mind, who did not observe the Law, and who blamed the Ebionites for doing so. The argument has a specific *imitatio Christi* structure. Jesus himself was elected to be the Messiah by his perfect obedience towards the Law; he was *justified* by his Law-obedience, and in imitating him in this respect, believers also become “Anointed Ones,” i.e., they are *justified* like him.

It is not entirely clear from this evidence whether the Ebionites required obedience towards the whole Law from Jewish believers only or from Gentile believers as well. When Tertullian says “Hebion” is attacked by Paul in Galatians, the implication would be that Ebionites required circumcision of Gentile believers, because that is what Paul combats very explicitly in Galatians. But it is uncertain whether Tertullian said this from direct knowledge of Ebionite doctrine or only made an inference about it from Galatians. As we have seen, the Fathers would probably also deem as heretical a requirement to keep the Law directed to Jewish believers only.

Once again, it may be useful to compare this with evidence in Justin. First of all, he knows some Jewish believers who practice the Law themselves, but who do not require that Gentile believers do the same. Unlike later Fathers, Justin has no problem with this (*Dial.* 47:1–2).⁵⁵ But, he says, there are other Jewish believers who do require Gentiles to practice the whole Law *if they are to be saved*. Justin does not recognize these as true believers (*Dial.* 47:3). It seems reasonable to suppose that the latter group or type of Jewish believers corresponds to Irenaeus’s Ebionites, and that the *rationale* of their position is the one given by Hippolytus and Pseudo-Tertullian, namely, that every believer, Jew or Gentile, should imitate Jesus in practicing the whole Law, in order to be justified and saved.

There is more evidence in Justin pertaining to this topic. As we have seen already, Trypho states repeatedly that *if* Jesus is to be recognized as Messiah, it has to be according to an adoptionist model. “Because of his perfect life under the Law was he deemed worthy to be chosen to be the Messiah” (*Dial.* 67.2). Indeed, Trypho adds, Justin himself admits that Jesus “was both circumcised and kept the other precepts of the Law which was appointed by Moses” (*Dial.* 67.5). Justin admits this, but says, “I did not admit that he endured all this *as being thereby justified* (δικαιούμενον)” (*Dial.* 67.6). In fact, no man at any time has been justified by keeping the non-ethical commandments of the Law, since these were given only to discipline the stiff-necked Jewish people, and are obsolete in the time of the New Covenant (*Dial.* 7–11). This whole treatment is quite parallel to the one

⁵⁵ He indicates that other Gentile Christians do not recognize such Jewish believers. The attitude of these Christians, in other words, anticipates that of later Fathers. It should also be noted that Justin clearly implies in *Dial.* 47.1 that the “tolerant” Jewish believers who do not require fulfillment of the Law by Gentiles are themselves aware that observance of the Mosaic commandments does not contribute to justification or salvation, because they know that these commandments were given for purposes other than salvation.

he offers concerning observance of the Law by Jewish believers in *Dial.* 46–49, and there also this question is treated in intimate conjunction with the question of adoptionist Christology. Jesus and his followers are “justified” by observing the Law perfectly, Jesus was chosen the Messiah because of his just life. It is very near at hand to conclude that Trypho is here made the spokesman of Ebionite points of view. Justin may brand the Ebionite views as Jewish and non-Christian by putting them in the mouth of Trypho, the non-believing Jew. His polemic against Trypho seems very precisely targeted at the Ebionite views reported by Hippolytus.

4.2. Origen

Origen⁵⁶ has scattered remarks on the Ebionites throughout his enormous corpus of writings. Most of these only repeat what we know about the Ebionites from the writers treated above:

- (1) “The Ebionites contradict the sign [of the virginal birth] saying that he was born of man and woman in the same way as we also are born.” (*Hom. Luc.* 17)⁵⁷
- (2) “[The Ebionites and Valentinians say] that he was born of Joseph and Mary.” (*In epist. ad Titum*)⁵⁸
- (3) “. . . not only the carnal Jews have to be refuted by us because of the circumcision of the flesh but also some of those who seem to have accepted the name of Christ but nevertheless believe that the rule of carnal circumcision has to be accepted, like the Ebionites and if there are others who err with a poverty of understanding similar to these.” (*Hom. Gen.* 3.5)⁵⁹
- (4) “And when he had called the crowd together, he said to them: Hear and understand;’ etc. Clearly we are taught with these words by the Savior—reading in Leviticus and Deuteronomy about the pure and impure foods concerning which the Jews by birth and the Ebionites who differ not much from them, accuse us of being transgressors of the Law—not to think that the purpose of the Scriptures is the sense which is the most obvious with regard to these things.” (*Comm. Matt.* 11.12)⁶⁰
- (5) “In accordance with this somebody with no experience perhaps does some investigating and falls into the Ebionite heresy (starting from the fact that Jesus during his life celebrated Passover in the way of the Jews and also likewise the first day of the unleavened bread and Passover) saying because it behaves us as imitators of Christ to do similarly: while not considering that Jesus “when the fullness of time had come” was sent and made “from a woman,” “made under the Law” not in order to leave

⁵⁶ For this paragraph, see especially Gilles Dorival, “Le regard d’Origène sur les judéo-chrétiens,” in *Le Judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états* (ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 257–88.

⁵⁷ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 126–27.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 132–33.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 126–27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 128–29.

those who were under the Law, under the Law, but to lead them away from the Law.”
(*Comm. ser. Matt.* 79)⁶¹

Passages (1) and (2) are summary notices in a heresiological context, in which other heresies are also mentioned briefly. Passage (3) is of more interest. Here Origen clearly shows that he knows the meaning of *ebion/ebionim*, and that there may be other believers in Jesus who, like the Ebionites, practice circumcision. If so, they have “a poverty of understanding” which make them “poor ones” like the Ebionites. It is not made clear whether Origen thinks of these believers as Gentiles or Jews by birth. But it seems he is willing to extend the term Ebionites = Poor Ones to other Law observant believers than the Ebionites, strictly speaking. This is something to keep in mind as we proceed to other of Origen’s statements on the Ebionites.

Passage (4) can be said to substantiate our interpretation of Irenaeus’s statement concerning Ebionite “over-scrupulous” interpretation of the Old Testament writings. They take the food laws literally, even in the time of the new covenant. It is difficult to say whether Origen bases his statement on personal knowledge of Ebionite references to Leviticus and Deuteronomy, or merely infers their interpretation of the food laws in these books from his general knowledge that they observe the Mosaic laws according to the letter.

Passage (5) implies that Origen knew the Ebionites celebrated Passover according to Jewish calendar and custom, and that he took this to be one more instance of their *imitatio Christi*—the general principle we found attested as Ebionite doctrine in Hippolytus and Pseudo-Tertullian. Again, it is difficult to know whether this is an inference made from general knowledge or is instead based on firsthand knowledge of contemporary Ebionite practice. It could well be the latter, because there are other passages in Origen in which he clearly transcends the traditional picture of the Ebionites. It seems this is due to his own firsthand knowledge of contemporary Jewish believers.

It is written in the Acts that somebody struck Paul by order of Ananias the high priest. Therefore Paul said: “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall.” And up to the present day the Ebionites strike the Apostle of Jesus Christ with shameful words commanded by the unlawful word of the high priest (*Hom. Jer.* 19.12).⁶²

⁶¹Ibid., 132–33.

⁶²In this case I prefer the translation of Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 126–29. Most other translators take the phrase μέχρι νῦν ὑπὸ παρανόμου ἀρχιερέως λόγου προστασσόμενοι Ἐβιωναῖοι . . . to mean: “the Ebionites, until now, subjected to the unlawful High Priest of the Logos. . . .” (For this interpretation see Dorival, “Le regard d’Origene,” 261–62; Pierre Nautin in *Homélies sur Jérémie 2: Homélies XII–XXX et Homélies latines* [SC 238; Paris: Cerf, 1977], 222–23, note 2; and John Clark Smith’s translation in *Origen: Homilies on Jeremiah. Homily on 1 Kings 28* (FC 97: 209–10). From this it is concluded that Origen calls the present leader of the Ebionites “the (illegitimate) High Priest of the Logos.” It is admitted by these scholars, however, that this is a strange way to name the leader of the Ebionites, who were known precisely for denying that Jesus was the

This is not simply a repetition of Irenaeus's statement that the Ebionites refuse to recognize Paul because he teaches apostasy from the Law. Origen says they accuse Paul with "shameful ($\deltaύσφημοι$) words"—probably meaning that they accuse him of shameful things—and that they do this "up to the present day." Exactly which shameful things the Ebionites accused Paul of doing cannot be known for certain. However, this accusation is very similar to a smear campaign written of in the so-called *Anabathmoi Iakobou* quoted by Epiphanius:⁶³

They assert that Paul was from the Greeks . . . the child of both a Greek mother and a Greek father, that he went to Jerusalem and remained there for a while, that he desired to marry a priest's daughter, that for this reason he became a proselyte and was circumcised, that when he still did not receive such a girl he became angry and wrote against circumcision and against the Sabbath and the law. (*Pan.* 30.16.9)⁶⁴

Origen's interpretation of the meaning of "Poor Ones" is certainly a secondary perversion of the original meaning of the name. He interprets the name on the background of his general theory that Jewish, literal-only, understanding of the Scriptures is wrong and "carnal." In *De principiis* 4.3.8 he explains that the name means "poor of understanding," since the Ebionites take "Israel" in Matt 10:6 to mean Israel according to the flesh, while for Origen Israel here means those who see God. Origen may know Ebionite exegesis of Matt 10:6 specifically, or he may infer this from general knowledge that they took Israel in Scripture in general to refer to the Jewish people. In *Contra Celsum* 2.1 he says that "they are named from the poverty of their interpretation of the Law,"⁶⁵ and in *Comm.*

preeexistent Logos. And the force of "right until now" is retained much better if "unlawful" is taken to qualify the High Priest's *word* rather than the High Priest himself. In that case, the meaning is: the unlawful command [$\lambdaόγος$] of the High Priest to strike Paul, is *still* obeyed, after so many years, by the Ebionites. (This interpretation presupposes an emendation of the reading $\tauὸν τοιοῦτον λόγον ἀρχιερέα$ into $\tauὸν τοιοῦτον ἀρχιερέα$ in the next phrase, and this is easily substantiated by the following context. Supporters of the other interpretation change $\lambdaόγον$, which is obviously meaningless, into $\lambdaόγου$.)

⁶³In this I follow Erich Klostermann in his GCS edition of the text: *Jeremiahomilien; Klageliederkommentar; Erklärung der Samuel- und Königsbücher* (GCS Origenes Werke 3; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901), 167; cf. Nautin in the SC ed. ad loc., and Dorival, "Le regard d'Origène," 262.

⁶⁴Translation according to F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71* (Christian Apocrypha Series 2 Texts and Translations 37; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 147 note 120. It is very difficult to date this writing precisely, but it seems distantly related to the early source being used in *Rec.* 1.27–71, which should date from around the middle of the second century (see section 5 of chapter 11 of this book). There would thus be good chances that Origen, some hundred years later, knew the Epiphanian *Anabathmoi* story, either by reading or by hearsay. For a commentary on the story itself, see: Glenn Alan Koch, "A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius' Knowledge of the Ebionites: A Translation and Critical Discussion of Panarion 30" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976), 255–57.

⁶⁵Translation according to Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 66; the one in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 135, is hopelessly confused.

Matt. 16.12 that they have their name from “the poverty of their faith in Jesus.” Obviously “poor of understanding” is Origen’s basic interpretation, which he then applies to different objects of theological understanding.

We have seen indications already that because Origen knew that the true meaning of “Ebionites” was not “followers of Ebion,” but the “Poor Ones,” he was willing to extend the meaning of the term to other Christians with a similar literal (thus “poor”) understanding of the Law as had the Ebionites proper. We see this process clearly in *Hom. Gen.* 3.5, where he says that some believers in Jesus “believe that the rule of carnal circumcision has to be accepted, like the Ebionites and if there are others who err with a poverty of understanding similar to these.” In *Contra Celsum* 2.1 Origen therefore calls *all* Jewish believers who keep the Law Ebionites:

[Celsus has claimed that Jewish believers abandoned the Law]. He failed to notice that Jewish believers in Jesus have not left the law of their fathers. For they live according to it, and are named from the poverty of their understanding of the law. The Jews call a poor man Ebion, and those Jews who have accepted Jesus as the Christ are called Ebionites.⁶⁶

It is precisely the unlocking of the name’s *meaning* that enables Origen to use it as a general description for a distinct group of people—Jewish believers in Jesus who adhere to a literal observance of the Law—and not only use it in the traditional meaning—the sect that followed “Ebion.” But if this is the case, Origen should be aware of the fact that not all Jewish believers, that is, not all “Ebionites,” had a traditional Ebionite Christology. We know from other sources that not all Law-obedient Jewish believers denied, e.g., the virginal birth of Jesus. In fact, this is precisely what we find Origen saying when he writes that there are two types of “Ebionites,” those who deny the virginal birth, and those who accept it.

Let us admit [with Celsus] that “some also accept Jesus” and on that account boast that they are Christians “although they still want to live according to the law of the Jews like the multitude of the Jews.” These are the two sects of Ebionites, the one confessing as we do that Jesus was born of a virgin, the other holding that he was not born in this way but like other men.⁶⁷

What is especially striking about this passage is that Origen informs his readers of the two types of Ebionites without any provocation by anything Celsus says about Jewish believers, and also unsolicited by Origen’s own concerns in the context. It seems Origen is almost pedantically concerned with being entirely fair towards the “Ebionites.” *They do not all, as the traditional picture has it, deny the virginal birth.* The same pedantry appears a few chapters later in the *Contra Celsum*: “There are some sects who do not accept the epistles of the apostle Paul, such as the two kinds of Ebionites and those who are called Encratites” (5.65).⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Translation according to Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 66.

⁶⁷ Translation according to Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 311–12.

⁶⁸ Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 314.

Some scholars jump to the conclusion that the “other” type of Ebionites—those who accept the virginal birth of Jesus—would correspond to the “Nazoreans” described by Epiphanius later. But this seems premature. According to the evidence in Epiphanius the Nazoreans apparently recognized Paul and his letters whereas Origen’s second type of Ebionites did not.

There is a third passage to be discussed in this context. In his commentary on Matthew, Origen discusses the story of the blind man outside Jericho who called Jesus “Son of David,” and was rebuked by “the many.” When you observe what Jewish believers believe concerning Jesus the Savior—

(a) whether they hold that he was from Mary and Joseph; (b) or from Mary only and from the divine Spirit (but not according to the [true] doctrine about his divinity [*οὐ μὲν καὶ μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ θεολογίας*])—you will see why that blind man, who was reprimanded by “the many,” says “Son of David, have mercy on me.” For many came out “from Jericho”—from the Gentiles—reprimanding the poverty of those of the Jews who pretended to believe [in Jesus] . . . so that those from the Gentiles should “silence” the Ebionite and the one who makes [others] poor concerning faith in Jesus.⁶⁹

When the blind man calls Jesus “Son of David,” Origen is immediately reminded of the Ebionites, whether they accept the virginal birth or not. He seems to say that even those Ebionites who accept the virginal birth of Jesus do not thereby share the correct doctrine of Jesus’ divinity. Perhaps they accept the virginal birth as told in Matthew and accept the Davidic descent also taught by Matthew, but reject the divine birth of the Logos from the Father before all ages, a doctrine which is *not* contained in Matthew. That is why believers from the Gentiles—Origen among them—who *do* believe the Johannine Christology are able to rebuke and silence both types of Ebionites.

This interpretation of the passage seems substantiated by another passage in Origen:

Now one and the same thing must be held also with regard to anyone who thinks something wrong about our Lord Jesus Christ:

(a) whether he follows those who say that he was born of Joseph and Mary, like the Ebionites and Valentinians,

(b) or those who deny that he is “the first born,” God of “all creation” (Col 1:15), Logos (John 1:1), and Wisdom which is “the beginning of the ways of God” (Prov 8:22) before anything came into being, “founded before the worlds” (Prov 8:23 LXX) and “generated before the hills” (Prov 8:25), but say that he was only a man . . .⁷⁰

⁶⁹ *Comm. Matt.* 16.12, Greek text according to Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 129–30; my own translation.

⁷⁰ Text and translation, Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 132–33; translation somewhat modified and arranged by me.

Alain le Boulluec and Gilles Dorival both think that the people envisaged in the two “b” passages above are in fact the same persons.⁷¹ In other words, “those who deny” the divine preexistence in the second “b” passage do affirm the virginal birth and are therefore to be identified with the “second” type of Ebionites spoken of by Origen elsewhere. This seems a reasonable conclusion.

If this interpretation of Origen’s statements is correct, he cannot have borrowed his picture of two types of Ebionites from Justin’s portrayal of two types of Jewish believers, because Justin (1) distinguishes between them by their different attitude to the Law’s significance, but (2) never distinguishes between acceptance of the virginal birth on the one hand and the Son’s divine preexistence on the other.

In short, Origen seems to add fresh information on the “Ebionites” based on direct knowledge of Jewish believers who did not belong to the specific type of Jewish Christians portrayed as Ebionites by earlier Fathers. Or could it be that his knowledge of the “non-Ebionitic” Ebionites derived from literary sources only? The latter may seem *a priori* unlikely when one considers his long stay in Caesarea. If one were, however, to posit a literary source for Origen’s new knowledge of a different type of Ebionites, one could speculate that the early version of the Pseudo-Clementine novel which he quotes a couple of times under the title *Vagaries of Clement*, was deemed Ebionite by Origen, and that it recognized the virginal birth.⁷² This, I suppose, cannot be entirely ruled out, and it would make Origen the predecessor of Epiphanius (and possibly Methodius, see below). But I consider it too speculative to allow any conclusion. On the whole, I am inclined to believe that Origen’s words about “non-Ebionitic” Ebionites are based on his own personal contact with such Jewish believers in Alexandria and Caesarea (see also above, chapter 12, section 6). It could rather be his reports on Ebionites of the type described by Irenaeus that were based on literary sources alone.

4.3. *The evidence of Eusebius*

In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius wrote the following about the Ebionites:

- (1) The ancients quite properly called these men Ebionites, because they held poor and mean opinions concerning Christ.
- (2) For they considered him a plain and common man who was justified only because of his progress in virtue, born of the intercourse of a man and Mary. In their opinion the observance of the Law was altogether necessary, on the ground that they could not be saved by faith in Christ alone and by a corresponding life.
- (3) There were others, however, besides them, that were of the same name but avoided the strange absurdity of the former, and did not deny that the Lord was born

⁷¹ Alain le Boulluec, *La notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque II^e–III^e siècles* (2 vols.; Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), 2:527–28; “Le regard d’Origène,” 266–67.

⁷² On this material in Origen, see Eduard Schwartz, “Unzeitgemäße Beobachtungen zu den Clementinen,” ZNW 31 (1932): 151–99; especially 159–61.

of a virgin and the Holy Spirit. But nevertheless in as much as they also refused to confess that he was God, Word and Wisdom, they turned aside into the impiety of the former, especially when, like them, they did their best to observe strictly the bodily worship of the Law.

(4) These men, moreover, thought that it was necessary to reject all the epistles of the Apostle, whom they called an apostate from the Law; and they used only the so-called Gospel according to the Hebrews and made small account of the rest.

(5) The Sabbath and the rest of the discipline of the Jews they observed just like them, but at the same time, like us they celebrated the Lord's day as a memorial of the resurrection of the Savior.

(6) Wherefore, in consequence of such a way of life, they received the name Ebionites, which signified the poverty of their understanding. For this is the name by which a poor man is called among the Hebrews. (*Hist. eccl.* 3.27.1–6)⁷³

Having reviewed, above, the patristic evidence before Eusebius, the source analysis of the present passage is quite easy:

Passages (1), (3), and (6) are clearly dependent on Origen. In passage (3), Eusebius is either dependent on Origen's passage from the commentary on Matthew quoted above—and interprets it exactly the same way as we have done—or he depends on another text by Origen unknown to us. In either case he supports the interpretation of Origen advocated above.

Passage (2) depends on Hippolytus. Passage (4) is very close to Irenaeus, except that "Matthew" has been substituted by "the Gospel according to the Hebrews." This is the first time a patristic writer attributes a non-canonical, "special" Jewish-Christian Gospel to the Ebionites. On what does Eusebius base this? One could imagine that he has made a combination of Irenaeus's and Origen's information. Since Origen spoke of a "Gospel of the Jewish [believers]" ["Hebrews"], Eusebius could conclude that the "Matthew" spoken of by Irenaeus was a modified Matthew = "the Gospel of the Jewish believers." Or he could know this gospel firsthand, and still conclude that Irenaeus must have had this gospel in mind while referring to Matthew.

Passage (5) contains new information compared with all Eusebius's predecessors, namely, that the Ebionites celebrated Sunday in addition to the Sabbath. There is great a priori probability that this is correct, considering how well documented Sunday worship is among Christians of all persuasions from a very early period. In general, the picture we get of the early Christian week is that most Jewish believers observed Sabbath as a day of rest (and many would also visit the synagogue if they were allowed there); while Jewish believers as well as Gentile Christians met for worship on Sunday, which was not a day of rest for either of them. From which source Eusebius had his information on Ebionite Sunday

⁷³Text and translation: Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 140–41. I have arranged the quote to bring out the structure.

practice is impossible to say. If from written sources, there is always the intriguing possibility that he may have had access to parts of Origen's works now lost to us.

The long passage we have now reviewed is Eusebius's main summary on the Ebionites. He does, however, have some scattered remarks on them elsewhere, and a few of these add fresh information that may be firsthand, or taken from texts of Origen which are no longer extant.

In his *Onomasticon*, Eusebius says regarding the village Choba (Gen 14:15): “[it] is to the left⁷⁴ of Damascus. There is also a village Choba in the same region in which live those of the Hebrews who believed in Christ, called Ebionites.”⁷⁵ Since Eusebius does not specify here which of the two kinds of Ebionites he has in mind, it seems very likely that he uses the name, as Origen sometimes did before him, as a general term for Jewish Christians. Some decades later Epiphanius speaks of “Ebion” as well as Nazoraeans in the same village and the same area. There is no need to conclude from this that two distinct groups of Jewish Christians—Ebionites and Nazoraeans—were living in Choba/Kokabe. Eusebius and Epiphanius may well be referring to the same people, and Epiphanius may unwittingly be referring to the same people twice, under two names.

Richard Bauckham has suggested that Jewish Christians may not have settled in two—possibly three⁷⁶—Kokabas by pure accident. The name means “Star,” and is taken from the Bala’am prophecy of the rising star from Jacob in Num 24:17. This was an immensely popular messianic prophecy before and during the first century C.E. and well into the second, when Simon bar Koseba took it for his eponym: Bar Kokhba, “Son of the Star.” Decades before this happened, Christians had already applied this important prophecy to Jesus, but there is evidence in Justin Martyr that clearly indicates that Bar Kokhba’s appropriation of this messianic title only intensified Christian attachment to it. We observe in the writings from this time a competition for the right to be the true Star.⁷⁷ Seeing a connection between messianic prophecies and place-names was nothing new to early Christians. Matthew documents the important connection that was made between Jesus being a *nozri* (a Nazoraeans) and the messianic oracle in Isa 11:1: a

⁷⁴When looking East, i.e., to the north of Damascus.

⁷⁵Text and translation: Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 150–51. This second Choba may be identical with the Kokabe mentioned as a Jewish Christian center by Epiphanius (*Pan.* 29.7.7; 30.2.8–9; 30.18.1; et al.). “[Ebion] began to dwell in Kokabe, a certain village on the borders of Karnaim and Astaroth in the land of Basanitis, as the information coming to us has it. From here he began his evil teaching . . .” (*Pan.* 30.2.8; translation by Koch, “Critical Investigation,” 115). This Choba/Kokabe (modern Kaukab) should not be identified with the Kokaba mentioned by Julius Africanus as one of two villages where the relatives of Jesus were living; this Kokaba was close to Nazareth and therefore to be located in Galilee (most likely modern Kaukab north of Sepphoris). See the extensive discussion in Bauckham, *Relatives of Jesus*, 62–66.

⁷⁶One in Galilee, one or two east of the Jordan, see Bauckham, *Relatives of Jesus*, 62–67.

⁷⁷See the evidence displayed in Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 50–52; 264–66; 269–73.

nezer—read *nozri!*—is to rise from the root of Jesse (Matt 2:23). If Nazareth and Kokaba in Galilee were centers of Jewish believers from the beginning, they would not miss the point that they were living in the two villages of Isa 11:1 and Num 24:17, and if emigrating to the east of Jordan later, why not seek out new Kokabas there? (Kokaba was a not uncommon name, unlike Nazareth). In the competition for who was the right “Star” from Jacob and the right *nezer* from the root of Jesse, the non-Davidic descent of Bar Kokhba may have highlighted the Davidic descent of Jesus—which we have seen already to be a major concern of the Ebionites, and probably also other Jewish believers.

The last evidence we will study in Eusebius is a passage concerning Symmachus. Eusebius claims that the Bible translator Symmachus was an Ebionite:

With Symmachus matters are as follows. It is said that Symmachus was an Ebionite. This was a heresy of some so-called Jews who claim to believe in Christ and Symmachus was one of them. With him things are as follows: “Hear, house of David . . . The Lord himself shall give you a sign: See a young woman conceives and bears a son and you shall give him the name Emmanuel.” (*Dem. ev. 7.1*)⁷⁸

As to these translators one must know that Symmachus was an Ebionite. But the heresy of the Ebionites, as it is called, consists of those who say that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary, considering him a mere man and insisting strongly on keeping the Law in a Jewish manner . . . Treatises of Symmachus are still extant in which he appears to support this heresy by attacking the Gospel of Matthew. Origen makes it clear that he obtained these and other commentaries of Symmachus on the Scriptures from a certain Juliana who, he says, received the books from Symmachus himself. (*Hist. eccl. 5.17*)⁷⁹

If we had only the first of these passages, one could reasonably suggest that Eusebius inferred the Ebionitism of Symmachus from his translation of Isa 7:14. The second passage, however, cannot be brushed aside that easily. However, it is not entirely clear how much can be made of it.

A maximalist interpretation would be that Symmachus wrote a whole polemical commentary on Matthew, as well as other New Testament commentaries, probably of a polemical nature. In that case, he would no doubt be a believer in Jesus, thus an Ebionite. Otherwise this intensive engagement with New Testament writings would be incomprehensible.

A minimalist interpretation would be that Symmachus wrote treatises on Old Testament books or themes, probably defending or explaining his own readings as a translator, and that he, in one or more of these, defended his translation of Isa 7:14 against, e.g., the one in Matt 1:23. In this case, Symmachus need not be a believer in Jesus, and one understands why Eusebius says that (in the preserved treatises) Symmachus “seems” ($\deltaοκεῖ$) to support the Ebionite heresy. Eusebius does not say Origen himself called Symmachus an Ebionite.

⁷⁸ Translation Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 139.

⁷⁹ Translation Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 147.

I am inclined towards the minimalist interpretation for this reason: If Symmachus had produced a whole series of Ebionite treatises on New Testament writings, it would be difficult to explain why there is no trace of counter-polemics in the extended commentaries on the same books produced by ecclesiastical writers after him, beginning with Origen himself. A commentary by Symmachus on Matthew ought to have played the same role in Origen's commentary on Matthew as the one by Heracleon on John does in Origen's John. At the very least Origen should not have been entirely silent about it. Not only is there no trace of such polemic in the scriptural commentaries, there is no polemic against *theologoumena* in Symmachus in any writing by any father. What we do have in more than one ecclesiastical writer is discussion of Old Testament readings in Symmachus. This is quite consistent with the minimalist interpretation suggested above. I therefore think it should be preferred.

There is one more item to be mentioned, however. If Symmachus was an Ebionite, his other peculiar readings of biblical texts should feature Ebionite concerns and Hans Joachim Schoeps claims to have found them.⁸⁰ When weighing Schoeps's arguments, two questions of method should be carefully considered. (1) The material from which Schoeps extracted his criteria for what should be considered typically Ebionite included the whole corpus of Pseudo-Clementine writings. If the position advocated in this volume concerning the Pseudo-Clementine writings is sound, they cannot as a whole be taken to represent Jewish-Christian, let alone specifically Ebionite, theology. (2) For Schoeps, the Ebionite affiliation of Symmachus was a given before he approached the peculiar readings of Symmachus. He was therefore satisfied if he found ideas in Symmachus that were in agreement with Ebionite doctrine and thought such agreement supported the view that Symmachus was an Ebionite. If, however, it is not assumed from the outset that Symmachus was an Ebionite, we have to ask more from the evidence in order to establish by this evidence alone that Symmachus belonged to the Ebionite sect. We shall then have to require evidence that cannot be explained as simply Jewish (according to one or other variety of Judaism), but as *only* compatible with an Ebionite position.

I will publish elsewhere a detailed examination of Schoeps's arguments. Here I am satisfied to state the conclusion that in none of the examples he adduces has Schoeps succeeded in proving the Ebionite-only character of the evidence. This accords well with the recent thorough discussion of Symmachus's possible Ebionite identity by Alison Salvesen. She agrees that there are no indications that Symmachus was an Ebionite, and several indications suggesting that he was not.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentumstums*, 350–65; and Schoeps, *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit*, 82–89.

⁸¹ Alison Salvesen, *Symmachus in the Pentateuch* (Journal of Semitic Studies: Monograph 15; Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991), 283–97.

It follows from the above that when later Fathers speak about a sect they call the “Symmachians,” this is probably a construction based on Eusebius’s claim that Symmachus was an Ebionite.⁸² As we have seen already, the Fathers in general had a tendency to construct a sect for every named heretic.⁸³

4.4. Epiphanius on the Ebionites

With Epiphanius’s extensive chapter on the Ebionites in his *Panarion* (*Pan.* 30) it is as if one enters a completely new world compared with the sparse information contained in his predecessors. Here, all of a sudden, we get a rich, if somewhat inconsistent, picture of Ebionite doctrines, practice, and history. Scholars not inclined to source criticism have found Epiphanius a veritable mine of information on this otherwise little known sect. But in order to evaluate his information properly, we must carefully investigate the nature of the source material used by Epiphanius. Basic analytical work on *Pan.* 30 has been done by Lipsius, Schmidtke, and Koch.⁸⁴ While there is no space here to treat the question in full, a very short analytical review of Epiphanius’s evidence will be attempted.

4.4.1. Dependence upon earlier heresiologists

Epiphanius seems eager not to miss any scrap of information on the Ebionites which he could glean from his heresiological predecessors, beginning with the New Testament itself. The following statements seem borrowed from the patristic sources we have studied already:

⁸² Jerome is clearly dependent directly upon Eusebius. In *Commentariorum in Habacuc libri II* 3.11 and *Vir. ill.* 54 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 208–9; 212–13) he says that Symmachus and Theodotion were Ebionites; in *Vir. ill.* 54 he also says that Symmachus wrote commentaries on Matthew, clearly a “maximalist” reading of *Hist. eccl.* 5.17.

⁸³ Ambrosiaster, *Commentarium in Epistulam ad Galatas*, prologue (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 196–99) describes the Symmachians with typically Ebionite traits; so does Augustine (and Faustus, who seems to have identified them with Nazoreans), *Faust.* 19.17; *Cresc.* 1.31 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 236–39); for comment on these passages, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 50–51, 53–54. Filaster and Marius Victorinus, on the other hand, seem to have identified their “Symmachians” with some Jewish Christian sect with gnostic leanings, possibly because they took the Pseudo-Clementines to be Ebionitic-Symmachian: Filaster, *Diversorum hereseon liber*, 36 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 232–33); Marius Victorinus, *Epistula ad Galatas*, 1.15; 4.12 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 232–35). For comment on this, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 54.

⁸⁴ Richard Adelbert Lipsius, *Zur Quellenkritik des Epiphanios* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1865); on Epiphanius and the Ebionites in particular, see pages 122–51; Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 175–241; Koch, “Critical Investigation.” See further: Aline Pourquier, *L’Hérésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine* (CAnt 4; Paris: Beauchesne, 1992) (a significant study of Epiphanius’s heresiology in general, but it does not treat the Ebionites in particular); Joseph Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry; WUNT 158; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2003), 182–208.

- (1) The Ebionites were founded by “Ebion.” (1.1—cf. Tertullian et al.)
- (2) “Ebion” means “poor,” i.e., poor in intellect, hope, and deed. (17.1, cf. Origen and Eusebius)
- (3) “Ebion” taught that Jesus was born of Joseph’s seed. (2.1—cf. Irenaeus et al.)
- (4) Ebionites held different doctrines concerning Christ. (3.1, cf. Origen—but in his details on these differences, Epiphanius deviates from Origen, cf. below)
- (5) “Ebion” observed the Law with regard to Sabbath, circumcision, and all other things. (2.2—cf. Irenaeus et al.)
- (6) Ebionites originated after the capture of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., and migrated into the Trans-Jordan area. (2.7, cf. Eusebius)
- (7) Ebionites use the Gospel of Matthew only (cf. Irenaeus et al.), but call it the “[Gospel] according to the Hebrews.” (3.7, cf. Eusebius)

However, Epiphanius has much additional information, some of the sources for which he points out himself.

4.4.2. “New” information in Epiphanius

- (1) On Ebion and Ebionite history

Concerning “Ebion,” Epiphanius speculates (“I believe”) that when his father and mother gave him this name, they—presumably unwittingly—acted prophetically. Ebion was indeed to be “poor,” but not in the sense the Ebionites themselves interpret the name (17.3). This is clearly Epiphanius’s own embellishment of the tradition of Ebion as the sect-founder. He also states that Ebion lived in the village Kokabe in Basanitis, close to Karnaim and Astaroth, “as the information coming to us has it” (2.8). This could be a reference to the information in Eusebius’s *Onomasticon*,⁸⁵ supplemented by Epiphanius’s own knowledge about the geography of the area. Later he adds that Ebion himself presented his doctrine in Asia and Rome, but that the main centers of origin of the Ebionite doctrine are in Nabatea, Paneas, Moabitis and the Kokabes in the land of Basanitis, and also in Cyprus (18.1). Schmidtke has analyzed all this in great detail,⁸⁶ and has shown convincingly that in mentioning Asia and Rome Epiphanius is transferring to Ebion something he knew about Cerinthus: this is based on his assumption that Ebion was traveling together with Cerinthus, his mentor, along with information he had from Hippolytus (*Haer.* 7.9), concerning Ebionite influence in Rome. In mentioning Nabatea, Paneas, and Moabitis as “root” locations of Ebionite doctrine, Epiphanius is really thinking of the *elchesaitic* roots he posits for Ebion.⁸⁷ The remaining geographical information is thus twofold: Ebionites live

⁸⁵ See above, section 4.3, esp. n. 75.

⁸⁶ Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 205–17.

⁸⁷ On Elxai and his teaching, see chapter 16 below, section 2.

in Kokabe(s) (= Eusebius), *and have one of their “roots” in Cyprus*. The latter piece of information stands out from the rest and is probably based on some personal knowledge in that Epiphanius was himself living in Cyprus at the time of the completion of the *Panarion*. I will argue below that Epiphanius received knowledge of a Jewish-Christian gospel extant in Cyprus at a late stage in his writing the *Panarion*, and that he took it to be Ebionite, and hence one of the “roots” of the Ebionite movement. His mention of Cyprus need not imply therefore the actual presence of Ebionites in Cyprus.

Concerning the meaning of *ebion*, Epiphanius is the first to combine the two interpretations of the name. Like the Fathers from Tertullian onwards, he takes it to imply the sect-founder Ebion. At the same time he knows, along with Origen and Eusebius, that it means (in the singular) “Poor One,” and that Ἐβιώναῖοι in the plural also really means “poor ones.” His interpretation of this name is two-fold. (1) He takes the interpretation of Origen and Eusebius to be the real one, while he says that the Ebionites themselves falsely claim the voluntary poverty of the Jerusalem community to be the background of their name (17.2–3). This is probably based on reliable information, since this quite good vindication of the Ebionite name as an honorific one is hardly one Epiphanius would invent, especially as his retort against it is quite weak. (2) He also accepts the older interpretation that the name meant “followers of Ebion.”

(2) The Christology of the Ebionites

Here Epiphanius is obviously trying to combine three conflicting sources, to which he has tacked on a fourth, an “Ebionite” gospel. He does so very consciously, since he is out to prove that Ebionite doctrine is very confused and contradictory.⁸⁸ The three components in Epiphanius’s Ebionite Christology are the following (in 3.1–6 he has massed them together):

(a) An adoptionist Christology attributed to the Ebionites by Irenaeus and his followers (2.2; 3.1; 14.4; 16.3–4; 18.5–6).⁸⁹

(b) A seemingly docetic Christology attributed to Elxai who, according to Epiphanius, influenced the Ebionites after the time of Ebion (3.2–6; 17.5–8). Epiphanius clearly recognizes that this Christology is at variance with the one attributed to the Ebionites by Irenaeus and his followers. His information on Elxaitic Christology is in general agreement with Hippolytus’s report in *Haer.*

⁸⁸In 1.1 he compares Ebion to the famous many-headed Hydra; Ebion has borrowed ideas from “every heresy” (1.2). “Ebion reveals himself through many forms” (14.6). Among Ebion’s followers “different things are told about Christ, since they turned their mind to chaotic and impossible things” (3.1); “again and again they change their opinion about him” (3.6). On this, see Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (TSAJ 8; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985), 130.

⁸⁹On these passages, see instructive comment in Koch, “Critical Investigation,” 251–53.

9.13.1–17.2,⁹⁰ but Hippolytus does not indicate any connection between Alcibiades (according to him the spokesman of Elxai) and the Ebionites. This connection is probably made for the first time by Epiphanius himself. He obviously noticed that the Christology of “Elxai” had some specific similarities to that of the Pseudo-Clementine *Journeys of Peter*, and since he held the latter to be Ebionite, he concluded that the Elxaites doctrines had influenced the Ebionites: some thought like Elxai, some modified Elxai’s doctrine (= the Christology of the *Journeys of Peter*).⁹¹ (He also thought the Jewish Nazarenes [Pan. 18] and the Jewish-Christian Nazoreans [Pan. 29] were influenced by Elxai; and that the Trans-Jordanian Sampseans regarded him as their teacher).⁹²

In Hippolytus the spokesman of Elxai is Alcibiades, whom Hippolytus does not relate in any way to the Ebionites. In Epiphanius the immediate followers of Elxai are the Sampseans, not the Ebionites.⁹³ There are thus good reasons to think that Epiphanius’s naming Elxai as a major teacher of the Ebionites is his own invention, and that the confused picture of Ebionite Christology in 3.1–6 is also his own construction.

(c) A “Jesus as the true prophet” Christology (3.2–6; 18.4–5). Epiphanius’s source for this is, apparently, the *Periodoi of Peter*, which according to him is a Clementine work falsified by Ebionites (i.e., the non-orthodox passages in the Pseudo-Clementine work are all Ebionite). There can hardly be any doubt that Epiphanius’s source is some version of the novel known to us in the two versions of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* and *Homilies*. He probably concluded that this source was Ebionite because of its anti-Paulinism and its other Jewish-Christian characteristics.⁹⁴ He may also have had a predecessor in attributing the Pseudo-Clementine novel to the Ebionites. Methodius of Olympus (ca. 300 C.E.) says in his *Symposium* that the Ebionites have gone astray with regard to the Holy Spirit because “they say out of contentiousness that the prophets spoke of their own accord.”⁹⁵ It is precisely in the Pseudo-Clementine corpus that this doctrine is to be found.

It seems obvious that in this case also Epiphanius has used source material that has little to do with the Ebionites of Irenaeus to enrich his own construction of an internally inconsistent Ebionitism. We shall therefore not include this material in our own reconstruction of Ebionite theology or practice. His material, insofar as it derives from the Pseudo-Clementine novel, belongs rather to the source material on Pseudo-Clementine theology or theologies.

⁹⁰ For text and translation, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 114–21.

⁹¹ I here follow the excellent analysis of Luttkhuizen, *Revelation of Elchasai*, 129–33.

⁹² On this, see Gunnar af Hällström and Oskar Skarsaune below, chapter 16, section 2.

⁹³ According to Hippolytus, Elxai had passed his book on to some “Sobiai.” This might possibly not be an individual (as Hippolytus seems to think), but simply the Sampseans of Epiphanius. See Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 55.

⁹⁴ See the review by Koch, “Critical Investigation,” 274–78; see also Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 177–78.

⁹⁵ *Symp.* 8.10, text and translation: Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 136–37.

(3) Ebionite “vegetarianism”

It would be more precise to say that the Ebionites, according to Epiphanius, abstained from “meat with soul in it” (ἔμψυχα . . . κρέα, 15.3). He first refers to this practice in 15.1–4, then again in 18.4–19.5. In both passages Epiphanius contends that this practice is based on the doctrine of false pericopes in the Pentateuch, along with a repudiation of all the prophets after Joshua son of Nun. Among the false pericopes in the Pentateuch are those in which the Patriarchs and Moses are portrayed as eating meat. In 15.1–3 Epiphanius is very explicit about his source of information for all of this: that is, the “Ebionite interpolations” into the *Journeys of Peter*; in other words, the Pseudo-Clementine literature. The practice and doctrine attributed to the Ebionites by Epiphanius in these passages do in fact agree fairly closely to ideas found in the *Pseudo-Clementines*. This corresponds to the fact that in his polemics against “Ebionite” doctrines found in the *Pseudo-Clementines*—in which *Peter* is the authoritative teacher—Epiphanius is eager to marshal the *canonical Peter’s* practices as counter-arguments.

While the designation of forbidden meat—ἔμψυχα—might evoke the biblical injunction against eating meat with blood in it, Epiphanius makes it evident that the “Ebionite” practice, along with their theory for it, is entirely un-Jewish. “Jews eat flesh, and the eating of meat is not an abomination to them, or forbidden” (22.8). The “Ebionite” reason for not eating meat seems to be based on the fear of eating souls, which was the main reason for Pythagorean vegetarianism: ἀποκὴ ἔμψύχων.⁹⁶ This reason for vegetarianism is not explicitly stated in the *Pseudo-Clementines* as we have them, but is not far from the idea in *Hom.* 8.15. It could also be that Epiphanius has this not from the *Journeys of Peter*, but from some of the other “Ebionite” Acts of Apostles he mentions in the same breath as the *Journeys* (in 16.6).⁹⁷ Epiphanius also attributes another argument to the “Ebionites”: “Since [the meat of animals] is produced by the congress and intercourse of bodies, we do not eat it” (15.4). While this might be an argument different from the fear of eating souls, it could also be the same argument. After all, transmigration of souls comes through sexual intercourse.

Having argued that Epiphanius got his notion of Ebionite vegetarianism from written sources he (mistakenly) took to express Ebionite ideas, I must ad-

⁹⁶ For which see Johannes Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike* (RVV 24; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1935), 97–157; esp. 136–40. Several Fathers before Epiphanius held that Pythagoreans abstained from meat because of their doctrine of *metempsychosis*, Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.32.8; Tertullian, *Apol.* 48.1; Lactantius, *Inst.* 3.19.19; Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum libri II* 2.6.

⁹⁷ The idea is explicitly attributed to some Syrian heretics in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* 6.10: “Others again of them [the heretics] taught that a man might not eat flesh, saying that no one might eat any thing wherein there is a soul”; translation according to R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and Accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929, repr., 1969), 202. The context would indicate that these heretics were Gentile ascetics rather than Jewish.

dress the possible objection that Epiphanius in several of these passages gives the impression of obtaining his knowledge from direct dialogues with Ebionites. “When you ask one of them why they do not eat meat . . . they foolishly answer, ‘Since it is produced by the congress and intercourse of bodies . . .’ (15.4). “When you say to them, of eating meat, ‘Why did Abraham [eat meat in Gen 18 etc.]?’ he will not believe that and will say, ‘Why do I need to read what is in the Law, when the Gospel has come?’ (18.7—the dialogue is continued in 18.8–9 with two more exchanges). Passages like these, however, by no means prove that Epiphanius got his information from live dialogues with the heretics in question. He characteristically dramatizes his exposition of doctrine taken from written sources in precisely this way. In his exposition of Satornilus’s doctrine, for example, he creates live dialogues between himself and Satornilus (23.4.1–7). In exposing Basilides’ doctrine we find him saying as follows: “*When questioned*, he and his followers claim that they are no longer Jews and have not yet become Christians, but that they always deny, keep the faith secret within themselves, and tell it to no one” (24.5.5). In both cases Epiphanius is dramatizing the same written source, Irenaeus’s *Haer.* 1.24. Irenaeus says of the Basilidians: “They declare that they are no longer Jews, and that they are not yet Christians, and that it is not at all fitting to speak openly of their mysteries, but right to keep them secret by preserving silence” (1.24.6).⁹⁸ It is therefore not warranted to conclude that in each case that Epiphanius pretends to report something heretics say when questioned, he has in fact questioned them. When he actually bases his treatise on personal contact with live informants, he is eager to point that out in so many words (as he repeatedly does in the Count Joseph story, 30.4–12; on which see below, chapter 17, section 5).

In summary, Epiphanius’s report on the vegetarianism of the “Ebionites” seems to be based on his reading of the Pseudo-Clementine *Journeys of Peter* (and possibly other pseudo-apostolic works). The same remark applies to his reports on the “Ebionite” doctrine of false pericopes in the Law and the rejection of all the Prophets coming after Joshua (i.e., all prophets not contained in the Pentateuch, thus reflecting a “Samaritan” canon of Scripture). This doctrine is obviously of one package with the doctrine of “vegetarianism,” which makes one hesitate very much in ascribing any of this to the Ebionites of Irenaeus and his followers.

This hesitance is increased when one observes that Ebionites are not the only sect to which Epiphanius attributes these doctrines. About the Jewish (non-Christian) sect “the Nazareans” he says that they recognize the prophets of the Pentateuch only, repudiating the others, but teach that the Pentateuch itself has been falsified. “Though they were Jews . . . , they would not offer sacrifices or eat meat” (18.1.3–4). In 18.2.4–18.3.2 Epiphanius argues against this view with exactly the same arguments which he dramatizes as a dialogue between himself and

⁹⁸ Translation according to ANF 1:350.

the Ebionites in 30.18.7–9, but also with some additional arguments. It seems rather obvious that he is using the same written source twice.

(4) Other Ebionite practices: Purity, baptism(s) and Passover Eucharist.

Like the Samaritans Ebion goes still further than the Jews. He added the rule about care in touching a Gentile, and that a man must immerse himself in water every day he has been with a woman, after he leaves her . . . If he meets anyone while returning from his plunge and immersion in the water, he runs back again for another immersion, often with his clothes on too (2.3–5).⁹⁹

Here again one gets the impression of vivid eye-witness report. But on closer inspection, written accounts prior to Epiphanius may account more or less for everything he says. In the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* Peter says that “this is the service God has appointed, . . . not to live any longer impurely¹⁰⁰; to wash after intercourse . . .” (*Hom. 7.8*).¹⁰¹ A second immersion with clothes on is mentioned as an Elxaite practice in Hippolytus, *Haer. 9.10*.¹⁰² Epiphanius himself seems to think that the Ebionites learned this practice from the Samaritans, cf. the following passage in his description of the latter: “Whenever they touch someone else, who is a Gentile, they immerse themselves in water with their clothes on” (9.3.6).¹⁰³ In other words, it is far from certain that Epiphanius builds on first-hand acquaintance with Ebionites in the passage quoted above.

In 15.3 Epiphanius himself attributes the information that Ebionites immerse daily—like Peter—to the *Journeys of Peter*, cf. *Hom. 10.1; 11.1*. He then adds that they also practice ordinary Christian baptism (once in life), and have a Eucharist with bread and water, which they apparently celebrate every Passover (not every week). The one Christian baptism, being a substitute for sacrifices, is a central point of doctrine in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27–71. A Eucharist with water instead of wine is mentioned in several apocryphal Acts of Apostles, mostly with a Syrian background.¹⁰⁴ Epiphanius read such literature on the premise that any deviations in the heroes’ behavior from standard orthodox praxis was due to the Ebionites modifying the heroes’ conduct to agree with their own.

In summary, it seems that practically all of Epiphanius’s “new” information on Ebionite practices can be explained as originating from literature which Epiphanius took to be Ebionite and to reflect Ebionite customs. If one thinks differently about this literature—as the present writer does—Epiphanius’s conclusions about Ebionite practice no longer apply. This does not mean we have

⁹⁹ Translation according to Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (2 vols.; NHS 35–36; Leiden: Brill, 1987–1994), 1:120.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. the refusal of table fellowship with Gentiles in *Hom. 13.4*, ANF 8:300.

¹⁰¹ Translation according to ANF 8:269, modified.

¹⁰² English translation in ANF 5:132–33.

¹⁰³ English translation according to Williams, *Panarion*, 1:31.

¹⁰⁴ See references in Williams, *Panarion*, 1:132, note 39.

proved that Ebionites did not practice any of the customs Epiphanius attributes to them, rather only that his assertions are no solid foundation for any description of their praxis.

4.4.3. Epiphanius and the “Ebionite” Gospel

At a late stage in the writing of his *Panarion*, Epiphanius chanced upon a fourth source (a Greek gospel), which he immediately took to be Ebionite. He interpolated fragments from this Gospel in 30.13–14, at the end of another large interpolation, the Count Joseph story in 30.4–12.¹⁰⁵ If one attaches 15.1 directly to 3.7, one gets a seamless, natural sequence, while much in 4–12 and 13–14 is clearly extraneous. All this indicates that these two passages are late interpolations (by Epiphanius himself, no doubt) into a previous draft.¹⁰⁶ Just before the interpolation, Epiphanius says the following about the Gospel used by the Ebionites:

They also accept the Gospel according to Matthew. For they too use only this like the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus. They call it, however, “according to the Hebrews” which name is correct since Matthew is the only one in the New Testament who issued the Gospel and the proclamation in Hebrew and with Hebrew letters (3.7).¹⁰⁷

This seems like a combination of Papias’s, Irenaeus’s, and Eusebius’s information on the Gospel used by the Ebionites. From Irenaeus, Epiphanius knows that they use Matthew only; from Eusebius he takes the title of the Gospel—the Gospel according to the Hebrews; and from Papias (in Eusebius) he knows that there was a Hebrew version of Matthew. He uses this last piece of information in his judgment that “according to the Hebrews” means something like “according to the Hebrew-speakers.” One should notice carefully that Epiphanius does not even hint at defects in this Gospel in this passage. None of his sources did, either. It is very different when he returns to the Gospel used by the Ebionites in 13.1–2: “The Gospel which is found among them, called “according to Matthew,” is not complete, but falsified and distorted (they call it “the Hebrew [Gospel]”) . . .” (13.2).¹⁰⁸

After this, he brings some quotations from a *Greek* gospel, not based on Matthew alone, but also as much on Mark and Luke. Epiphanius finds two errors in this Gospel. First, it has textual deviations from canonical Matthew, and second, it has eliminated Matt 1–2, thus beginning with the story of Jesus’ baptism by John, which is understood as God’s adoption of Jesus:

Cerinthus and Carpocrates, apparently using the same Gospel as they [the Ebionites], wish to prove from the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew with the help of the

¹⁰⁵ On which, see below, chapter 17, section 5.

¹⁰⁶ I here arrive, by independent arguments, to the same conclusion as Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 217–23. I think his arguments on the whole are convincing.

¹⁰⁷ Text and translation, Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 178–79.

¹⁰⁸ Text and translation, Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 178–79 (translation modified by me).

genealogies that Christ is from the seed of Joseph and from Mary. These [the Ebionites], however, have other plans. For *they have removed the genealogies of Matthew* and begin . . . with the words: “It happened . . . in the days of Herod the king of Judaea when Caiaphas was high priest that a certain man called John came baptizing a baptism of repentance in the river Jordan . . .” (14.2–3).¹⁰⁹

It seems rather clear that Epiphanius’s characterization of the Gospel used by the Ebionites in 3.7 is not based on firsthand knowledge of the Gospel quoted in 13–14, nor are the contents of the introductory remarks in 13.2 taken from the Gospel itself. They are rather an attempt to adjust the traditional description in 3.7 to the new document Epiphanius has got hold of and which he took to be the Gospel his predecessors among the Fathers had been talking about. Until now, Epiphanius had believed that Ebionites would use Matthew the same way as Cerinthus—they would prove from the Matthean genealogy that Jesus was of David’s seed through Joseph. But now he has discovered that in this Gospel the genealogy was in fact missing. Instead of concluding that the Gospel he had gotten hold of was a synoptically harmonized Greek version of Mark—which is what it looks like, to judge from the quoted fragments—he concluded that it was a “not complete, but falsified and distorted” version of Matthew.

The one important piece of information on Ebionite doctrine Epiphanius extracts from this newfound Gospel is that they rejected the infancy narratives in Matthew because—he concludes—they denied the virginal conception and birth of Jesus (cf. his comments in 14.4). In order to highlight the inconsistency of the Ebionites, Epiphanius adds that while stressing the ordinary human birth of Jesus, they also deny his humanity by their interpretation of Matt 12:47–48 (14.5). Apparently, Epiphanius takes the Ebionites to imply that in this saying Jesus denied that Mary was his mother. It is uncertain, however, that this was in fact implied in the version of Matt 12:47–48 contained in their Gospel, and further, that this version deviated from canonical parallels at all.¹¹⁰ It seems here that Epiphanius is twisting the evidence to make it conform to one of his accusations against the Ebionites, namely, that they repeatedly contradicted themselves. In this case, after having claimed that Jesus is human only, they follow up by denying his humanity.

The only other critical comment Epiphanius makes about their Gospel is that it contains false readings, i.e., it deviates from canonical Matthew. This seems to be his only concern also with regard to the deviant reading of their Gospel at

¹⁰⁹ Text and translation, Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 180–81 (translation modified by me).

¹¹⁰ Perhaps Schmidtke is right in denying that this quotation of Matt 12:47–48 derives from the Ebionite Gospel (there are no significant deviations from canonical Matthew in it). Epiphanius may have taken his point from Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.12, who says that those who accepted the Gospel according to the Hebrews [Epiphanius would take this to mean the Ebionites] would claim that the Holy Spirit was Jesus’ mother, according to the reading in their Gospel: “My mother the Holy Spirit . . .” In commenting on this, Origen referred to Matt 12:49–50. Cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 223.

Mark 1:6/Matt 3:4, where instead of John's diet of wild honey and locusts (Greek: ἀκρίδες), their Gospel read "wild honey, having the taste of manna, like a cake (έγκρις) made with oil." Modern scholars detect here an Ebionite concern: vegetarianism. But this is uncertain: Epiphanius himself is apparently completely unaware that vegetarianism is at stake in this reading, and he may well be right. Let me substantiate this claim by two observations.

(1) In 18.7–19.4 Epiphanius reports on Ebionite refusal to eat flesh "with life in it," and argues against this by quoting the saying of Jesus that the Baptist neither ate nor drank, whereas the Son of Man did both [Matt 11:18–19]. The clue to understanding this saying, according to Epiphanius, is to interpret "eat and drink" as meaning "eat flesh and drink wine." John ate only locusts and wild honey, and drank water only—thus did not eat [flesh] and drink [wine], whereas Jesus could be said to "eat and drink" because he ate flesh and drank wine. In other words, Epiphanius here presupposes that John did not eat flesh—"food which has life in it"—while knowing John ate locusts. For Epiphanius, locusts were not meat, and the question of whether John had a vegetarian diet would not hinge upon his eating locusts or not.

(2) The changing of ἀκρίδες into ἔγκριδες can be explained as a midrashic reading of the Greek text. By changing one syllable slightly, a new, biblical meaning is extracted from the text: the food of John in the desert (wild honey) tasted the same as the *manna* of the Israelites. According to Exod 16:31 and Num 11:8 the manna tasted like "a cake baked in oil."¹¹¹ "Vegetarianism" would in this case not be a concern.

Still, if the saying by Jesus reported in *Pan.* 30.22.4 derives from the Ebionite Gospel, it would be clear evidence for abstention from meat on the part of the author of this Gospel. Luke 22:15 is changed to read: "'Where do you wish that we should prepare for you to eat the Passover?' 'I have no desire whatsoever to eat this Passover meat with you.'" It is far from certain, however, that this saying derives from the Ebionite Gospel. It does not occur in the passage which Epiphanius has devoted to this Gospel, 30.13–14, but rather in a passage where the whole context shows he is quoting Pseudo-Clementine material from the *Journeys of Peter* (introduced as Epiphanius's source in 30.15.1). In 15.3 Epiphanius mentions two practices attributed to Peter in the *Journeys*: daily baptisms for purification and abstention from "that which had life in it and from meats." After adding more clearly Pseudo-Clementine material in 16, and some Elxaita in 17, and still more Pseudo-Clementine or other material in 18.1–3, he continues with Pseudo-Clementine material in 18.4–6. He now turns to an extensive discussion and refutation of the Ebionite abstention from meat in 18.7–19.5, digresses into a discussion of the virginal birth in 20, and picks up the theme again in 21.1. He then

¹¹¹ See for this Koch, "Critical Investigation," 327–29; Sebastian Brock, "The Baptist's Diet in Syriac sources," *OrChr* 54 (1970): 113–24; repr. as article 10 in Brock, *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity* (Variorum collected studies series 644; Aldershot: Variorum, 1999).

treats Peter's alleged daily baptisms, 21.1–6, and finally finishes his discussion of abstention from meat, 22.1–11. In this whole discussion, Peter is the constant point of reference. Peter was taught to abstain from baptisms by Jesus in John 13. Peter was taught by the Lord to eat even unclean meat in Acts 10, which clearly presupposes that until then Peter had eaten clean meat. There can therefore hardly be any doubt at all that in 15.3–4; 18.7–19.5 and 21.1–22.11 Epiphanius is working with the *Journeys of Peter* as his source and that it is from *this source* he takes the following: "But they [the Ebionite falsifiers of the *Journeys*] destroyed the true order and changed the passage [Luke 22:15], that is clear to everyone because of the words that belong to each other. They made the disciples say: "Where . . . [Luke 22:15a]," and they made him [Jesus] answer: "I do not at all desire to eat meat. . . ."

The probability that Epiphanius took this from the same source he is exploiting in the context—the Pseudo-Clementine *Journeys*—seems to me so great that attributing this saying to the Ebionite Gospel is the less likely hypothesis.

Finally—what can be said about this Ebionite Gospel from which Epiphanius quotes fragments in *Pan.* 13–14? It cannot be the same as the Hebrew Matthew spoken of as the Gospel of the Irenaeian Ebionites.¹¹² Epiphanius's Gospel, written in Greek, was very harmonistic and was based on Mark and on Luke as much as, if not more than, on Matthew. There is one more feature of this Gospel that clearly makes it distinct from what we know of the Hebrew Matthew: it contained no genealogy of Jesus. According to Epiphanius, it began with a short version of Luke 3:1–3: "It happened in the days of Herod the king of Judaea when Caiaphas was high priest that a certain man called John. . . ." This probably reveals something about the *genre* this Gospel was intended to represent. This genre becomes even more clear when we compare it to the full Lukan passage: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. . . ." This is clearly the typical beginning of a *prophet's book*, cf. Amos 1:1, Mic 1:1, Zeph 1:1, Hag 1:1, Zech 1:1, Isa 1:1, Jer 1:1–3, Ezek 1:2–3. Comparing the two passages, we immediately observe that in shortening the Lukan passage, the Ebionite Gospel has also distorted it in ways that betray (1) an ignorance of first century political history in the land of Israel that indicates a rather late date for the Gospel, and (2) a non-interest in the Transjordan areas (so extensively treated by Luke) that is incompatible with any derivation from Transjordan Ebionites. When the Gospel changes Luke's "the word of God came to John," it may simply be that for this Gospel the prophet is not John, but Jesus. We have seen repeatedly how important the Davidic genealogy was for Ebionite Christology; it was

¹¹² If it had contained the readings quoted by Origen from *his* Gospel of the Hebrews, it is strange that Epiphanius should not have noticed the fact and tried to exploit it.

the importance of this Davidic lineage through Joseph that made them deny the virginal birth. For them, Jesus was the Davidic Messiah. For the author of the Ebionite Gospel this seems to have been no concern at all. Instead, he may have conceived of Jesus as the end-time prophet, endowed with the Spirit at his calling—his baptism by John. Two features in the Ebionite Gospel’s story of the baptism of Jesus might be explained by this: (1) the Holy Spirit (in the appearance of the dove) “went into him” (εἰσελθούσης εἰς αὐτόν); and (2) “suddenly a great light (φῶς μέγα) shone about (περιέλαμψε) the place.” The Spirit “going into” Jesus recalls prophetic endowment with the Spirit, cf. Isa 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord is with me, for he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor (!) . . .” The great light shining recalls Isa 9:1: “The people wandering in darkness shall see a great light (φῶς μέγα); those who dwell in the land and shadow of death, over you the light shall shine (λάμψει).” Since we know that the Gospel of the Ebionites worked with Matthew and Luke among its sources, it is relevant to point out that these two Isaian passages are quoted as relevant to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, one in each Gospel: Isa 61:1–2 in Luke 4:18 and Isa 8:23–9:1 in Matt 4:15–16. Considering the fact that the heavenly voice recalls God’s word to the Isaian servant of Isa 42:1–4, who is called “Son” in whom God has pleasure, to whom God has given his Spirit, and who shines (ἀναλάμψει); it does not seem farfetched to conclude that the Ebionite Gospel understood Jesus’ baptism as his being called and endowed to be the end-time prophet (rather than the Davidic Messiah).

Apart from this Christology, it seems Epiphanius found no other fault with this Gospel than its textual deviations from canonical Matthew. How it got into Epiphanius’s hands we cannot know for certain. But there is much to commend in Schmidtke’s juxtaposition of (1) “and also in Cyprus” being an addition to Epiphanius’s list of where Ebionites had their roots, and (2) the clear indications that the fragments from the Ebionite Gospel were added at a late stage in the writing of *Panarion* 30. Epiphanius may have obtained his “Ebionite” Gospel from someone on the island of Cyprus and may have concluded from this Gospel that it should be reckoned as one of the sources of Ebionite doctrine. It seems clear, however, that he was quite mistaken in identifying the group authoring or using this Gospel with the Irenaean Ebionites. The prophet-Christology of the Gospel would rather point to the group behind the Pseudo-Clementine *Grund-schrift* as near theological relatives.

To conclude, Epiphanius’s portrayal of the Ebionites in *Pan.* 30 is a learned construction, based almost exclusively on written sources, including the following: (1) Heresiological descriptions in Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius; (2) Pseudo-Clementine material, called the *Journeys of Peter* by Epiphanius; (3) Elchesaita material; and (4) a Greek harmonistic Gospel (mis)taken to be Ebionite by Epiphanius. At no point is there any certain evidence that Epiphanius’s knowledge is based on firsthand, personal contact with Ebionites who called themselves by this name.

5. Conclusion

On closer inspection, the apparently very rich patristic material on the Ebionites boils down to the information contained in Irenaeus and Hippolytus, to be supplemented also by evidence in Justin of unnamed Jewish believers who held Ebionite points of view. The name of this group may originally not have been peculiar to it, but could well be a self-designation current among Jewish believers in the land of Israel in general. Origen, living in the land of Israel in the third century, apparently still knows that there were Ebionites (Jewish believers) who did not share the "Ebionite" doctrines attributed to all Ebionites by Irenaeus.

The two most characteristic doctrines of the group (called Ebionites by Irenaeus and his followers) seem to belong closely together: (1) Jesus was of David's seed through his father Joseph, and hence eligible to be the Messiah. He was in fact made the Messiah because of his flawless observance of the Law. (2) Believers are to imitate Jesus in every respect. Hence they should observe the entire Law as he did, thereby being saved. Other characteristics comprise a sharp repudiation of Paul and praying in the direction of Jerusalem. Since the Ebionites required circumcision of Gentiles who joined them, they may have conducted mission among Gentiles, and their sect may have comprised quite a few circumcised Gentile believers. After the third century we have no certain firsthand information on them.

The Nazoraeans

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Since Solomon Schechter's publication of a Palestinian recension of the Birkat Haminim from the Cairo Genizah at the end of the 19th century,¹ the Nazoraeans have received widespread attention from scholars, for this recension includes a malediction not only of *minim* (i.e., "heretics"), but also of a group called *nosrim* (נָזְרִים), which was identified by some scholars with the Nazoraeans.² It may be said that this scholarly attention is somewhat out of proportion to the historical significance of this Jewish-Christian group. For the Birkat Haminim notwithstanding, the evidence for the Nazoraeans is scanty, which seems to reflect their rather exotic character.³

1. The Sources

The Nazoraeans are mentioned as a distinct Jewish Christian group by only two writers: Epiphanius and Jerome.⁴ Epiphanius enumerates the Nazoraeans as

¹Cf. Solomon Schechter, "Genizah Specimens," *JQR* 10 (1898): 197–206; 654–59.

²Cf. below, section 5.

³The following paper is based on an article originally published in 1991 (Wolfram Kinzig, "'Non-Separation': Closeness and Co-operation between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century," *VC* 45 [1991]: 27–53). A fresh study of the evidence has led me to considerable modifications of my earlier conclusions. After the completion of the manuscript (2002) the following recent studies dealing with the Nazoraeans have come to my knowledge: François Blanchetière, *Enquêtes sur les racines juives du mouvement chrétien (30–135)* (Paris: Cerf, 2001); Simon Claude Mimouni, *Les chrétiens d'origine juive dans l'Antiquité* (Présences du Judaïsme 29; Paris: Albin Michel, 2004); Simon Claude Mimouni, "Les nazoréens descendants de l'Église de Jérusalem," in *Les premiers temps de l'Église de saint Paul à saint Augustin* (ed. Marie-Françoise Baslez; Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 384–91; cf. also Jörg Frey, "Nazaräer," *RGG*⁴ 6:160.

⁴The relevant sources, accompanied by (not always reliable) translations, are conveniently found in A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*

heresy no. 29 in his *Panarion* (“Medicine chest”), a catalogue of heresies written ca. 374–377.⁵

Jerome mentions the Nazoreans only incidentally in a number of passages scattered across his huge exegetical work.⁶ In addition, he quotes from a Hebrew Gospel (or, a Gospel in Aramaic/Syriac written in Hebrew letters?⁷) used by the Nazoreans.⁸ Finally, in his *Commentary on Isaiah* Jerome gives several extracts from a Nazorean exegesis of that prophet.⁹ It is not necessary to go into the details of source criticism here, since this has already been admirably dealt with by Alfred Schmidtke at the beginning of last century.¹⁰ Schmidtke has shown that,

(NovTSup 36; Leiden: Brill, 1973). Scholarly literature until 1925 is found in L. Marchal, “*Judéo-chrétiens*,” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 8/2 (ed. A. Vacant et al.; 15 vols.; Paris, 1903–1950): 1681–1709.

⁵ Karl Holl, ed., *Ancoratus und Panarion Haer. 1–33* (vol. 1 of *Epiphanius [Ancoratus und Panarion]*; GCS 25; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915), 321–33. For an introduction into the writings of Epiphanius cf. Glenn Alan Koch, “A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” (PhD diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1976); Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (2 vols.; NHS 35–36; Leiden: Brill, 1987–1994), 1:IX–XXVI; Aline Pourquier, *L’hésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine* (CAnt 4; Paris: Beauchesne 1992); Winrich A. Löhr, “Epiphanius von Salamis,” *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur* (3d ed.), 226–28.

⁶ *Vir. ill.* 3 (date: 392); *Comm. Matt.* 27:9–10 (date: ca. 392); *Epist.* 112.13 (date: 404); *Comm. Isa.* 3.26 (on Isa 8:11–15; date 408/10); 3.29 (on 8:19–22); 3.30 (on 9:1); 4.13 (on 11:1–3); 9.13 (on 29:17–21); 10.6 (on 31:6–9); *Comm. Ezech.* 16.16 (date: 410/5); *Comm. Jer.* 1.59 (on 3:14–16; date: ca. 419). *Sit. p.* 143 in Paul de Lagarde, *Onomastica Sacra* (Göttingen: Rente, 1870) (date: 390) alludes to the old name of the Christians according to Acts 24:5. In *Comm. Am.* 1.11–12 (date: 406) and *Comm. Isa.* 2.51 (on Isa 5:18–19); 13.21 (on 49:7); 14.17 (on 52:4–6) it is claimed that the Jews curse the Christians under the name of Nazoreans. Cf. below, section 5.

⁷ Cf. below, section 3.

⁸ *Vir. ill.* 3.2: “*Mihi quoque a Nazareis qui in Beroea, urbe Syriae, hoc volumine utuntur, describendi facultas fuit*” (Aldo Ceresa-Gastaldo, *Gli uomini illustri* [Bibliotheca patristica 12; Firenze: Nardini, 1988], 80); *Comm. Matt.* 12.13: “*In euangelio quo utuntur Nazareni et Hebionitae . . .*” (CCSL 77:90.366–67); 23.35: “*In euangelio quo utuntur Nazareni . . .*” (220.315); *Comm. Isa.* 4.13 (on Isa 11:1–3): “. . . iuxta euangelium quod hebraeo sermone conscriptum legunt Nazaret” (VL 23:437.36–37); 11.24 (on Isa 40:9–11): “*Sed et in euangelio quod iuxta Hebraeos scriptum Nazarei lectitant . . .*” (VL 30:1246.76–77); 18.1: “. . . iuxta euangelium quod Hebraeorum lectitant Nazareni . . .” (VL 36:1819.47–48); *Comm. Ezech.* 16.13: “. . . in euangelio quoque quod Hebraorum lectitant Nazarei . . .” (CCSL 75A:178.1360–61); 18.5–9: “. . . in euangelio quod iuxta Hebraeos Nazarei legere conserunt . . .” (237.333–34); Pelag. 3.2: “*In Evangelio iuxta Hebraeos, quod Chaldaico quidem Syroque sermone, sed Hebraicis litteris scriptum est, quo utuntur usque hodie Nazareni, secundum apostolos, sive, ut plerique autumant, iuxta Matthaeum, quod et in Caesariensi habetur bibliotheca, narrat historia: . . .*” (CCSL 80:99.1–5).

⁹ Cf. below, section 3.

¹⁰ Alfred Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den jüdenchristlichen Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Literatur und Geschichte der Judenchristen* (TU 37.1; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911). Unfortunately Schmidtke’s study has not received enough attention in subsequent scholarship. If it had, many confusions and false judgments as to the reliability of the sources could have been avoided. Pritz appears to be the first to elaborate

whether they used no “Hebrew” Gospels¹¹ or one or even several,¹² both Epiphanius and Jerome drew their knowledge of the Nazoreans from the same source, probably the now lost *Commentaries on Isaiah, on Ephesians and on Matthew* by Apollinaris of Laodicea.¹³ It is a matter of dispute whether, in addition, Jerome had direct access to the Nazorean exegesis of Isaiah.¹⁴

Most, if not all other patristic and medieval writers appear to have taken their information from Epiphanius and Jerome.¹⁵ In addition, a “Gospel of the Nazoreans” (*Evangelium Nazar[a]eorum*) is explicitly mentioned by a variety of

and partly revise Schmidtke’s conclusions (Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* [SPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988; repr., Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992]); but cf. the critical review by A. F. J. Klijn in VC 43 (1989): 409–10.

¹¹This is Schmidtke’s position, who claims that Jerome had no firsthand knowledge of Jewish Christian gospels; cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 66–68; 246–86.

¹²Cf. below, note 17 and section 3.

¹³Cf. Schmidtke *Neue Fragmente*, esp. 63–94. Moreover, Jerome also used Epiphanius (cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 250–53). On pages 123–24 Schmidtke sums up his conclusions like this: “Für die Beurteilung der nazäischen Gemeinde steht außer den NE-Varianten [i.e., the variant readings in the gospel of the Nazoreans] kein weiteres Material zu Gebote als die haltbaren Angaben bei Epiphanius und die exegetischen Proben bei Hieronymus, was beides durch Apollinaris bekannt gegeben war. Denn Hieronymus bietet, wo er sonst über Epiphanius bzw. dessen Quelle hinausgeht, nachweislich nur nichtige Fabeleien.” As to the last point, see his extensive discussion in *Neue Fragmente*, 246–86. Koch also thinks that Epiphanius had “no first-hand knowledge of the ‘Nazoreans.’” (“Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” 250).

¹⁴Pritz argues that at least the extracts from the Nazorean commentary on Isaiah (cf. below) are firsthand (*Nazarene*, 60–62; similarly A. F. J. Klijn, “Jerome’s Quotations from a Nazorean Interpretation of Isaiah,” RSR 60 (1972): 241–55; and Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* [VCSup 17; Leiden: Brill, 1992], 19). I do not think, however, that the evidence put forward by him is conclusive.

It can now be positively demonstrated that Apollinaris entertained “Judaizing” eschatological views, so that a familiarity with the Nazoreans appears even more likely. Cf. Wolfram Kinzig, “Jewish and ‘Judaizing’ Eschatologies in Jerome,” in *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* (ed. Richard Kalmin and Seth Schwartz; Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 3; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 409–29.

¹⁵On Epiphanius depends Filastrius (*Haer.* 8; cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 124.) Epiphanius is also the *Vorlage* of John of Damascus (*Haer.* 29–30) and Theodor Bar Khonai (*Liber scholiorum* 2; CSCO 69:302). Cf. Pritz, *Nazarene*, 81. Klijn, who claims that they depend on Augustine (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 20 and n. 57), is no doubt mistaken.

On Jerome depends Paschasius Radbertus (*In Matt.* 2:23 [CCCM 56:182–83]); cf. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 50, n. 1; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 81.

There may be two exceptions:

(1) Augustine (*Bapt.* 7.1.1; *Faust.* 19.4; 19.17 (where Augustine gives Faustus as his source); *Cresc.* 1.31.36; *Epist.* 116.16.1; in *Haer.* 9 he depends on Epiphanius); yet he gives only very little information beyond what we can already gather from Epiphanius and Jerome. In *Faust.* 19.17 he does claim, however, that a small group existed to his own day. Cf. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 50–51; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 76–79. On Augustine depend *Praedestinatus* 1.9; Eugippius, *Thes.* 226 (cf. Pritz, *Nazarene*, 79, 81); and Isidore of Seville (*Haer.* 10; *Et.* 8.6.9) who in turn was copied by Honorius Augustodunensis (*Haer.* 24) and

medieval authors, some of whom clearly depend on Jerome.¹⁶ However, there are quotations from this gospel in various authors that do not stem from Jerome and whose provenance is ultimately unclear.¹⁷

Paulus (*Haer.* 5). Cf. also Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 51, n. 2; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 81; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 20, n. 57 (who differ from each other on this point).

(2) Theodoret of Cyr, *Haer. fab.* 2.2. Klijn and Reinink think that “all he knew of the Nazoreans was that they were Jewish-Christians. This explains why he mentions that they accepted Jesus as just man” (*Evidence*, 52). For suggestions as to why Theodoret said that the Nazoreans used the Gospel of Peter, cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 119–20; Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 52; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 80.

¹⁶On Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 12.13, depend Rabanus Maurus, *In Matt.* 4.12 (PL 107:923B); Paschasius Radbertus, *In Matt.* 12.10 (CCCM 56A:652); cf. A. F. J. Klijn, “Das Hebräer- und das Nazoräerevangelium,” ANRW 25.5:3997–4033 (4013, n. 53); Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 88–89 (no. XVII).

On Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 23.35 depend Rabanus Maurus, *In Matt.* 7.23 (PL 107:1075A); *In II Paral.* (PL 109:505B–505C); Ps-Walafridus Strabo, *Comm. Matt.* 23 (PL 114:159D); Haimo of Auxerre, *Hom. De s. Stephano* (PL 118:67B); Anselm of Laon, *Enarr. Matt.* 23 (PL 162:1447D); Zacharias Chrysopolitanus, *In unum ex quatuor* 3.141 (PL 186:456B); Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica in Evangelia* 135 (PL 198:1608D); cf. Klijn, “Nazoräerevangelium,” ANRW 25.5:4013, n. 54; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 90–91 (no. XVIII).

On Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 4.13 depends Hugo of St Cher, *In Isaiam* (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 98); cf. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 98–101 (no. XXI).

Cf. also Zacharias Chrysopolitanus, *In unum ex quatuor* 4.170 (PL 186:584B); Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica in Evangelia* 178 (PL 198:1633A: *in Evangelio Nazaraeorum*); Hugo of St Cher, *In Isaiam* (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 94–95: *in evangelio Nazaraeorum*); *Historia passionis domini folio* 65r (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 95: *in ewangelio Nazareorum*). They all seem to depend on Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 27.51 (cf. also *Epist.* 18.9; 120.8) where, however, the source is given as: *in euangelio cuius saepe facimus mentionem*. Cf. also Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 259–64, 283; A. F. J. Klijn, “Jérôme, Isaïe 6 et l’Évangile des Nazoréens,” VC 40 (1986): 245–50; Klijn, “Nazoräerevangelium,” ANRW 25.5:4014, n. 57; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 93–97 (no. XX).

¹⁷(1) Haimo of Auxerre, *In Isaiam* 53:13 (PL 116:994B: *in Evangelio Nazaraeorum*); Ps-Walafrid Strabo, *In Isaiam* 53:12 (PL 113:1296C: *secundum Evangelium Nazaraeorum*); Hildebert of Lavardin, *Sermo* 99 (PL 171:805A: *secundum Evangelium Nazaraeorum*); Martin of Leon, *Sermo* 23 (PL 208:906A: *secundum Evangelium Nazaraeorum*); Hugo of St Cher, *In Isaiam* 53:12 (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 129: *secundum Evangelium Nazaraeorum*); *Historia passionis domini folio* 55r (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 129–30: *in ewangelio Nazaraeorum*). Parallels: Jerome, *Epist.* 120.8.2; *Comm. Isa.* 11.11–14. Discussion in Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 284–86; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 85 and n. 11; Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, “Judenchristliche Evangelien,” in *Evangelien* (vol. 1 of *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*; ed. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher; 6th ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990), 114–47, esp. 127; Klijn, “Nazoräerevangelium,” ANRW 25.5:4026; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 129–31 (no. XLII); Peter L. Schmidt, “Und es war geschrieben auf Hebräisch, Griechisch und Lateinisch: Hieronymus, das Hebräer-Evangelium und seine mittelalterliche Rezeption,” *Filologia mediolatina* 5 (1998): 49–93, esp. 86–87, 89.

(2) Petrus de Riga, *Aurora*, scholion in cod. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Franklin McLean 31 (second half 12th cent.), folio 166v *in marg.* (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 137: *in libris euangeliorum quibus utuntur Nazareni*). Parallels: Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 21.15–16; *Epist.* 65.8. Discussion in Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 286; Klijn, “Nazor-

Finally, there seems to be no archaeological evidence with regard to the existence of the Nazoraeans.¹⁸ Before we study the evidence by Epiphanius and Jerome in closer detail, let us first consider some problems of terminology.

äerevangelium," ANRW 25.5:4027; Vielhauer and Strecker, "Judenchristliche Evangelien," 127; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 137–38 (no. XLVI).

(3) Hugo of St Cher, *In Matt.* 1:25 (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 138: *in Evangelio Nazaraeorum*). Discussion in Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 282; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 138 (no. XLVII); Schmidt, "Und es war," 85.

(4) Hugo of St Cher, *In Matt.* 27:53 (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 139: *in Evangelio Nazaraeorum*). Parallel: *Ev. Nicod.* (*Descensus ad inferos*) 12 (28). Discussion in Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 282–83; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 138–39 (no. XLVIII); Schmidt, "Und es war," 88. In some manuscripts the *Gospel of Nicodemus* bears the title "Gospel of the Nazoraeans" (cf. Constantin von Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* [2d ed.; Leipzig: Olms 1876], 333 note). It may, therefore, have served here as *Vorlage*.

(5) Hugo of St Cher, *In Matt.* 27:57 (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 139: *in Evangelio Nazaraeorum*); *In Ioh.* 19:42 (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 140: *in Evangelio Nazaraeorum*). Parallel: *Ev. Nicod.* 12.1; 15.5 (used by Hugo?). Discussion in Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 139–40 (no. XLIX); Schmidt, "Und es war," 87–88.

(6) Hugo of St Cher, *In epp. Pauli* (on 1 Cor 15:5; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 140: *in Evangelio Nazaraeorum*). For parallels and discussion cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 283–84; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 140–41 (no. L); William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (VCSup 25; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 398–403; Schmidt, "Und es war," 87.

(7) *Historia Passionis Domini* folio 25v (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 142: *in evangelio Nazaraeorum*). Discussion in Klijn, "Nazoräerevangelium," ANRW 25.5:4029; Vielhauer and Strecker, "Judenchristliche Evangelien," 128; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 142 (no. LII).

(8) *Historia Passionis Domini* folio 32r (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 143: *in Evangelio Nazareorum*). Discussion in Klijn, "Nazoräerevangelium," ANRW 25.5:4029; Vielhauer and Strecker, "Judenchristliche Evangelien," 128; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 142–44 (no. LIII).

(9) *Historia Passionis Domini* folio 35r (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 144: *in evangelio Nazareorum*). Discussion in Klijn, "Nazoräerevangelium," ANRW 25.5:4029; Vielhauer and Strecker, "Judenchristliche Evangelien," 128; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel* (no. LIV).

(10) *Historia Passionis Domini* folio 44r (Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 144: *in evangelio Nazareorum*). Parallels: *Acts Thom.* 165; Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 118. Discussion in Klijn, "Nazoräerevangelium," ANRW 25.5:4027; Vielhauer and Strecker, "Judenchristliche Evangelien," 128; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 144–45 (no. LV).

The following reference is not mentioned in Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*:

(11) *Vita Beate Virginis Marie et Salvatoris Rhythmica* (ca. 1230) whose Prologue quotes as sources: "... ut ex Evangelio, quod Nazareorum vocatur, et ex hoc, quod est dictum Hebreorum" (quoted after Schmidt, "Und es war," 84). Discussion *ibid.*, 83–85, 89. Cf. also Max Päpke and Arthur Hübner, *Das Marienleben des Schweizers Wernher* (Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 27; Berlin: Weidmann, 1920), verses 2119–2122 (36): "... Also von dem ewangelio // Genant Nazareorum // Und von dem andern, // Genemmet Hebreorum . . ."

¹⁸Cf. Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, *pace* what she calls the "Bagatti-Testa Hypothesis" (for which cf., e.g., Bellarmino Bagatti, *Le comunità giudeo-cristiane* [vol. 1 of *Alle origini della chiesa*; Storia e Attualità 5; Vatican City: Libr. Ed. Vaticana,

2. Some Remarks on Terminology

Epiphanius distinguishes the Nazoraeans (*Ναζωραῖοι*)¹⁹ on the one hand from the Naziraens (*Ναζηραῖοι*; *Pan.* 29.5.7), the body of Israelites specially consecrated to the service of God (Hebrew נזירים; נזירים),²⁰ and on the other hand from a Jewish sect called the Nasaraeans (*Νασαραῖοι*; *Pan.* 29.6.1). The latter, according to Epiphanius's description in *Pan.* 18, distinguished the Mosaic Law from the Pentateuch, refused sacrifices, and lived as vegetarians.²¹ Jerome calls the group either *Nazareni* or *Nazar(a)ei*, but other spellings like *Nazorei* or even *Nazarini* are also attested in the manuscript tradition of the works of this church father.²²

1981]; Emmanuele Testa, *The Faith of the Mother Church: An Essay on the Theology of the Judeo-Christians* [Studium biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio minor 32; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1992]). The only archaeological evidence that may point to Nazoraeans having lived there is found in the Roman-Byzantine village Farj in the southern Golan where inscriptions were found with both the Jewish menorah and Christian symbolism together (cf. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 39–41). However, even this possibility appears to me unlikely, since it is based on Epiphanius's unfounded claim that the Nazoraeans are linked to nearby Kokaba/ Chochaba (cf. also below note 36. Pace Taylor, cf. now again Bargil Pixner, "Nazoraeans on Mount Zion," in *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états* (ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 289–316, esp. 291 and note 2. Cf. also chapter 23 of this book).

¹⁹The most extensive discussion of terminology is found in Simon C. Mimouni, "Les Nazoréens: Recherche étymologique et historique," *RB* 105 (1998): 208–62 (esp. 212–15 with full bibliography).

²⁰Cf. Günter Mayer, "נָזֵר nqr," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren; Stuttgart, 1970–), 5:329–34; Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie*, 450–52; Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakha and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 23–48. They are probably also meant by Jerome in an enigmatic passage in *Comm. Isa.* 4.13. Commenting on Isa 11:1b גַּם־צַדְקָה מִשְׁעִיר ("and a branch shall grow out from his roots") he remarks that the *Nazarei* were always written with the letter *zain* and were translated by the Septuagint as "sanctified" and by Symmachus as "separated." Jerome appears to confuse here נָזֵר (from נָזֶר) and נָזֵר (from נָזֶר, "consecrate"). Pritz (*Nazarene*, 54) and Klijn (*Jewish-Christian Gospel*, 98–101), when discussing this passage, do not comment on the etymology suggested by Jerome which directly contradicts that of Epiphanius.

²¹Cf. Marcel Simon, *Les sectes juives au temps de Jésus* (Mythes et Religions 40; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), 89–92; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 45–47; Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie*, 452.

²²No firm conclusions may, therefore, be drawn from the texts in the printed editions. A look into the apparatus of the new edition of Roger Gryson et al., *Commentaires de Jérôme sur le prophète Isaïe* (5 vols.; VL 23; 27; 30; 35; 36; Freiburg: Herder, 1993–1999) demonstrates the variability of the attested readings (in what follows the first reading is that adopted by the editors): *Comm. Isa.* 2.51 *Nazarenorum*, *Nazerenorum*; 3.26: *Nazarei*, *Nazoraei*; 3.29: *Nazareni*, *Nazoren*, *Nazarei*, *Nazaraei*; 3.30: *Nazarei*, *Nazoraei*; 4.13: *Nazarei* (twice), *Nazor(a)ei* (twice); 9.13: *Nazarei*, *Nazor(a)ei*, *Nazaren*; 10.6: *Nazarei*, *Nazor(a)ei*, *Nazorai*, *Nazei*; 11.24: *Nazarei*, *Nazorei*; *Nazaraei*; *Nazareth/Nazareth*; 13.21 *Nazarenorum*, *Nazorenorum*, *Nazarinorum*; 14.17: *Nazarenorum*, *Nazorenorum*; 18.1: *Nazareni*, *Nazarei*,

In the New Testament the term Ναζωραῖος is sometimes used instead of Ναζαρηνός. Mark offers exclusively the form Ναζαρηνός (1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6). Matthew and John consistently use only the form Ναζωραῖος (Matt 2:23; 26:71; John 18:5, 7; 19:19). In Luke-Acts, however, both terms are used; when following his source its author uses Ναζαρηνός (Luke 4:34 [cf. Mark 1:24]; 24:19), whereas his redactional linguistic usage can be seen from the choice of the form Ναζωραῖος (Luke 18:37; Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9).²³ It is not necessary here to discuss in detail the term Ναζαρηνός, which is always applied to Jesus, but never to his disciples. It is probably derived from the town of Nazareth (hence “Jesus of Nazareth”).²⁴ As regards Ναζωραῖος, the most important passages are Matt 2:23 and Acts 24:5. In Matt 2:23 it is said of Joseph that “he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, ‘He shall be called a Nazorean’ (Ναζωραῖος).” According to Acts 24:5 when accusing the apostle Paul before the Roman governor Felix a certain Tertullus said: “For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoraeans (Ναζωραῖων αἵρεσεως).” It becomes clear from this that Matthew connected “Nazorean” with Nazareth and understood the term as designating Jesus’

Nazaraeis, Nazarei. The inhabitants of Nazareth are called *Nazareni* in *Comm. Matt.* 13.54 and *Nazarei* in *Sit. p. 143* (Lagarde, *Onomastica*). In the critical edition of *De viris illustribus* by Ceresa-Gastaldo we find in 3.2 (cf. above note 8): *Nazaraeis* (emendation), *Nazareis, Nazoreis, Ναζιραῖων*; cf. also 3.4. In the *Vulgata* the form *Nazarenus/ Nazareni* appears throughout (cf., however, the variant readings *nazarei* [AC] and *nazorei* [G] in Acts 26:9) except in Matt 2:23, where the text reads *Nazareus* (cf. also Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 44, n. 2). Perhaps this reflects the usage in the *Vetus Latina*, for Tertullian says in *Marc. 4.8.1*: “*Nazaraeus uocari habebat secundum prophetiam Christus creatoris. Vnde et ipso nomine nos Iudei Nazarenos appellant per eum*” (CCSL 1:556.24–26). The first sentence refers to Matt 2:23, whereas the second probably to Acts 24:5. Eusebius, *Onom. s.v. Ναζαρίθ* is perhaps based on Tertullian or on a common source: ὅθεν ὁ Χριστὸς Ναζωραῖος ἐκλήθη, καὶ Ναζαρηνὸς τὸ παλαιὸν ἴμεις οἱ νῦν Χριστιανοί (Lagarde, *Onomastica*, 284,37–285,1). Cf. also Pritz, *Nazarene*, 46.

²³Cf. Horst Kuhli, “Ναζαρηνός/Ναζωραῖος,” EWNT 1:1117–21, 1118 (who also records variant readings in the manuscript tradition not listed here). As regards the New Testament evidence, cf. in addition Hans Heinrich Schaeder, “Ναζαρηνός, Ναζωραῖος,” ThWNT 4:879–84; Ernst Zuckschwerdt, “*Nazóraios* in Mt 2,23,” TZ 31 (1975): 65–77; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (2d ed.; London: Chapman, 1993), 207–13; 218–19; 223–25, 617; Hans-Peter Rüger, “ΝΑΖΑΠΕΘ/ΝΑΖΑΡΑ ΝΑΖΑΦΝΟΣ/ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ,” ZNW 72 (1981): 257–63; K. Berger, “Jesus als Nasoräer/Nasiräer,” NovT 38 (1996): 323–35; Martinus C. de Boer, “L’Évangile de Jean et le christianisme juif (nazoréen),” in *Le déchirement: Juifs et chrétiens au premier siècle* (ed. Daniel Marguerat; Le monde de la Bible 32; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996): 179–202; Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus: 1. Teilband: Mt 1–7* (4th ed.; EKK 1.1; Zurich: Benziger, 1997), 131–33; Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens,” 216–23. A survey of the older literature is found in the same article, 212–15.

²⁴Cf. the recent survey of the problem in Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens,” 217–18.

birthplace.²⁵ Moreover, it appears from the second passage that the first Christians were called Nazoreans (derived from Hebrew/Aramaic נָצְרִים²⁶). Whatever the reason may have been why Matthew connected Ναζωραῖος with Nazareth, the name of the Christians as found in Acts 24:5 will hardly have been understood to relate to this town, as, “certainly, the vast majority of Jewish Christians were not, and were not perceived to be, from Nazareth; nor was first-or second-century Nazareth a prominent centre of Christianity.”²⁷ It may be that the Christians were called Nazoreans because of the epithet attached to Christ. As regards the latter, some connection with a christological interpretation of נֶזֶר in Isa 11:1–10 (“and a branch shall grow out from his roots”), which is frequently attested elsewhere,²⁸ is likely. Subsequently, “the Aramaic-derived word and its cognates (as opposed to the Greek-derived term ‘Christians’) became the normative reference to believers in Christ in Persia, Arabia, Armenia, Syria, and Palestine, providing a clue to the extent of the success of missions from the Aramaic-speaking Palestinian Church.”²⁹

²⁵ As to the thorny problem whether or not Ναζωραῖος originally was a toponyme cf. Zuckschwerdt, “Nazóraios,” 65–66; Brown, *Birth*, 209–10, 223–25, 617; Kuhli, *EWNT* 1:1120–21; Rüger, “NAZAPEΘ”; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 11–14; François Blanchetiére, “La secte des nazaréens ou les débuts du christianisme,” in *Aux origines juives du christianisme* (ed. François Blanchetiére and Moshe David Herr; Jerusalem: Diffusion Peeters, 1993), 65–91, esp. 70–72. Mimouni derives it from נֶזֶר (“to guard,” “to observe”). He thinks that originally the Nazoreans called themselves נָצְרִים (“guardians”) and that this was connected by the rabbis with the noun נֶזֶר (“shoot,” “sprout,” “branch,” cf. Isa 11:1; used in a negative sense in Isa 14:19; 60:21) in order to denigrate this group (“Les Nazoréens,” esp. 233). This seems unnecessarily complicated given the strongly messianic drift of Isa 11:1.

²⁶ Recently Klaus Berger and Markus Bockmuehl have attempted to make another case for deriving Ναζωραῖος from Hebrew יֵנֶסֶה (Berger, “Jesus”; Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 36–48; cf. already Zuckschwerdt, “Nazóraios”). However, given that the later name for the Christians in Aramaic and cognate languages is נָצְרִים (see below in the main text) and given Epiphanius’s distinction between Ναζωραῖοι and Ναζִיראῖοι, this is hardly plausible.

²⁷ Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 44.

²⁸ Cf. Rom 15:12; Justin, *1 Apol.* 32.12–13; *Dial.* 86–87; Irenaeus, *Epid.* 59; etc.

²⁹ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 24, note 17 referring to Schaefer, *ThWNT* 4. Cf. also Shlomo Pines, “The Iranian Name for Christians and the ‘God Fearers,’” in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 2 (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1968), 143–52 (144); Joan Taylor, “The Phenomenon of early Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?” *VC* 44 (1990): 313–34 (316–17); Blanchetiére, “Secte,” 69; Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens”; Michel Tardieu, “Les Symmachiens de Marius Victorinus et ceux du Manichéen Faustus,” in *Le Judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états* (ed. Simon C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 322–34. This designation for all Christians seems to have been preserved in Samaritan texts; cf. John MacDonald and A. J. B. Higgins, “The Beginnings of Christianity According to the Samaritans,” *NTS* 18 (1971): 54–80 (67); Stanley Isser, “Jesus in the Samaritan Chronicles,” *JJS* 32 (1981): 166–94 (170, 177); Daniel Vigne, *Christ au Jourdain: Le Baptême de Jésus dans la tradition judéo-chrétienne* (EBib 16; Paris: Gabalda, 1992), 93–94; cf. also the Qur’an (sing. *natzrani*, pl. *natzara*); cf. Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens,” 211, n. 9. In Mandaean literature the term נָצְרָיָה (natzorayye) is used as a self-designation. This problem cannot be discussed here. Cf. Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens,” 211, note 9, and 244–45.

In ancient rabbinical literature, too, the Christians are occasionally referred to as נזירים (*nosrim*); since the Middle Ages it has been the standard term and has remained so in modern Hebrew.³⁰

3. Main Features of the Group

According to the evidence of Epiphanius and Jerome, the Nazoraeans were a group of Jewish believers in Jesus³¹ who lived in Beroea in Coelesyria³² next to the Christian community and also a strong Jewish community.³³ In addition, Epiphanius locates this group also in the Decapolis near Pella and at Kokabe/Chochabe in Basanitis.³⁴ These are, however, unhistorical attempts to link the Nazoraeans on the one hand to the supposed exodus of the Jewish Christian community from Jerusalem to Pella in 70 C.E.,³⁵ and on the other hand to the Ebionites whose tradition was located at Kokabe/Chochabe.³⁶ The Nazoraeans

³⁰Cf. Johann Maier, *Jüdische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum in der Antike* (EdF 177; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 166–68; Taylor, “Phenomenon,” 316 and note 16; Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (EdF 82; 2d ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), 270–71; Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens,” 232–44.

³¹Their Jewish origin is emphasized by Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29.5.4: ὄντες μὲν κατὰ τὸ γένος Ἰουδαῖοι. Cf. also 29.7.1; 29.9.1.

³²Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29.7.7; Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 3. The *Panarion* was dedicated to the presbyters Acacius and Paul, “archimandrites, or abbots, in Chalcis and Beroea in Coelesyria” (*Epistula Acacii et Pauli* [Holl I, 153,6–8]) which makes it likely that this information is correct. Cf. also Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 104; Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 45–46, 71; Jozef Verheyden, *De vlucht van de christenen naar Pella: Onderzoek van het getuigenis van Eusebius en Epiphanius* (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren Jaargang 50, 127; Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1988), 145–46; Pourkier, *L'hésiologie*, 462–63.

³³Apart from many Christian churches and sanctuaries there were there at least two synagogues; cf. J. Sauvaget, *Alep: Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIX^e siècle* (2 vols.; Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 36; Paris: Geuthner, 1941), 1:58–61.

³⁴Cf. *Pan.* 29.7.7–8; 30.2.8.

³⁵Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.3. Jozef Verheyden has shown that with a high degree of probability “the ‘flight to Pella’ is a product of Eusebius’ imagination” (Robert M. Grant in his review of J. Verheyden, *De vlucht van de christenen naar Pella: Onderzoek van het getuigenis van Eusebius en Epiphanius*, *JTS NS* 41 (1990): 664–65, at 665). Epiphanius in turn depends on Eusebius (cf. Verheyden, *Vlucht*, 67–152). Cf. also Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 43–44. More cautiously, Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 145–48, with a survey of the relevant literature in notes 13–14. The Pella tradition is, once again, taken at face value by François Blanchetiére and Ray Pritz, “La migration des ‘Nazareens’ à Pella,” in *Aux origines juives du christianisme* (ed. François Blanchetiére and Moshe David Herr; Jerusalem: Diffusion Peeters, 1993), 93–110, who do not appear to have known Verheyden’s seminal study.

³⁶Cf. *Pan.* 30.2.8–9; 30.18.1; 40.1.5. The identity of the village Κωκάβη (Χωχάβη) is unclear. Julius Africanus (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.14) mentions a village Κωχάβα

observed the Law, i.e., they were circumcised, celebrated the Sabbath, and perhaps abstained from pork.³⁷ Moreover, Jerome claims that they performed sacrifices.³⁸

As Holy Scriptures the Nazoraeans used the Hebrew Bible within which, following Jewish custom, they distinguished Law, Prophets and “Books,” and the New Testament.³⁹ More importantly, they appear to have read the Gospel of Matthew in an archaic “Hebrew,” i.e., probably Aramaic version.⁴⁰ Jerome identifies it with the Gospel according to the Hebrews known to us from earlier Christian writers and says that it was “written in the Chaldaic and Syriac language but with Hebrew letters.”⁴¹ He claims that the library of Caesarea possessed a copy and, moreover, that he had copied it from the Nazoraeans and translated it into Greek and Latin.⁴² He quotes this version frequently in his writings.⁴³ To what extent this is true is a matter of debate and is discussed in another chapter.⁴⁴ In the scholarly literature the position probably most often adopted is that of Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker in Hennecke/Schneemelcher and, more recently, that of A. F. J. Klijn. They distinguish three gospels: one used by the Nazoraeans, one by the Ebionites, and a gospel “according to the Hebrews.”⁴⁵ This view, how-

(which was perhaps situated near Nazareth), Eusebius another one called Χωβά (Onom. p. 172,1–3 [Lagarde, *Onomastica*]; Jerome, *Sit.* p. 112 [Lagarde, *Onomastica*]: Choba) which is supposed to be the one mentioned in Gen 14:15 (הַבָּא “north of Damascus,” LXX: Χωβά “to the left of Damascus”; cf. also Josh 19:27 LXX: Χωβά/Χαβώλ; Hebrew: כְּבוֹד, Judith 4:4; 15:5: Χωβά). Finally, we know from *Pesiqa Rabbati* 16 that Rabbi Dositai was born in a town named Kochaba. In his *Onomasticon* Eusebius knows nothing about a Nazoraean settlement at Choba. Cf. also Schmidtko, *Neue Fragmente*, 98–105.

On the difficulties of locating Kokaba/Chochabe cf. Pritz, *Nazarene*, 120–21; Koch, “Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites,” 221–24; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 36–38; Pourquier, *L’hérésiologie*, 459–62.

³⁷Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29.5.4; 29.7.2. 5; Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 3.26; *Comm. Ezech.* 16.16; Augustine, *Bapt.* 7.1.1; *Faust.* 19.4; 19.7; *Cresc.* 1.31.36; *Epist.* 116.16.1. It should be emphasized that we do *not* know whether they observed Sunday (*pace* Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* [vol. 1 of *History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964], 342). Cf., however, Humbert of Silva Candida, *Adversus Graecorum Calumnias* 6 (PL 143:936): “Unde quia cum Iudeis sabbatum, et nobiscum celebratis diem dominicum, videmini in tali observatione imitari sectam Nazarenorum, qui sic recipiunt Christianismum ut non dimittant Iudaismum.” It is quite unlikely, however, that Humbert had any independent knowledge of the Nazoraeans.

³⁸Cf. *Comm. Jer.* 1.59 (on Jer 3:14–16). Moreover, according to Augustine, they also practiced baptism (cf. *Cresc.* 1.31.36).

³⁹Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29.7.2. 4.

⁴⁰Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 29.9.4.

⁴¹Pelag. 3.2 (quoted above n. 8).

⁴²Cf. *Comm. Mich.* 7.5–7 (date: ca. 391); *Vir. ill.* 2; 3; 16; *Comm. Matt.* 12.13; *Pelag.* 3.2.

⁴³The references are collected in Vielhauer and Strecker, “Judenchristliche Evangelien” (in German translation) and in Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*.

⁴⁴Cf. above chapter 9, section 3.

⁴⁵Cf. Vielhauer and Strecker, “Judenchristliche Evangelien”; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel*, esp. 27–30; cf. also Dieter Lührmann and Egbert Schlarb, *Fragmente apokryph*

ever, has recently come under strong attack by Peter Lebrecht Schmidt who, after a careful study of the evidence, largely follows Jerome in claiming that there was in principle only one Aramaic gospel, called “according to the Hebrews,” which was used by the Nazoraeans and other groups. This gospel was written at around 100 C.E. and was considered the *Ur-Matthäus*. Jerome translated this gospel into Greek and Latin taking as his basis a copy which he had obtained from the Nazoraeans, probably assisted by an expert in semitic languages. Another Greek translation was made in Alexandria. Whereas these Greek versions have left few traces, the Latin translation was widely known and quoted in the Middle Ages.⁴⁶ Be that as it may (and further studies of the medieval evidence are urgently called for), the quotations that Jerome specifically attributes to the Gospel used by the Nazoraeans reveal little beyond what we already know from Epiphanius’s and Jerome’s accounts of Nazoraeian beliefs.⁴⁷

Jerome, moreover, claims to have consulted an apocryphal Hebrew book of Jeremiah which was given to him by “a Hebrew person of the Nazoraean sect.” In this book he found the quotation from Zech 11:13 in precisely the same wording in which it is ascribed to Jeremiah in Matt 27:9–10.⁴⁸ Schmidtke and Pritz have

gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache (Marburger theologische Studien 59; Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 2000), 32, 42; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien: Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002), 53–55. The older view, which has recently been defended by Vigne, distinguishes simply between the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and the *Gospel of the Ebionites*; cf. the survey in Vigne, *Christ*, 25–36. See, in addition, François Bovon, “Hebräerevangelium,” RGG⁴ 3:1497. After the completion of the manuscript (2002) the following recent studies dealing with the Gospel of the Nazoraeans have come to my knowledge: Jörg Frey, “Die Scholien aus dem ‘Jüdischen Evangelium’ und das sogenannte Nazoräerevangelium,” ZNW 94 (2003): 122–37; Jörg Frey, “Et numquam laeti sitis . . .”—Ein apokryphes Jesuswort und die Probleme des Hebräerevangeliums,” in *Oleum Laetitiae: Festschrift für P. Benedikt Schwank OSB zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. Gunda Brüske and Anke Haendler-Kläsener; Jerusalemer Theologisches Forum 5; Münster: Aschendorff, 2003), 187–212; Jörg Frey, “Nazoräerevangelium,” RGG⁴ 6:160–61; Jörg Frey, “Ein Weg zurück zu den Ursprüngen? Die Fragmente judentheistischer Evangelienüberlieferungen,” *Bibel und Kirche* 60 (2005): 75–81.

⁴⁶ Schmidt, “Und es war.” Cf. also Schmidt in Klaus Sallmann, ed., *Die Literatur des Umbruchs: Von der römischen zur christlichen Literatur 117 bis 284 n. Chr.* (vol. 4 of *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*; Munich: Beck, 1997), 386 (§470.4) and Petersen, *Diatessaron*, 29–31, 39–41. For the medieval fragments see also Friedrich Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi* (11 vols.; Madrid: Inst. Francisco Suárez, 1940–83), 1:112 (no. 140); 8:129 (no. 169.2); Bernhard Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien: Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte* (3 vols.; Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1966–1981), 1:215–18; 260–61; Martin McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1975), 40–42; Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien*, 69–72.

⁴⁷ Cf. the survey in Pritz, *Nazarene*, 88–94. In addition J. M. Magnin, “Notes sur l’ebionisme,” *Proche-Orient chrétien* 23 (1973): 233–65; 24 (1974): 225–50; 25 (1975): 245–73; 26 (1976): 293–318; 27 (1977): 250–73; 28 (1978): 220–48 (26:301–5); Vigne, *Christ*, 140–46, 163, 215–17.

⁴⁸ Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 27.9–10.

both argued that Jerome's claim of possessing a copy of a Jeremiah Apocryphon is probably untrue and that his explanation rests on Origen's exposition of the verses in his *Commentary on Matthew*.⁴⁹ Finally, the Nazoreans must have had an active interest in biblical exegesis, for Jerome quotes a number of extracts from one of their commentaries on Isaiah (see below).

We know very little about the doctrine of the Nazoreans. Epiphanius tells us that they believed in God's being the creator of the universe, the resurrection of the dead (a belief they shared with the Pharisees⁵⁰), and Christ's being the servant of God ($\piαὶς τοῦ Θεοῦ$).⁵¹ The expression clearly refers to Deutero-Isaiah (42:1–4) as quoted in Matt 12:18–21.⁵² As to their Christology, however, Epiphanius confesses not to know any details (29.7.6).⁵³ Jerome claims "that they believe in Christ, the Son of God born of Mary the virgin, and they say about him that he suffered and rose again under Pontius Pilate" (*Epist.* 112.13).⁵⁴ Yet this may be an extrapolation from a remark made by Epiphanius in a quite different context.⁵⁵

We have more information about their attitude towards the Law, and this requires some comment. In his *Commentary on Isaiah* Jerome quotes some fragments from an exegetical work by an unknown Nazorean author which he did not, however, take directly from one of their writings, but probably from Apollinaris's commentary on the same prophet.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 253–54; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 56–57. Cf., however, Petersen (*Diatessaron*, 410) who, following A. Resch, assumes the existence of such a work.

⁵⁰ Cf. Günther Baumbach, "Φαρισαῖος," EWNT 3:992–97 (995); Günter Stemberger, *Pharisäer, Sadduzäer, Essener* (SBS 144; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 69–70; Hans-Friedrich Weiß, "Pharisäer," TRE 26:473–85 (477); the Sadducees opposed the belief in the resurrection, cf. Marcel Simon, "Sadducéens," DBSup 10:1545–56 (1549–50); Anthony J. Saldařini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1988), 304; Stemberger, *Pharisäer*, 68–69; Hans-Friedrich Weiß, "Sadduzäer," TRE 29:589–94 (592); Bernd Schröder, "Sadduzäer," RGG⁴ 7:732–33 (732).

⁵¹ *Pan.* 29.7.3.

⁵² Cf. also Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30. From Jerome, *Epist.* 112.13; *Comm. Isa.* 10.6 it appears that the Nazoreans spoke of Christ as *Dei filius*. *Filius* may be a translation of $\piαὶς$ and not $\nuιός$. Cf. also Pourquier, *L'hérésiologie*, 455 and note 260; 457–58.

⁵³ In 69.23.1 he accuses them of believing that Christ was a pure man ($\psiιλὸς ἄνθρωπος$). Yet this is only polemics.

⁵⁴ Trans. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 201.

⁵⁵ Here I follow Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 252–53, *pace* Pritz, *Nazarene*, 55.

⁵⁶ Cf. above note 14. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 47, mistakenly assume that the *Nazareni* mentioned by Jerome in his exegesis of Matt 13:54 are the Nazoreans (cf. also Reuven Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," in *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* [vol. 2 of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*; ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson; London: SCM, 1981], 226–44 [esp. 238 and note 75]). They are, however, the inhabitants of Nazareth; cf. also Pritz, *Nazarene*, 54–55.

(1) Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 3.26 (on Isa 8:11–15):

The Nazoraeans who accept Christ in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old Law explain the two houses as the two families of Shammai and Hillel, from whom originated the Scribes and the Pharisees. Akiba⁵⁷ who took over their school is called the master of Aquila the proselyte⁵⁸ and after him came Meir⁵⁹ who has been succeeded by Joannes the son of Zakkai⁶⁰ and after him Eliezer⁶¹ and further Telphon,⁶² and next Joseph the Galilaean⁶³ and Joshua⁶⁴ up to the capture of Jerusalem. Shammai then and Hillel were born in Judaea not long before the birth of the Lord.⁶⁵ The name of the first means scatterer (*dissipator*)⁶⁶ and of the second unholy (*profanus*),⁶⁷ because he scattered and defiled the precepts of the Law by his traditions (*traditiones*) and δευτέρωσις.⁶⁸ And these are the two houses who did not accept the Saviour who has become to them destruction and shame. (VL 23:373.43–374.55)⁶⁹

(2) Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 3.29 (on Isa 8:19–22):

For the rest the Nazoraeans explain this passage in this way: When the Scribes and the Pharisees tell you to listen to them, men who do everything for the love of the

⁵⁷ R. Akiba ben Josef. The dating is incorrect, since Shammai and Hillel were contemporaries of Jesus, whereas Akiba flourished in the first half of the second century C.E. (second generation Tanna). In what follows Jerome presents a curiously garbled genealogy where all names are correct and all dates are wrong. For highly speculative attempts to account for this phenomenon cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 123; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 59–60. On what follows cf. Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch* (8th ed.; Munich: Beck, 1992), 72–105.

⁵⁸ Aqilas, though influenced by Akiba, was pupil of R. Eliezer and R. Jehoshua ben Chananya (second generation Tanna).

⁵⁹ R. Meir was pupil first of Ishmael, then of Akiba, not of Aquila (third generation Tanna).

⁶⁰ R. Johanan ben Zakkai is a Tanna of the *first* generation.

⁶¹ R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos is a contemporary of Akiba (second generation Tanna).

⁶² R. Tarfon is a contemporary of Akiba (second generation Tanna). As to the orthographical variation cf. Pritz, *Nazarene*, 60–61.

⁶³ R. Jose ha-Gelili is a contemporary of Akiba and Tarfon (second generation Tanna).

⁶⁴ R. Jehoshua ben Chananya is a contemporary of Eliezer (second generation Tanna)

⁶⁵ The date of Shammai and Hillel is approximately correct.

⁶⁶ The name is apparently derived from οἴρεσθαι (“to disperse,” “to scatter”), which does not make sense. Cf. Stemberger, *Einleitung*, 75.

⁶⁷ The name is derived from the verb λύπη (“to desecrate”) or the adjective λύπη (“un-holy,” “profane”). As to the linguistic problems cf. Pritz, *Nazarene*, 61–62.

⁶⁸ In Jerome this term which he quotes in Greek is used to designate Jewish traditions in a wide sense. Cf. Hans Bietenhard, “Deuterosis,” RAC 3:842–49 (esp. cols. 847–48). Further literature on the meaning of δευτέρωσις is found in Wolfram Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana: Die Idee des Fortschritts in der Alten Kirche bis Eusebius* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 58; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 216, note 48. Add now Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, for the wider background.

⁶⁹ Trans. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 221, slightly altered.

belly and who hiss during their incantations in the way of the magicians in order to deceive you, you must answer them like this: It is not strange if you follow your traditions, since every tribe consults his own idols. We must not, therefore, consult you who are dead about the living ones. Rather God has given *us* the Law and the testimonies of the Scriptures. If you are not willing to follow them, you will not have light, and darkness will always oppress you. It will cover your earth and your doctrine so that, when they see that they have been deceived by you in error and they feel a longing for the truth, they will then be sad or angry. And let them who believed you to be like their own gods and kings curse you. And let them look at the heaven and the earth in vain, since they are always in darkness and they cannot flee away from your ambushes. (VL 23:383.72–86)⁷⁰

(3) Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 3.30 (on Isa 9:1):

The Nazoraeans, whose opinion I have set forth above, try to explain this passage in the following way: When Christ came and his preaching shone out, the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali first of all were freed from the errors of the Scribes and the Pharisees and he shook off their shoulders the very heavy yoke of the Jewish traditions (*grauissimum traditionum Iudaicarum iugum*). Later, however, the preaching became more dominant, that means the preaching was multiplied, through the Gospel of the apostle Paul who was the last of all the apostles. And the Gospel of Christ shone to the most distant tribes and the way of the whole sea. Finally the whole world which earlier walked or sat in darkness and was imprisoned in the bonds of idolatry and death, has seen the clear light of the gospel. (VL 23:388.71–81)⁷¹

(4) Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 9.13 (on Isa 29:17–21):

What we understood to have been written about the devil and his angels, the Nazoraeans believe to have been said against the Scribes and the Pharisees, because the δευτεροί⁷² passed away, who earlier deceived the people with very vicious traditions and who watched night and day to deceive the simple ones and who made men sin against the Word of God in order that they should deny that Christ was the Son of God. (VL 30:1067.81–1068.86)⁷³

(5) Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 10.6 (on Isa 31:6–9):

The Nazoraeans understand this passage in this way: O Sons of Israel, who deny the Son of God with a most vicious opinion, turn to him and his apostles. For if you will do this, you will reject all idols which to you were a cause of sin in the past, and the devil will fall before you, not because of your powers, but because of the compassion of God. And his young men who earlier fought for him, will be the tributaries of the Church, and all his power and his rock [stronghold] will pass away. Also the philosophers and every perverse dogma will turn their backs to the sign of the cross. Because

⁷⁰ Ibid., 221–23, altered.

⁷¹ Ibid., 223.

⁷² Jerome quotes the term in Greek; cf. above, note 68.

⁷³ Ibid., 223, altered.

this is the meaning of the Lord that this will take place, whose fire or light is in Sion and whose oven is in Jerusalem. (VL 30:1122.39–48)⁷⁴

From these passages it becomes clear that, like the Sadducees,⁷⁵ the Nazoraeans were very critical towards what they regarded as a tightening up of the Law by the Pharisees. Not only did the Nazoraeans resent the oral *traditiones* valued by the Pharisees,⁷⁶ but they also had a very clear concept of the history of salvation. It is divided into three stages: the preaching of Christ in Galilee; the preaching of Paul in the Mediterranean countries; and the spread of the gospel across the whole world (cf. esp. quotation no. 3).⁷⁷ Obviously, therefore, the Nazoraeans did not regard the Gentile Christians as inferior, and consequently cannot have required from them the fulfilment of the Mosaic statutes as a condition of becoming Christian.⁷⁸

In the context of this chapter a final aspect can only be touched upon. In many places throughout his exegetical works Jerome fights against a millenaristic eschatology that he ascribes to “Jews” (*Iudei*) or “Hebrews” (*Hebrei*). At times, however, Jerome combines the “Jews” or “Hebrews” with another group that he calls “our Judaizers” (*nostri iudaizantes*) or “half-Jews” (*semiiudei*). In another study I have shown that Jerome received most, if not all of his information about this type of eschatology from the writings of Apollinaris of Laodicea. Apollinaris, in turn, is also the source for Jerome’s knowledge of the Nazoraeans.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, we do not know the exact nature of the relations between Apollinaris and the Nazoraeans, nor are we able to say precisely to what extent Jerome’s information stems from Apollinaris himself or from Nazoraeian sources quoted (and perhaps also criticized) by the bishop of Laodicea. Given their tendency towards a literal understanding of the Hebrew Bible, the Nazoraeans may very well have

⁷⁴ Ibid., 223–24, altered.

⁷⁵ As to the Sadducees’ critical attitude towards oral tradition, cf. Baumbach, “Σαδδουκαῖος,” EWNT 3:530–31 (530); Simon, “Sadducéens,” col. 1549; Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 303; Stemberger, *Pharisäer*, 89–90; Weiß, “Sadduzäer,” 29:592; Schröder, “Sadduzäer,” 7:732. A similar tendency is also found in the Gospel of Matthew; cf. esp. the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5) and Matt 23; cf., moreover, A. Michel and J. Le Moigne, “Pharisiens,” DBSup 7:1022–1115 (esp. 1095–1100); Klijn, “Quotations,” 253–55.

⁷⁶ Cf. Michel and Le Moigne, “Pharisiens,” cols. 1060–69; Stemberger, *Pharisäer*, 89; Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer: Ihr Verständnis im Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz* (WUNT 101; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997), 541–42. As to the criticism of the Pharisees, cf. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), 214–18. As to the combination of Pharisees and scribes in the New Testament cf. Michel and Le Moigne, “Pharisiens,” cols. 1070–71; Günther Baumbach, “γραμματεύς,” EWNT 2:624–27 (624–25); Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 144–98; Weiß, “Pharisäer,” 26:475; Deines, *Pharisäer*, 541, note 42; Hans-Friedrich Weiß, “Schriftgelehrte, II. Neues Testament,” TRE 30:516–20 (516–17); Albert I. Baumgarten, “Pharisäer,” RGG⁴ 6:1262–64.

⁷⁷ Cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 110.

⁷⁸ Ibid.; cf. also Pritz, *Nazarene*, 64–65.

⁷⁹ Cf. above section 2, and esp. note 14.

been millenarians, but the evidence is very complex and yields no clear-cut conclusions. This is why I refrain from discussing it here in detail.⁸⁰

Hence the Nazoraeans were Jewish Christians in the classical definition of the term: they were born Jews who observed the Law out of tradition but believed in Christ.⁸¹ Moreover, they did not require the Gentiles to follow their example. Consequently, they did not regard the Law as necessary for salvation. Although in excerpt no. 5 the Pharisees are not mentioned, they are clearly meant here. (The sentence regarding the “young men” certainly alludes, beyond Isa 31:8, to the conversion of Paul.) It is not the observance of the Law, but rather God’s compassion which saves humanity.⁸²

The Nazoraeans were truly a mixture of different groups. With the Pharisees they shared the belief in the resurrection. With the Sadducees they were critical of the oral interpretation of the Law. And with the Christians they shared the belief in Christ, a belief that, while it did not render the observance of the Law unnecessary, relativized it considerably. Hence Epiphanius’s assessment of the character of the Nazoraeans is quite correct:

They are different from Jews, and different from Christians, only in the following. They disagree with the Jews because they have come to faith in Christ; they are not in accord with the Christians since they are still fettered by the Law—circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest. (*Pan.* 29.7.5; trans. Williams, *Panarion*, altered).

4. The Origins of the Nazoraeans

The question remains as to whether the Nazoraeans—who were probably still in existence at the time of Epiphanius (he speaks of them in 29.7.2 ff. in the

⁸⁰ Cf. *in extenso* Kinzig, as referred to in note 14.

⁸¹ Cf., e.g., Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135–425* (London: Littman Library, 1986), 246; Johannes Munck, “Primitive Jewish Christianity and Later Jewish Christianity: Continuation or Rupture?” in *Aspects du judéo-christianisme* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Centres d’Etudes Supérieures Spécialisés, 1965), 77–93 (87); Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 4; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 70 who, however, criticizes the distinction between Jewish Christians and Judaizing Christians; Georg Strecker, “*Judenchristentum*,” *TRE* 17:310–25 (311); Simon C. Mimouni, “Pour une définition nouvelle du judéo-christianisme ancien,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 161–86 (esp. 184); Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 70; Stemberger, *RAC* 29:228–29; Bernd Wande, James Carleton Paget, Adolf Martin Ritter and Siegfried Hermle, “*Judenchristen*,” *RGG* 4:601–9. For further references on the problems of definition, cf. Burton L. Visotzky, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities in Rabbinic Literature,” *AJSR* 14 (1989): 47–70 (esp. 48, note 1); also in Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (WUNT 80; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 129–49 (129, note 1); Mimouni, “Définition,” 163–67; Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 42–46.

⁸² Augustine writes that the “Symmachians or Nazoraeans” “forced the Gentiles to judaize” (*Faust.* 19.7). If there is any truth in this remark, it can only apply to the Symmachians, but not to the Nazoraeans.

present tense)—were an old group or, as Johannes Munck claimed, whether they did not appear until the fourth century.⁸³ Again, the sole evidence comes from Epiphanius. The fact that apparently *all* the Christians were in the beginning called Nazoraeans caused him some problems. If I understand him correctly, Epiphanius offers two conflicting explanations.

On the one hand, he distinguishes three successive stages of the development of the group:

(1) First, *all* Christians were called Nazoraeans (29.1.2–3).

(2) At a second stage, namely, “after the Saviour’s ascension and after Mark had preached in the land of Egypt” (29.5.4),⁸⁴ the Christians’ name was Iessaeans.⁸⁵ He identifies this group with the Essenes described by Philo.⁸⁶

(3) Finally, at Antioch, the “disciples began to be called Christians” (29.1.3; cf. Acts 11:26).

During the second stage, a group split from the Iessaeans retaining the old name Nazoraeans (29.5.4; cf. also 29.7.1). Epiphanius says that this group was the same as the one described by him in this chapter.

On the other hand, however, Epiphanius gives another, competing explanation. He claims that the “sect” of the Nazoraeans derived the name from Jesus’ origin from Nazareth (cf. Acts 2:22). They “adopted this name, so as to be called Nazoraeans” (29.5.6; cf. also 29.7.1). This sounds as if the name came into being as a self-designation by a specific group of Jewish Christians.

⁸³ Munck, “Christianity,” 91. Cf. already Johannes Munck, “Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times,” *NTS* 6 (1959/60): 103–16.

⁸⁴ Epiphanius obviously assumes the preaching of Mark in Egypt (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16) to have taken place after Acts 24:5.

⁸⁵ As to Epiphanius’s explanation, cf. 29.1.2–5.3. He assumes the name to be derived from either Jesse (Ἰεσσαῖ), the father of David (29.1.4; cf. Isa 11:1,10; Rom 5:12) or from Jesus himself. He explains that “Jesus” in Hebrew meant θεραπευτής ἦτοι ἰατρός καὶ σωτήρ (29.4.9). Hence Epiphanius quite rightly connects Jesus’ name (Hebrew יִשְׁעָה [יְשֻׁעָה] with γεννητός (“to save”; cf. Werner Foerster, “Ιησοῦς,” *ThWNT* 3:284–94 [esp. 290]).

⁸⁶ In 29.5.1 Epiphanius mentions a writing by Philo entitled περὶ Ἰεσσαῖῶν which is, in fact, nothing else than *Contempl. Life*. As Philo himself explains, this tract is the second half of a work which was preceded by a (now lost) book on the Essenes (cf. *Contempl. Life* 1). The Latin version is entitled *De statu Essaeorum*. Hence Ἰεσσαῖοι is an (intentional?) misspelling of Ἐσσαῖοι. (Cf. Leopold Cohn and Siegfried Reiter, *Philonis Alexandrini Opera Quae Supersunt* [7 vols.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1896–1930], 6:IX; *pace* Schoeps, *Theologie*, 10; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 39–42; the same mistake occurs in Nilus, *Mon. exerc.* 3 [PG 79:721 A–B]). If it is true that Epiphanius knew Philo only through Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.17; cf. Holl’s apparatus *ad* 29.5.1 and Heinrich Karpp, “Christennamen,” *RAC* 2:1114–38 (1128), *pace* Pourquier, *L’hérésiologie*, 440–47), then Epiphanius must have had a manuscript of the *Ecclesiastical History* which gave the misspelled title of *Contempl.* The preserved manuscripts as recorded by Schwartz in his GCS-edition (GCS 9.1–3; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–1909) give the correct titles in *Hist. eccl.* 2.17.3 and 2.18.7. Another possible explanation for this mystery is suggested by Pourquier, *L’hérésiologie*, 441, who thinks that Epiphanius remembered (and confused) the first words of *Contempl. Life* 1 (Ἐσσαῖῶν πέρι διαλεχθείς) which he remembered as the title to what follows in Philo on the Therapeutai (and not the Essenes).

On the basis of Acts 24:5 he then says that the *enemies* of Christianity maliciously applied the name of this specific “heresy” (*αἵρεσις*) to *all* Christians.⁸⁷ This term in turn was adopted by Paul, because

in those days everyone called Christians this because of the city of Nazareth—there was no other usage of the name then. People thus gave the name of “Nazoraens” to believers in Christ, of whom it is written, “He shall be called a Nazorean” [Matt 2:23].⁸⁸

The Christians’ *self-designation*, however, was “disciples of Jesus” (*μαθηταὶ Ἰησοῦ*, 29.6.7).⁸⁹ As far as the name for all Christians is concerned, he seems, therefore, to distinguish between this self-designation and the name “Nazorean,” which was first a self-designation by the Nazoraens and *only later* adopted by all Christians.

These theories are attempts to combine the apparently contradictory information about the original names of Christians using additional evidence from Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History*.⁹⁰

Epiphanius’s claim that the Nazoraens split from the early Christian community cannot, therefore, be relied upon, since it probably is not based on any evidence. At the beginning of the chapter, Epiphanius even confesses that he does not know whether they lived before, at the same time as, or after the Cerinthians whom he had dealt with in the preceding chapter (29.1.1). Moreover, he mentions in 29.7.7 yet another theory according to which the Nazoraens did not come into existence until after the exodus of the Jerusalem community to Pella.⁹¹

This means that the different traditions about Jewish-Christians gave rise to conflicting conclusions with regard to the origins of the Nazoraens. On the one hand he assumes that they lived in Jerusalem before 70 A.D. and on the other hand he supposes that they originated among Christians who left the city before its fall.⁹²

It becomes clear from this that Epiphanius had no personal knowledge of the Nazoraens and that his testimony, therefore, has to be treated with great caution.

⁸⁷ Epiphanius understands the term *αἵρεσις* in Acts 24:5 to mean “heresy” and to refer to the Jewish Christian group of Nazoraens (29.6.2).

⁸⁸ *Pan.* 29.6.5; translation taken from Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 171; cf. also Jerome, *Sit.*, page 112 (Lagarde, *Onomastica*).

⁸⁹ In 29.7.1 he even seems to indicate that the term “Iessaeans” was derived from “Jesus.”

⁹⁰ The source is *Hist. eccl.* 2.16.1 combined with 2.17.2; cf. Pourquier, *L'hérésiologie*, 447–49.

⁹¹ Cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 98–105.

⁹² Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 45. Cf. also the ingenious reconstruction by Schmidtke (*Neue Fragmente*, 100–104) as to how Epiphanius came to associate the Nazoraens with Pella and, in addition, Verheyden, *Vlucht*, 91–107.

Nevertheless, after what has been said so far, there can hardly be any doubt that the Nazoraeans had a long history.⁹³ Not only did they possess an apparently old Gospel version close to Matthew; their theological position resembles very much the group around the apostle James as described in Acts 15. They may, therefore, have descended from the Jewish-Christian community at Jerusalem, but we do not know in what way. They could very well have been a group which, on the basis of Matt 2:23, retained the old Aramaic name that originally designated all Christians and that Tertullian attests as common among the Jews even in his time (around 210).⁹⁴ Whether or not they are related to Johannine Christianity, as has been recently suggested,⁹⁵ cannot be determined with any certainty. They belonged, perhaps, to the kind of *milieu* in which we have to place the dialogue by Ariston of Pella between the Jewish-Christian Jason and the Alexandrine Jew Papiskos.⁹⁶ There is, however, no compelling evidence linking the Nazoraeans in any way with the Ebionites.⁹⁷ In her recent study on the

⁹³Cf. also Magnin, "Notes"; Taylor, "Phenomenon," 326; Blanchetière, "Secte"; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 156; Stemberger, RAC 29:234; Martinus C. de Boer, "The Nazoraeans: Living at the Boundary of Judaism and Christianity," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 239–62.

⁹⁴Marc. 4:8.1: "According to the prophecy, the Creator's Christ was to be called a Nazarene (*Nazaraeus*). For that reason, and on his account, the Jews call us by that very name, Nazarenes (*Nazarenos*). For we are also those of whom it is written, *The Nazarenes (Nazaraei) were made whiter than snow* [Lam. 4:7], having previously of course been darkened with the stains of sin, and blackened with the darkness of ignorance. But to Christ the appellation of Nazarene was to apply because of his hiding-place in infancy, for which he went down to Nazareth, to escape from Archelaus, the son of Herod [cf. Matt 2:23]" (trans. according to Ernest Evans, *Tertullian Adversus Marcionem* (2 vols.; OECT; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

⁹⁵Cf. Martinus C. de Boer, "L'Évangile de Jean et le christianisme juif (nazoréen)," in *Le déchirement: Juifs et chrétiens au premier siècle* (ed. Daniel Marguerat; Le monde de la Bible 32; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 179–202.

⁹⁶Cf. Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus Iudaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld* (1.–11. Jh.) (3d ed.; Europäische Hochschulschriften 172, Theologie; Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1995), 180; an extensive discussion of the source problem is found in Adolf Harnack, *Die Überlieferung der griechischen Apologeten des zweiten Jahrhunderts in der Alten Kirche und im Mittelalter* (TU 1.1; Leipzig: Hinrichs 1882), 115–30.

⁹⁷Pace Pritz, *Nazarene*, 108: "The Nazarenes were distinct from the Ebionites and prior to them. In fact, we have found that it is possible that there was a split in Nazarene ranks around the turn of the first century. This split was either over a matter of christological doctrine or over leadership of the community. Out of this split came the Ebionites, who can scarcely be separated from the Nazarenes on the basis of geography, but who can be easily distinguished from the standpoint of Christology." Referring to Pritz' study in his recent article on "Iudaizantes" in RAC 19:130–42, Vincent Déroche even goes so far as to claim both groups to be identical; cf. RAC 19:136. This view is especially widespread in French scholarship; cf. Magnin, "Notes"; Vigne, *Christ*, 117; for a criticism of this view see Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 85–86.

archaeological evidence for Jewish-Christian groups, Joan E. Taylor has emphasized that we must allow for a great complexity with regard to the origins of these groups. She writes: "Certainly, it is almost impossible to see in the plethora of possible Jewish-Christian groups any real case for their being a unified movement."⁹⁸ A look at the present situation of Messianic Judaism in Israel appears to confirm this cautious assessment.⁹⁹

Nazorean relations with Rabbinic Judaism were clearly less relaxed than those with orthodox Christianity. The strong polemics of the Nazoreans against the Pharisees must have caused some form of reaction on the part of the attacked or, rather, those who felt themselves to be the legitimate heirs of the Pharisees. There are some traces of this reaction in the writings of Epiphanius and Jerome.

5. The Condemnation of the *Noṣrim* in the *Birkat Haminim*

In an appendix to his notice concerning the Nazoreans Epiphanius reports that the Jews

stand up at dawn, at midday, and toward evening, three times a day when they recite their prayers in the synagogues, and curse and anathematize them. Three times a day they say, "God curse the Nazoreans" (ἐπικαταράσσει ὁ θεὸς τοὺς Ναζωραίους) (*Pan.* 29.9.2; trans. Williams, *Panarion*).

The cursing of "Nazoreans" by the Jews is also attested by Jerome. In 404 C.E. he says in a letter:

Until now a heresy is to be found in all synagogues of the east among the Jews; it is called "of the Minaeans" and cursed by the Pharisees up to now. Usually they are named Nazoreans' (*Epist.* 112.13).¹⁰⁰

Yet in several places Jerome emphasizes that this curse applied to *all* Christians: ". . . until today in their synagogues they blaspheme the Christian people under the name of Nazoreans. . ."¹⁰¹ ". . . until today they persevere in their blasphemies and three times a day in all the synagogues they anathematize the Christian name under the name of Nazoreans."¹⁰² ". . . for they curse him [sc. Christ] in their synagogues three times every day under the name of Nazoreans. . ."¹⁰³

⁹⁸Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 24; cf. Taylor, "Phenomenon," 325.

⁹⁹Cf. the recent survey in Kai Kjær-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjøtt, *Facts & Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel* (Jerusalem: United Christian Council in Israel, 1999 = *Mishkan* 30–31 [1999]).

¹⁰⁰Trans. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 201, altered.

¹⁰¹*Comm. Am.* 1.11–12 (CCSL 76:227.476–77); trans. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 219, slightly altered.

¹⁰²*Comm. Isa.* 2.51 (VL 27:293.44–47); trans. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 221, slightly altered.

¹⁰³*Comm. Isa.* 13.21 (VL 35:1425.17–18); trans. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 225.

“... in your synagogues which blaspheme the Saviour night and day and utter curses against the Christians three times a day, as I have often said, under the name of Nazoraeans.”¹⁰⁴ Epiphanius and Jerome are probably not the first to mention such a liturgical curse. Earlier testimonies, albeit less specific, are found in Justin’s *Dialogue against Trypho* and in Origen.¹⁰⁵ What is new in Epiphanius and Jerome is that the curse is uttered three times a day and that the term used is that of “Nazoraeans.”¹⁰⁶

This clearly recalls the condemnation of the *nosrim* in the *Tephilah*. The *Eighteen Benedictions* (*Tephilah*, also called *Shemoneh-esreh* or *’Amidah*) form a prayer that is situated in the center of the synagogal liturgy and is recited three times each weekday. Its age is uncertain; a final redaction may have been carried out under Rabbi Gamaliel II at around 90–100 C.E.¹⁰⁷ Just like the prayer as a whole, its twelfth benediction (the so-called *Birkat Haminim*, i.e., benediction of the heretics¹⁰⁸) has been preserved in various recensions. In a recension found at the end of the nineteenth century by Solomon Schechter in the Cairo Genizah a group called *nosrim* is cursed:

For apostates let there be no hope, and the kingdom of insolence mayest thou uproot speedily in our days; and let the *nosrim* and the *minim* perish in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of life and let them not be written with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the insolent.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ *Comm. Isa.* 14.17 (VL 35:1498.38–40), my translation.

¹⁰⁵ Justin: *Dial.* 16.4; 93.4; 95.4; 96.2; 108.3; 123.6; 133.6. Cursing of Christ: 35.8; 47.5; 117.3; 137.2. Origen: *Fragmenta in Lamentationes* 116; *Comm. Jo.* 28.241; *Homiliae in Psalmos* 2.8 (on Ps 37) (PG 12:1387C; spurious); *Homiliae in Isaiam* 1.4; *Homiliae in Jeremiam* 10.8; 19.12; *Cels.* 2.29; *Comm. Matt.* 16.3; *Comm. ser. Matt.* 123.

¹⁰⁶ For discussion of these patristic testimonies cf., e.g., Kimelman, “*Birkat*,” 234–40; Maier, *Jüdische Auseinandersetzung*, 138–39; Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1985), 56–61; Timothy C. G. Thornton, “Christian Understanding of the *Birkath Ha-Minim* in the Eastern Roman Empire,” *JTS NS* 38 (1987): 419–31; Pritz, *Nazarene*, 105; S. J. Joubert, “A Bone of Contention in Recent Scholarship: The ‘Birkat Ha-Minim’ and the Separation of Church and Synagogue in the First Century AD,” *Neotestamentica* 27 (1993): 351–62; Pieter W. van der Horst, “The *Birkat ha-minim* in Recent Research,” *ExpTim* 105 (1993–1994): 363–68; also in van der Horst, *Hellenism—Judaism—Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 8; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 99–111 (quoted thereafter); William Horbury, “The Benediction of the *Minim* and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy,” *JTS NS* 33 (1982): 19–61; also in Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 67–110 (quoted thereafter), 72–73 and Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 161–88, all with rich bibliographies. A short introduction into the problem touching upon the main points is given by Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 64–73.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 163–88.

¹⁰⁸ The expression is confusing, because it is in fact a curse.

¹⁰⁹ Translation after Horbury, “The Benediction,” 68; for the Hebrew text cf., e.g., Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 170; Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens,” 234–35.

In another fragment from this Genizah, published by Jacob Mann in 1925, the same groups of people are condemned.¹¹⁰ Among the Palestinian versions of the Birkat Haminim, which are usually seen as the oldest, these recensions are the only ones mentioning the *nosrim*.¹¹¹ Yet even so there can be hardly any doubt that Epiphanius and Jerome knew about a version of the Birkat Haminim like this being used in the synagogues of Palestine, although the wording preserved in Epiphanius seems to suggest that it was somewhat different from the Cairo version.

We need not deal here with the intricate question concerning the development of the Birkat Haminim,¹¹² let alone of the *Tephilah* as a whole.¹¹³ Within the scope of this chapter it suffices to address the problem with regard to who precisely the *nosrim* were who were cursed in this benediction. There is today a wide consensus that the *minim* were dissenting Jews in general without specifically designating (Jewish) Christians, although they were certainly included.¹¹⁴ The *nosrim*, on the other hand, no doubt referred to Christians. This, then, raises the question as to which Christians were meant here. Were the *nosrim* (a) Christians in general or (b), more specifically, Jewish believers or (c), even more specifically, the Nazoraeans of Beroea? Given the conflicting evidence by Jerome it is hardly possible to give a definitive answer to this question, since we must also take into account both the possibility of a shift in the meaning of the term over time

¹¹⁰Cf. Jacob Mann, "Genizah Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service," *HUCA* 2 (1925): 269–338 (306); cf. also Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 170, note 3.

¹¹¹In Babylonian versions of the benediction the term *nosrim* occurs more frequently. The textual tradition is, however, very intricate and cannot be dealt with in detail within the scope of this chapter. As regards references for the Hebrew text, cf., e.g., Peter Schäfer, "Die sogenannte Synode von Jabne: Zur Trennung von Juden und Christen im ersten/zweiten Jh. n. Chr.," *Judaica* 31 (1975): 54–64; 116–24; also Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums* (AGJU 15; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 45–64 (48–49); Horbury, "The Benediction," 68, note 2; 83, note 67; Mimouni, "Les Nazoréens," 172–73.

¹¹²Recent surveys are found, e.g., in van der Horst, *Hellenism*; Mimouni, "Les Nazoréens," 161–88; Mimouni, "La 'Birkat ha-minim': Une prière juive contre les judéo-chrétiens," *RSR* 71 (1997): 275–98. Cf. also Horbury, *Jews*, 8–11; Horbury, "Early Christians on Synagogue Prayer and Imprecation," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 296–317; also in Horbury, *Jews*, 226–43 (esp. 240–43).

¹¹³For which cf., e.g., Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Betendes Judentum: Die Liturgie der Synagoge* (Münchener Vorlesung; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1980), esp. 83–99; Frédéric Manns, *La prière d'Israël à l'heure de Jésus* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 22; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1986), 141–55; Klaus Herrmann, "Shemone Esre," *RGG* 7:1279–80.

¹¹⁴Cf., e.g., Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente*, 250, note 1; Schäfer, *Studien*, 50–51; Maier, *Auseinandersetzung*, 141; Steven Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 C.E.: A Reconsideration," *JBL* 103 (1984): 43–76 (esp. 63–76); Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew?* 54 (who is, however, strangely inconsistent on this point; cf., e.g., 60); Pritz, *Nazarene*, 102–3; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 25–31; Mimouni, *Judéo-christianisme*, 171, 177–85 with bibliography 177, note 2.

and between various recipients of these texts. Simon C. Mimouni has recently devoted an extensive study to this problem. However, he mentions Jerome's testimony only in passing.¹¹⁵ Yet Jerome seems to envisage either Christians in general or the group of Nazoraeans from Beroea and never Jewish believers as a whole. This, in turn, suggests that the choice is between (a) and (c). Alternative (a) is strengthened by the fact that *nosrim* is the term by which the Christians were called by the Jews at the time of Tertullian.¹¹⁶ Even though attestations of the term are admittedly rare in ancient rabbinical literature,¹¹⁷ the evidence from other Semitic languages suggests that it was the standard term used for the Christians and—from medieval times onwards—has remained so also in Hebrew until this very day.¹¹⁸ If, therefore, it appears more likely that the *nosrim* of the Birkat Haminim are the Christians in general,¹¹⁹ then how are we to explain the misunderstanding of Epiphanius and Jerome, who refer the term to a *specific* group of Nazoraeans? As we have seen, the Nazoraeans probably lived as an Aramaic-or Syriac-speaking group within a Greek-speaking majority.¹²⁰ They were Jewish Christians who called themselves *nosrim* using the traditional Aramaic/Syriac term designating Christians.¹²¹ The Greek-speaking Christian environment (the Χριστιανοί), however, will have used precisely this self-designation in Greek in order to designate this *specific* group. It is, therefore, not surprising that in a society which was predominantly Greek-speaking, *nosrim* in the Birkat Haminim could very easily have been understood as designating a specific “denomination” within Christianity (i.e., Epiphanius’s and Jerome’s Nazoraeans), even though it originally meant *all* Christians.¹²² Nevertheless, it must be emphasized

¹¹⁵ Mimouni, “Les Nazoréens,” 226.

¹¹⁶ Cf. above, note 94.

¹¹⁷ Cf. above, note 30.

¹¹⁸ See above, section 2.

¹¹⁹ Louis Feldman has quite rightly emphasized the difficulty of squaring the cursing of Christians in the synagogues with the well-attested attraction of the synagogue services to those cursed (Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993], 372–73). I must admit that I have no easy answer to this difficulty. Perhaps it is true that a condemnation of *nosrim* only took place in Palestine. In any case, I wonder to what extent Christians really understood what was going on in the synagogues.

¹²⁰ As regards the questions of languages, cf. Rüdiger Schmitt, “Die Sprachverhältnisse in den östlichen Provinzen des Römischen Reiches,” in *ANRW* 29.2:554–86 (esp. 572–76); Sebastian P. Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (Collected Studies Series 199; London: Variorum Reprints, 1984; repr., 1997), esp. nos. II, III, and IV; Han Drijvers, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” in *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians* (ed. Judith Lieu, John North and Tessa Rajak; London: Routledge, 1992), 124–46 (esp. 125–26); Sebastian P. Brock, “Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria,” in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 149–60.

¹²¹ The precise reason why they did this is unclear. The term probably had messianic overtones. Cf. above, section 2 and note 29.

¹²² Cf. also Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 24, note 17: “The name ‘Nazoraeans’ is unlikely to be a sectarian self-reference; instead, it appears to indicate that a group with

that all solutions proposed to understand this problem remain within the realm of conjecture.

6. Conclusion

The Nazoreans were, then, the Aramaic-/Syriac-speaking Jewish Christians of northern Syria who sought good relations with the Gentile church. If their theological views were also reflected in their everyday life, relations with the Gentiles should have been fairly relaxed, as long as the different positions towards the observance of the Law were mutually tolerated. Yet the hostile reactions by both Epiphanius and Jerome appear to indicate that this was not always the case. It is, unfortunately, entirely unclear how the Nazoreans were organized. We do not know whether they formed part of the Greater Church (as some kind of convention within the community) or whether they had their own organization, as had the Ebionites.¹²³ Here again the testimony of Epiphanius and Jerome treating

this name spoke a dialect of Aramaic or Syriac. The Aramaic term, transliterated into Greek as Ναζωραῖος or Ναζαρηνός was that by which the Aramaic-speaking church referred to itself from the beginning, but it carried no implication of theological separation.” Similarly Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 156–57.

Albert I. Baumgarten, however, has reiterated Kimelman’s view (cf. Kimelman, “Birkat”) that the Birkat ha-Minim was formulated specifically against the Nazoreans. “The Nazoreans, therefore, rejected Judaism as it was practiced in their day and had harsh things to say about Jewish leaders; in turn, they were cursed by the Jews. [. . .] The Nazoreans thus represent one side of the relationship between rabbinic Jews and Jewish-Christians, one of mutual rejection and hostility” (Albert I. Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence for Jewish Christianity in the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* [ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992], 39–50 [quote at 39–40]). Similarly Thornton, “Understanding”; de Boer, “The Nazoreans,” 250. Thornton’s point that *nosrim* could not refer to Christians *in toto*, since in that case the Roman authorities would have taken action in order to suppress this curse, does not hold if we presuppose an understanding on the part of the authorities similar to that of Epiphanius and Jerome.

¹²³ Schmidtke is overstating it: “Demnach sind die Nazoräer nicht anders zu bestimmen denn als der späterhin abgesonderte judenchristliche Teil der ursprünglich gleich der Gemeinde von Antiochien (Gal. 2) aus geborenen Juden und Heiden gemischten Gemeinde von Beröa. Diese Christen jüdischen Volkes waren durch die Verhältnisse dazu gedrängt worden, sich zu einem eigenen Verein zusammenzutun, in dem sie ungestörter die alte nationale Sitte pflegen konnten” (*Neue Fragmente*, 124–25). Even though it is certainly a matter of dispute whether or not the Nazoreans came from Pella or had always been in Beroea (for which cf. above section 3 and note 32), there is no evidence to assume that the community in Beroea was ever “mixed,” if this means that they had a common organization. For further reflections on the relationship between Nazoreans and Greater Church cf. also Magnin, “Notes” (1976), 306–18.

As to the Ebionites cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.18.2: “For they have elders and archisynagogues (πρεσβυτέρους [. . .] καὶ ἀρχισυναγώγους), and they call their church a synagogue and not a Church and honour Christ in name only” (trans. Klijn and Reinink, *Evidence*, 187).

them as a heretical sect appears to indicate the latter, but this need not reflect the actual state of affairs. Finally, it should be emphasized that, whereas in the first centuries of the Common Era the Jewish Christians may even have outnumbered the Gentile Christians,¹²⁴ by the fourth century Jewish Christian groups no longer appear to have played a significant role.¹²⁵ Apart from the relatively scarce remarks preserved by Epiphanius and Jerome, the Nazoraean are rarely mentioned and cannot, therefore, have had a strong influence on the mainstream church.

¹²⁴Cf. Strecker, “Judenchristentum,” 17:311.

¹²⁵Around 231 Origen says that Jewish believers in Jesus were “rare” (*σπάνιος*) and that their number was in any case less than 144,000 (i.e., the number given in Rev 14:3; cf. *Comm. Jo.* 1.7).

Cerinthus, Elxai, and Other Alleged Jewish Christian Teachers or Groups

Gunnar af Hällström and Oskar Skarsaune

1. Cerinthus

In the earliest reports on Cerinthus, there is no indication that he was thought to be a Jewish believer. Nevertheless, he is often included in surveys of Jewish believers in antiquity.¹ This is because in later patristic reports two characteristics of Jewish believers are ascribed to him: millennialism of a very concrete nature, and observance of the law. But not even in these later reports is he said explicitly to have been a Jewish believer. It will be argued here that the earliest sources paint him as an early form of gnostic teacher who included in his doctrine some elements of a clearly Jewish nature. These latter elements in no way make him a Jewish believer. These Jewish elements, however, later led some church fathers to conclude—without sufficient foundation—that he was a Jewish Christian. As a consequence of this, they ascribed to him other characteristics of Jewish Christians, first and foremost observance of the law. Since our conclusion is negative with regard to Cerinthus being a Jewish believer, we will be content with a rather cursory review of the evidence concerning him.

Cerinthus himself, not the Cerinthians as a group, is the topic of the earliest sources, which are unanimous in considering him a contemporary of the apostles. Thus John is mentioned frequently in connection with Cerinthus, especially in a story first reported by Irenaeus. When visiting a bath-house in Ephesus, John discovered Cerinthus inside and ran out, “saying that he was afraid that the bath-house would fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, was inside” (*Haer. 3.3.4*). Obviously the popularity of this story con-

¹ See, e.g., A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (NovTSup 36; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 3–19. See also the recent treatment of Christoph Marksches, “Kerinth: Wer war er und was lehrte er?” *JAC* 41 (1998): 48–76.

tributed to making these two a pair. It is worth noting, too, that Cerinthus is mentioned already in mid-second century patristic texts, providing us with a *terminus ante quem*. Geographically Cerinthus is placed first of all in Ephesus, as the story about him and John in the bath house indicates. As to the duration of his stay there, we have no information, but he seems to have stayed in Asia Minor for some time.² Another area mentioned already in a text from the beginning of the third century is Egypt; he is said to have spent considerable time there, preparing for his future mission.³ Later sources claim that Cerinthus was present at the apostles' conference in Jerusalem, but this is probably without any historical foundation. His missionary conquests were worldwide, according to his catholic critics, suggesting an active traveling program.⁴ Thus we are left with the commonplace information that Cerinthus was thought to have lived in the eastern parts of the Mediterranean area, presumably traveling a lot, as did so many other religious leaders in those days.

Cerinthus makes his first appearance in one of the New Testament Apocrypha, the so-called *Epistle of the Apostles*, probably written around the middle of the second century C.E. Here he is introduced together with Simon, the famous magician mentioned in Acts 8. *Epistula apostolorum* was, as it explicitly claims, written against both of these "pseudo-apostles," who are mentioned together twice in the treatise.⁵ Their doctrines are not described, but it is clear that the *Epistula* regards them as a pair with a common teaching, at least in some areas. From what we know about their lifetime and geographical location the two could at least theoretically form such a pair. Simon "Magus" was often regarded as the father of all heresies, in particular the gnostic ones, by ecclesiastical authors. From the polemic contained in *Epistula apostolorum* nothing certain can be deduced as to the doctrine of Simon or Cerinthus, but the strong emphasis on the real humanity of Christ could be interpreted as a polemic against docetic views. If so, Cerinthus should rather be connected with gnostics than with Jewish believers in Jesus.⁶

Irenaeus deals with him after having spoken about Simon, Menander, Saturninus and Basilides—for Irenaeus a series of gnostic teachers—and before continuing with the Ebionites, Nicolaitans, Cerdö and Marcion. It is quite evident

²"... in Asia ... docuit," Irenaeus says (*Haer.* 1.26.1).

³"Cerinthus himself having been trained in Egypt . . .," Hippolytus, *Haer.* 10.21.1. One is reminded of Celsus and others who deduced Christ's spiritual knowledge and powers from the fact that the latter was trained in Egypt; see Origen, *Cels.* 1.29. A closer parallel, however, is Simon Magus, who practiced magic in Egypt according to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (2.22.2–6).

⁴Thus already in *Epistula apostolorum* 7.

⁵*Epistula apostolorum* 1 and 7.

⁶The polemic between Cerinthus and John in the bath house could be understood as a polemic either between Judaism and Christianity or between Gnosticism and (orthodox) Christianity. Presumably the latter alternative more closely reflects the concerns of the earliest church fathers; see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 4.

that in this series, it is the Ebionites and Nicolaitans who are the intruders; the rest of the series has great uniformity in that it deals with a succession of gnostic teachers. The reason why Irenaeus, almost as an afterthought concerning Cerinthus, adds the Ebionites and the Nicolaitans, is not difficult to discern: his report on Cerinthus has reminded him of two things: (1) the similarity of some aspects of Cerinthus's Christology to that of the Ebionites; and (2) John's role as the main adversary of Cerinthus. John fought against Cerinthus, but also against the Ebionite heresy in his Gospel and against the Nicolaitans in Revelation. Therefore Irenaeus found it opportune to include short notices on these two anti-Johannine heresies while treating John's archenemy Cerinthus.

This means that the real context in which Irenaeus placed Cerinthus is the series Simon, Menander, Saturninus, Basilides, Cerdö and Marcion. This grouping corresponds to the contents of Cerinthus's doctrine, as reported by Irenaeus. We shall first look at his doctrine of creation:

And a certain Cerinthus, then, in Asia taught that the world was not made by the Supreme God but by a certain Power highly separated and far removed from the Principality who transcended the universe and which is ignorant of the one who is above all, God.⁷

According to Cerinthus a certain power (in Latin: *virtus*, probably δύναμις in Greek) created the world, not God himself. Such a creator, not identical with the Highest God, occurs in somewhat later religious movements, e.g., Marcionism and Valentinian Gnosticism. But it is worth noting, too, that Simon Magus, whom *Epistula apostolorum* paired with Cerinthus, held a similar view. According to him angels and archangels created the world.⁸ He himself was called both God and *sublimissima virtus*, the highest power. In fact, Hippolytus brings Cerinthus and Simon even closer together by stating that according to the teaching of the former, angelic powers created the world—powers that did not know God.⁹ A logical consequence of Cerinthus's doctrine of creation is a rift between God's world on the one hand and that of angels and men on the other. This rift gets deep indeed if we accept Ps-Tertullian's statement that Cerinthus believed the Jewish God was in fact an angel.¹⁰ If the statement is correct, Cerinthus turns out to be a pre-Marcionite in his thinking.

According to Cerinthus, angels were active also when the Law was given to the Jewish people.¹¹ This notion suffers from the same ambiguity as his statement that the creation took place through the mediation of angels: it does not explicitly

⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1. This and following translations of texts are adapted from Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*.

⁸ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.16.2.

⁹ Hippolytus *Haer.* 10.21.1. Hippolytus speaks of *dynamis angelike*, which is very close to the *virtus* of Irenaeus.

¹⁰ “*Judeorum deum non dominum, sed angelum promens.*” Ps-Tertullian, *Haer.* 3. For text and translation, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 122–25.

¹¹ Thus Ps-Tertullian, *Haer.* 3; text and translation as in previous note.

define the moral quality of the law. He may have conceived of creation as well as the law as negative, as Marcion was to do. Or he may have thought of the law as a positive entity as in Acts 7:53, where the agency of angels in creation is also mentioned. Ps-Tertullian seems to suggest the former alternative, since he points out the differences between Cerinthus and Ebion, and Ebion is said to have required a Jewish reverence for the law. Remembering also the statement by Hippolytus that the angelic powers did not know God, it is tempting to conclude that the Jewish law, given through the same angelic order, cannot have enjoyed highest spiritual authority in the thought of Cerinthus.

Cerinthus's *Christology* is the doctrine mentioned most frequently by the early sources. Irenaeus reports it as follows:

He suggested that Jesus was not born of a virgin (because that seemed to him impossible), but that he was the son of Joseph and Mary in the same way as all other men but he was more versed in righteousness, prudence and wisdom than other men. And after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from that Principality that is above all. Then he proclaimed the unknown Father and performed miracles. At the end, however, Christ flew away again from Jesus. Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, being a spiritual being.¹²

The Christology here described bears strong resemblance to both Ebionite and Gnostic doctrines. The very loose and temporary union of a physical man and a heavenly Christ is reminiscent first of all of Gnosticism.¹³ Towards the end of the second century, Theodosius of Byzantium, according to Hippolytus, held similar views,¹⁴ though he accepted the virgin birth of Jesus. The tendency to separate rather than unite a heavenly and an earthly sphere, noted already in connection with the doctrine of creation, is remarkably strong. One can hardly speak of an incarnation in connection with this doctrine; inhabitation is closer to the point. The Christ of Ebion was more coherent, since the man called Jesus remained the same single individual also in and after baptism, whereas Cerinthus taught that a new person from an unknown world took possession of Jesus.

Hippolytus presents a rather similar picture of Cerinthus's Christology, adding that after baptism Christ was active as a miracle worker. The emphasis put on the impassibility of the Cerinthian Christ is present in both writers. According to Irenaeus, Cerinthus taught that Jesus was abandoned by Christ just before he died, and then he rose again. Whether this happened in a spiritual

¹²Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1.

¹³Charles E. Hill, "Cerinthus, Gnostic or Chiliasm? A New Solution to an Old Problem," *JECS* 8 (2000): 135–72, emphasizes with good reason (pages 150–54) that Irenaeus, in spite of attributing a rather "gnostic" Christology to Cerinthus, knew a number of differences between Cerinthian and Valentinian Christology. Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 4, presented a different view, stressing the similarities between Cerinthus and the great gnostic teachers.

¹⁴"Subsequently, at his baptism in the river Jordan, He (Jesus) received Christ, who descended from above in the form of a dove." Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.35.2. See also 10.23.2.

or physical way we are not told, nor is it clear whether this took place as a resurrection- or ascension-type event.

As long as we are dealing with *Epistula apostolorum*, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Ps-Tertullian, Cerinthus appears remarkably gnostic, or at least pre-gnostic, in character. There is an obvious tendency towards dualism in his thinking. Whatever happens between God and the world is always performed by intermediaries, powers or angels, and the separation between Jesus and Christ underlines the difference between the world of passion and death on the one hand and that of God on the other. The reliability of this picture may be increased by the fact that the various sources represent widely separated regions of the Roman Empire. None of our sources speaks of Cerinthus as a Jewish Christian, nor do they mention the Cerinthians, though obviously our “pseudo-apostle” had many followers. They did not draw any conclusions as to the importance of the Torah for him, nor did they comment on the morals of Cerinthus or his followers. The following centuries were to change this picture dramatically, however.

The first signs of change occur with a somewhat mysterious theological thinker named Gaius. He himself was, to be sure, an early third century figure,¹⁵ but he is known only through short fragments in fourth century sources, and it is clear that he became well known only at that point of time. Because of the fragmentary nature of the texts attributed to Gaius, his opinions can be reconstructed only partially. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, our main informant, Gaius opposed Montanism and in so doing rejected the Johannine literature, which he thought too highly favored the Montanist idea of a millennial kingdom. In this connection he invented the crushing argument that it was in fact Cerinthus who wrote the Book of Revelation—thereby reducing its authority from that written by an apostle to that of a pseudo-apostle.¹⁶ Ingenious though such a theory might have been from a church-political point of view, it reveals at the same time a remarkable lack of historical and theological insight. Naturally, everything else Gaius has to say about Cerinthus continues along similar polemical lines:

And he (Cerinthus) says that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be set up on earth, and that in Jerusalem the body will again serve as the instrument of desires and pleasures. And since he is an enemy of the divine Scriptures and sets out to deceive, he says that there will be a marriage feast lasting a thousand years.¹⁷

Before commenting on this passage, we would like to add the other third-century attestation of Cerinthus's chiliasm. Eusebius quotes the well known bishop Dionysius of Alexandria as saying the following:

¹⁵ According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25 he was active during the time of the Roman bishop Zephyrinus (199–217).

¹⁶ There is no evidence for such a view of the authorship of the Book of Revelation before Gaius, so it seems likely that he was the inventor of it. This is also what our sources claim to be the case.

¹⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.28.2.

But Cerinthus who also founded the sect which was called after him the Cerinthian, wanted to give his own fiction a reputable name. For the doctrine which he (Cerinthus) taught was this: that the kingdom of Christ will be an earthly one. He dreamt that it would consist of things he himself was devoted to, because he was a lover of the body and altogether carnal, namely in the delights of the belly and of the sexual passion, that is to say in eating and drinking and marrying, and—because of this he thought he could provide himself with a better reputation—in festivals and sacrifices and the slaying of victims.¹⁸

In their authoritative analysis Klijn and Reinink claim that Dionysius has Gaius as his only source for his own report on Cerinthus. But this can hardly be the case, since Dionysius has additional information not attested in Gaius's writings, and he deems this additional information to be of such a nature that it could give Cerinthus "a better reputation." If Dionysius were only adding details to Gaius's report, based on his own surmises as to what Cerinthus might have taught, he would have had no interest in improving the heretic's image. Accordingly, his report that Cerinthus imagined a restitution of the sacrificial cult in the millennium has to be based on sources other than Gaius.

Also, the language of Dionysius differs from that of Gaius. Origen, the great Alexandrian and teacher of Dionysius, had taken strong action against chiliiasm even among his fellow church members.¹⁹ Dionysius picks up Origen's polemical terms one by one: the chiliasts are earthly, carnal, lovers of the body, fond of eating, drinking and having sex. What seems to be missing is the attribute "Jewish," which Origen frequently used against chiliasts. Those teaching an earthly kingdom are Jews by definition! One could say, however, that this accusation is present in the fragment from Dionysius in its reference to festivals and animal sacrifices.²⁰

It should be noted that neither Gaius nor Dionysius say that Cerinthus held this millennial doctrine because he was of Jewish origin. All ecclesiastical writers of the third century were quite familiar with the phenomenon of Gentile Christians espousing Jewish points of view, and would regard them as (Gentile) "Judaizers" rather than Jewish believers. There is thus nothing at all in these authors that can be taken as *prima facie* evidence that Cerinthus was a Jewish believer. Here, however, the modern scholar feels a real problem: Can one and the same man be a full-fledged gnostic and at the same time hope for an earthly millennium in which the pleasures of the body are to be satisfied and the sacrificial cult of the Bible is to be resumed?

¹⁸ *Hist. eccl.* 3.28.4–5.

¹⁹ See Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides simpliciorum according to Origen of Alexandria* (*Commentationes humanarum litterarum* 76; Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984), 80–92.

²⁰ From what has been said it is clear that the opinion of Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 5, cannot be accepted, according to which "we do not think that it was really Cerinthus's ideas that caused him to be considered a Millenarian." On the contrary, it appears that Millenarianism was the fact upon which many other statements concerning Cerinthus were founded.

In response to that question, we suggest the following remarks. First, we do not know how full-fledged a gnostic Cerinthus was. Nor do we know how internally consistent his doctrine was. Second, Cerinthus taught, as we have seen, a distance between two worlds and their temporary coexistence in the composite person of Jesus and Christ. There is nothing in this which excludes by logical necessity a doctrine of an earthly millennial reign. The fact that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary could even possibly have increased the hopes for a temporary kingdom in which family life would be highly esteemed. This kingdom would be founded, as Gaius said, "after the resurrection," an expression intimating if not proving that Cerinthus did not expect the souls to reach an immaterial eternity immediately after death. Thus there would be room for at least a temporary physical mode of existence in the future. For a true gnostic an eternity in an immaterial state represented the highest conceivable state of existence—but even for the gnostic a temporary kingdom of Christ should be no less possible to maintain than a temporary dwelling of Christ in the man Jesus, precisely since both are temporary solutions. It is understandable that Irenaeus, who favored a millennial view, and Dionysius of Alexandria as the opponent of such views, would present Cerinthus differently as regards a millennial reign. It is also understandable that Hippolytus, who opposed Gaius and wrote *Contra Caium* against him, interpreted Cerinthus differently than Gaius. In this light it is not difficult to conceive of two variant traditions about Cerinthus; the earlier dualistic, and the latter initially less well known and chiliastic.

Third, one could also contemplate the solution proposed by Charles E. Hill.²¹ He believes Cerinthus may have taught an earthly "Jewish" millennium in much the same way as did Marcion. According to Marcion, the Jewish Messiah would indeed come as the Prophets had promised, and would establish the Jewish kingdom promised by the Bible, in all its abhorrent materialism. When Gaius says that Cerinthus is "an enemy of the divine Scriptures and sets out to deceive," the meaning could well be that Cerinthus propounded his doctrine of the earthly millennium as the necessary consequence of belief in the Hebrew Scriptures—thus discrediting them. This would make him a "Marcionite" before Marcion. The best argument against this interpretation is that Gaius as well as Dionysius clearly implied that the physical pleasures of the millennium were something Cerinthus very much wanted for his own part. However, this could be merely an insinuation to blemish his reputation.

The second to third century sources here surveyed are the only primary sources on Cerinthus that have come down to us. All later patristic references to Cerinthus seem to depend on these, and add no fresh and independent information concerning him. The general tendency seems to be that his gnostic leanings are downplayed and his Jewish characteristics are enlarged, so that gradually he becomes an observer of the law, and hence a Jewish believer. The climax of this development comes in Epiphanius. The resurrection of Jesus and of all people

²¹ See Hill, "Cerinthus."

will take place in connection with the coming of Christ's kingdom.²² The kingdom will be established on earth—in Jerusalem to be precise²³—the very place where Cerinthus first made himself known. The duration of the kingdom will be the traditional thousand years, thus the Cerinthians were called *chiliasts* in Greek, and in Latin *millenarians*.²⁴ They became the chiliasts *par excellence*. The sinful voluptuousness of the lifestyle in the kingdom is stressed over and over again by fourth- and fifth-century ecclesiastical authors, in spite of the fact that earlier authors know nothing of Cerinthus's moral corruption.²⁵ With Epiphanius of Salamis the Jewish (-Christian) character of Cerinthianism gets a substantial boost. The Cerinthians are said to require their adherents to be circumcised: "For they (the Cerinthians) also say in their silly prattle: 'It must be sufficient for a pupil to be like his master. Christ,' they say, 'was himself circumcised, therefore you also have to be circumcised.'"²⁶ Epiphanius is notorious for his tendency to transfer heretical theogoumena from sect to sect; this one he has obviously taken from his tract on the Ebionites. He may have felt justified in so doing by observing the close proximity of Cerinthus and Ebion(ites) in several heresiologies, beginning with Irenaeus.

John of Damascus was later to influence Byzantine thought on Cerinthus and the Cerinthians. He provided his readers with the frank information: "The Cerinthians, also called Merinthians, take their name from Cerinthus or Merinthus. They are Jews and are proud of circumcision."²⁷ This is really a severely abbreviated version of Epiphanius's picture of the Cerinthians. There is good reason to think this portrayal was Epiphanius's own attempt to make sense of his many and contradictory sources. The bottom line remains this: there is no sufficient basis in the most ancient and reliable sources for the conclusion that Cerinthus should be included among the Jewish believers of the early church. The multiple gnosticizing features of his doctrine rather tell against it.

²²Hill, "Cerinthus," 144, points out that Epiphanius was inconsistent, since in *Anacephalaiosis* 28.1.7 he says that Cerinthus accepted the older tradition according to which Jesus did in fact rise from the dead!

²³"And he (Cerinthus) says that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be set up on earth, and that in Jerusalem the body will again serve as the instrument of desires and pleasures." Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.28.2.

²⁴Isidorus of Seville, *Etymologiae liber* 8.6.8 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 260–61). Before Isidorus, Augustine had stated that the "Cerinthiani . . . etiam Chiliastae sunt appellati," *Haer.* 8 (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 238–39).

²⁵Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.2.6 presented an interesting theory as to the morality of the Ebionites: they were once propagators of virginity and abstinence, but they changed their minds! On the many inconsistencies in Epiphanius's portrayals of the Ebionites, see section 4.4 of chapter 14 of this book.

²⁶Epiphanius, *Anacephalaiosis* tom. 2 (26.1). Hill, "Cerinthus," 146–47, concludes that Epiphanius's opinions concerning Cerinthus came from his having misread Irenaeus, and thus he attributed the doctrines of Ebion to Cerinthus.

²⁷John of Damascus, *Haer* 28. This is a free quotation from Epiphanius's *Anacephalaiosis*.

2. Elxai, Elkesaites, and Sampseans

If much is uncertain about Cerinthus, this can be said to an even greater degree about Elxai.²⁸ There even is uncertainty about whether an individual with this name ever existed. Elxai seems to be one of the ways the Aramaic *chel kasai*, “Hidden Power,” was rendered in Greek.²⁹ This name seems to have occurred in the title of a book, “The book of Elxai [Hidden Power],” and in the book, one of two huge and important angels seems to have carried this name. This angel may also have played the role of an interpreting angel, and therefore the whole book may have been named after him, in analogy to the “Book of the Shepherd” written by Hermas in Rome. Hermas’s “Shepherd” is the interpreting angel who speaks in the greater part of his book, and has given the whole book its name. Some may have misunderstood the “Book of Elxai” to mean “the book written by Elxai,” and from this concluded that Elxai was the founder of the sect that revered his book. Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that the three church fathers who have substantial and firsthand information on the Elkesaites all regard Elxai as the sect founder, and so does a fourth and independent source, the so-called Cologne Mani Codex. We shall look at these in turn, in apparent chronological order.

Hippolytus of Rome, in his *Refutation of All Heresies* (ca. 225) launches a caustic attack on Pope Calixtus, whom he accuses of irresponsible leniency towards believers who had apostatized during recent persecutions. In this leniency Calixtus was only surpassed by the heretic Alcibiades, who came to Rome and proclaimed a re-baptism that would cleanse all apostates and others guilty of serious sins from all guilt. According to Hippolytus, Alcibiades came from Apamea in Syria and propagated the ideas contained in the book of the founder of the

²⁸The classic study is Wilhelm Brandt, *Elchasai, ein Religionsstifter und sein Werk* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912). More recent studies: Georg Strecker, “Elkesai,” RAC 4:1171–86; Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 54–67; Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (TSAJ 8; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985); cf. review of this book by F. Stanley Jones in JAC 30 (1987), 200–209; and the rejoinder by Luttikhuizen, “The Book of Elchasai: A Jewish Apocalypse,” *Aula Orientalis* 5 (1987): 101–6; Luigi Cirillo, “L’Apocalypse d’Elkasai: son rôle et son importance pour l’histoire du judaïsme,” *Apocrypha* 1 (1990), 167–79; F. Stanley Jones, “The Genre of the Book of Elchasai. A Primitive Church Order, Not an Apocalypse,” in *Historische Wahrheit und theologische Wissenschaft. FS Gerd Lüdemann* (ed. A. Özen; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1996), 87–104; Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, “The Book of Elchasai: a Jewish Apocalyptic Writing, not a Christian Church Order,” SBL Seminar Papers, 1999 (SBLSP 38; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1999), 405–25; Simon C. Mimouni, “Les elkesaites: états des questions et des recherches,” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in the Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry; WUNT 158; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2003), 209–29.

²⁹Hippolytus renders it Ἡλχασαῖ; Epiphanius Ἡλξαῖ or Ἡλξαῖος; the Köln Codex Ἀλχασαῖος; cf. Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 54, note 3. For a very extensive discussion of all attested forms of the name, see Luttikhuizen, *Revelation of Elchasai*, 179–82.

sect, Elxai. But Alcibiades also propagated the movement through some books of his own. Concerning Elxai himself Hippolytus has little to say, except that he “apparently adhered to the law” but in reality devoted himself to Gnostic ideas, and even astrology and magic. He claimed that the book called by his name had its origin among the “Seres of Parthia” (possibly meant to be the Chinese), and that the contents of this book had been revealed by an angel of enormous size. This angel was male and was called The Son of God. At his side was a female angel of the same size, called the Holy Spirit (*Haer.* 9.13.1–3).³⁰

First, in Hippolytus’s report, it is not always quite clear what is taken directly from Elxai’s book and what is a summary of the teaching of Alcibiades and his followers. Alcibiades preached in Rome a second baptism for those who would believe him and believe the message of Elxai’s book. This baptism was offered to “anyone who had been involved in all kinds of lasciviousness, filthiness and wickedness.” Alcibiades “pretends to live according to the law, saying believers ought to be circumcised and live according to the Law, as an enticement . . .” (*Haer.* 9.14.1)³¹ His Christology was the following: “He asserts that Christ was born a man in the same way common to all, and that he was not at this time born for the first time of a virgin but that, having been previously born and being re-born, he thus appeared and exists, undergoing alterations of birth and moving from body to body. He adopted that Pythagorean idea” (*Haer.* 9.14.1).³² The adherents of Elxai/Alcibiades practice fortune-telling based on (Pythagorean) numerology and astrology; they use magical incantations, especially against possession caused by the bite of a rabid dog. Among the remedies for this is an immediate immersion in water fully clothed. The same requirement of bathing with one’s garments on is also prescribed for the ordinary, once-only baptism of repentance. Baptisms and any important work should not be undertaken on Saturdays and Tuesdays, because these days were ruled over by hostile stars (*Haer.* 9.14.2–16.4).

It has been customary in most scholarly discussions of this report to describe Alcibiades, his master Elxai, and their followers as *Judeo-Christians* or *Jewish Christians tout court*. But it should be noted that those scholars who take care to define in which sense they use this term with reference to this group say they use it in an ideological sense: the Elkesaites represent a Jewish form of Christianity.³³

³⁰ Greek text and English translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 114–15.

³¹ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 116–17.

³² The Elxaites view on the virgin birth of Jesus may seem less than crystal clear from this passage, but we are much helped by another passage in Hippolytus, in which it at least becomes clear what Hippolytus himself took to be the view of his adversaries: “they do not confess that Christ is one, but that there is one on high, and that he is transferred into many bodies many times, and now in Jesus. Likewise (they confess) at one time that he was begotten of God, and at another time that he came into being as a spirit, at one time that he was (born) of a virgin, at another time not, and that he is since then continuously transferred into bodies, and that he appears in many at different times” (*Haer.* 10.29.2). Translation according to Luttkhuizen, *Revelation of Elchasai*, 53.

³³ E.g., Luttkhuizen, *Revelation of Elchasai*, 64, note 35.

Perhaps it would be better, with regard to Hippolytus's evidence, to say that he portrays the group as having a clearly gnostic leaning, but with certain Judaizing elements, first and foremost being the requirement of circumcision. He nowhere states that these people were Jews in an ethnic sense, and much of his information about them would seem to make this rather unlikely. The requirement of circumcision for converts implies that they recruited new members among the non-circumcised. Baptism and immersions fully dressed are utterly un-Jewish practices. Not doing any important work on the Sabbath may seem Jewish, but the reason given for this prohibition (hostile stars) is not Jewish at all, and neither is prohibiting work on Tuesdays. This seems much more like rather amateurish Judaizing than something practiced and taught by born Jews. We shall have more to say about Elxaites Christology after we have reviewed the evidence in Origen and Epiphanius.

Second, the evidence in Origen appears only in the following brief passage:

A certain man came just now, puffed up greatly with his ability to proclaim a godless and impious opinion which has appeared lately in the churches, called that of the Elkesaites. . . . It rejects certain parts of every scripture. Again it uses portions of the entire Old Testament and the Gospel, but it rejects the Apostle altogether. It says that to deny Christ is an indifferent matter and he who understands this will, under necessity, deny with his mouth but not in his heart. They produce a certain book which, they say, fell from heaven and whoever hears and believes this shall receive remission of sins, a different remission from that which Jesus Christ has given (in Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 6.38).³⁴

One should notice that there is not the slightest indication that Origen counted the Elkesaites as Jewish believers. Two of the characteristics he ascribes to them would rather be regarded by him as typically gnostic: selective recognition of biblical texts and allowing outward denial during persecutions. The one and only criterion that could be adduced in favor of their being Jewish Christians would be their rejection of Paul. But caution is needed here. While some Jewish Christians did, in fact, reject Paul, not all who rejected Paul were Jewish Christians. Origen's statement could well mean that the Elkesaites only used passages from the Gospels within the New Testament, ignoring Acts and the Pauline letters. There is nothing in this statement that shows conclusively that they were Jewish Christians. One should also notice Origen's silence in this regard. He does not say that the Elkesaites had the same shortcomings as the Ebionites, namely, that they understood the Scriptures in an over-literal and "poor" way, that they continued to practice the Law after it became obsolete, etc.³⁵ Origen's report

³⁴ Text and translation: Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 146–47.

³⁵ Another silence that Luttkhuizen makes much of is that Origen says nothing about the second baptism preached so emphatically by Alcibiades. He therefore surmises that Origen in Caesarea may have come into contact with another branch of the movement than the one represented by Alcibiades in Rome (Luttkhuizen, *Revelation of Elchasai*, 216). This, however, may be an overinterpretation of Origen's silence. At this period,

stems from a publicly preached homily on Psalm 82 during his last years in Caesarea. The reference to Elkesaites instructions on how to behave during persecution may indicate a date after the Decian persecution in 250/251 C.E. Eusebius, in his introduction to this passage from Origen, says that the Elkesaites heresy originated during Origen's period and disappeared again soon afterwards. This must mean that Eusebius had no knowledge of references to this heresy prior to Origen and no knowledge of their presence after Origen, either in areas he knew well or in literature known to him. This should warn against overestimating the spread and significance of this movement.

Third, it is also interesting to observe how Epiphanius, our third witness, treats the Elkesaites. He does not treat them as one of the 80 named heresies in his *Panarion*. This can only mean he did not know them in his own time as a separate group under this name. He comes to speak of them on two occasions. The *first* occurs when he discusses the Jewish heresy of the Osseans (*Pan.* 19). Having presented the Osseans (a Jewish group) very briefly in 19.1.1–3, Epiphanius continues in 19.1.4: "The man called Elxai joined them later, in the reign of the Emperor Trajan...." Then he devotes the rest of *Pan.* 19.1–4 to a detailed report on Elxai's teaching and practice, supplying much information not contained in Hippolytus or Origen. In 19.5 he adds a little excursus on the four heresies that became influenced by Elxai: the (Jewish) Osseans and Nasareans, and the (Jewish-Christian) Ebionites and Nazoreans. In 19.6 he adds some final polemics against the Osseans and Elxai. The *second* occasion is when he says concerning the Sampseans that they are also called Elkesaites (*Pan.* 53.1.1). Having said this, he goes on to call them Sampseans only. From this it is quite evident that Epiphanius knew of no self-contained movement in his time which was known as "the Elkesaites."

His picture of the *Osseans* is somewhat contradictory. He partly claims that they died out around the fall of Jerusalem 70 C.E., and partly that they lingered on for some time, continuing in the sect called the *Sampseans*. On the latter sect, Epiphanius has a separate chapter, ch. 53 of the *Panarion*. In it, he has in fact very little to add to what he has said already in *Pan.* 19. In both places he mentions that the Sampsean sect is located east of the Dead Sea and is currently led by two sisters, Marthous and Marthana, who claim descent from the sect-founder and are highly regarded because of this.

While sharing much material with Hippolytus, Epiphanius seems to have had direct access to an Aramaic version of the Book of Elxai, some passages of which he quotes. His information on the two sisters who led the Sampsean sect seems firsthand. Whether his claim that this sect was based upon the Book of Elxai is also firsthand or whether it is merely his own inference is more uncertain. In our context the most interesting question is whether Epiphanius has any

"baptism" and "remission of sins" were so closely associated that they could sometimes stand for each other, and Origen's saying that the Elchesaites preached another remission of sins than that granted by Christ could well be his way of rendering their message of a second baptism necessary to now obtain remission of sins.

relevant information on the possible Jewish-Christian character (1) of Elxai on the one hand, and (2) of the Sampsean sect on the other.

(1) On Elxai he says the following: "Originally he was a Jew with Jewish beliefs, but he did not live by the Law. He introduced substitutes, and formed his own sect . . ." (19.1.5).³⁶ The value of this information with regard to Elxai's ethnic origin is questionable. We do not even know for certain that the Elxai of the Book of Elxai was the historical founder of the sect or merely the name of a heavenly being in the book. Epiphanius's statement may be his own invention based on his general impression of Elxai's book as representing a strange kind of Judaism. Epiphanius also expresses doubt as to whether Elxai refers to Jesus at all in his book, or merely to a Messiah in general, without identifying him:

He confesses Christ by name . . . and says "Christ is the great king." But from the deceitful, false composition of the book . . . I am not quite sure whether he gave this description of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he does not specify this either. He simply says "Christ," as though—from what I can gather—he means someone else, or expects someone else (19.3.4).³⁷

They confess Christ in name but believe that he is a creature, and that he keeps appearing every now and then. He was formed for the first time in Adam, but when he chooses he takes Adam's body off and puts it on again. He is called Christ, and the Holy Spirit is his sister, in female form (53.1.8).³⁸

In evaluating these passages, one has to keep in mind that Epiphanius was convinced that the *Pseudo-Clementines* were Ebionite, and that he, like modern scholars, clearly saw the great similarity between the Elkesaiter idea of a series of incarnations of the "Hidden Power," "Great King," and "Messiah" on the one hand, and the series of incarnations of the True Prophet spoken of in the *Pseudo-Clementines* on the other. As we noted when treating Epiphanius's picture of the Ebionites, he surmised that the author of *Pseudo-Clementines* got this idea from Elxai. Even so, Epiphanius refrains from identifying Elxai as an Ebionite, and expresses genuine doubt as to whether Elxai had Jesus in mind at all when he spoke of this successively incarnated heavenly being. For once, Epiphanius evinces a critical acumen that seems very well founded. There is in fact nothing to indicate that Elxai's Book contained anything Christian. The author of the book was hardly a believer in Jesus, and may not have been Jewish either.

(2) The Osseans are, in Epiphanius's scheme for the Panarion, non-Christian Jews by definition. About their successors, the Sampseans, he vacillates somewhat: "... the remnant of Osseans, no longer practicing Judaism but joined with the

³⁶ For quotations from Epiphanius, see Greek text in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 154–60; 194–96. English translations are taken from Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (2 vols.; Nag Hammadi Studies 35 and 36; Leiden: Brill, 1987–1994), the present quotation at 1:44.

³⁷ Williams, *Panarion*, 1:46.

³⁸ Ibid., 2:71.

Sampsites . . . who live beyond the Dead Sea . . . and now joined to the Ebionite sect. And so they have lapsed from Judaism" (20.3.2–3).³⁹ "The Sampseans . . . base their religion on [the Book of Elxai], and are neither Christians, Jews nor Pagans. Since they are simply in the middle, they are nothing" (53.1.3). "They are devoted to the Jewish religion, [but] not in all ways" (53.1.4).⁴⁰ "They accept neither prophets nor apostles, but all their own ideas are delusion" (53.1.7).⁴¹ This seems to be best summarized in modern terms by saying the Sampseans are depicted by Epiphanius as typical syncretists and that no conclusion can be drawn as to their ethnic background. Apart from his information on the two female leaders of the sect, Epiphanius seems to know firsthand only the vaguest contours of the sect's doctrines, and fills in the gaps with elements of Elxai's Book which he believes the sect adopted. That they did so may or may not be the case.⁴²

3. Conclusion

If we retain Elxai as an eponym for the author of the Book of Elxai, he seems to have been a resident of the Parthian empire, close to its Roman border, and deeply engaged by the Parthian-Roman wars 114–117 C.E. During this period, he published his book, containing a message about imminent judgment and offering an opportunity of purification and remission of sins by undergoing a special baptismal ceremony. Specifically Christian elements are not documented in this book, but Jewish elements are, in what seems like a typically syncretistic mix of ideas. When Alcibiades and other missionaries took this message westwards, they seem to have adapted it to a Christian audience, by "Christianizing" it to a certain degree. While this no doubt resulted in a form of Christianity that may be called "Jewish" because of some Jewish elements, there is no positive indication that this movement was mainly comprised of ethnic Jews.

It would seem that in this case we face a phenomenon quite similar to what shortly later happened with Manichaeism. As a syncretistic movement, Manichaeism showed great adaptability with regard to the milieu in which it recruited new members. From its non-Christian origin in Persia it spread westward and it seems that the further west it came, the more Christian it became. This may be more than an accidental analogy. According to the Cologne *Mani Codex*, Mani had his background in a group of "Baptists" who reckoned one Alchasai as their leader—quite likely the "Sampseans" of Epiphanius, or at least a very similar group. The more one tries to get an idea of the type of religion represented by

³⁹ Ibid., 1:50.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2:70.

⁴¹ Ibid., 2:71.

⁴² Luttkhuizen (*The Revelation of Elchasai*, 140–41; 219–20) seems very convinced that the Sampseans had no connection with the Book of Elxai at all, but this may be a more definite conclusion than the evidence allows.

the *Book of Elxai* and how this religion subsequently was taken to Rome and no doubt Christianized by Alcibiades, the more one begins to see “Elxai” as a kind of “Mani” before Mani, and the Elkesaites as “Manicheans” before the Manicheans. Even more than the Manicheans, the Elkesaites remind us that some of the syncretistic, Gnosis-like movements that flourished in Syria and further east had a strong “Judaizing” tendency, even before they also included “Christianizing” elements.⁴³

⁴³ On this paragraph, and in general on Mani’s background among followers of Elxai, see now Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (2d ed.; WUNT 63; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 33–85.

PART FIVE

*Other Literary and Archaeological Evidence
for Jewish Believers*



Evidence for Jewish Believers in Greek and Latin Patristic Literature

Oskar Skarsaune

This survey can make no claim to completeness. Combing through the entire corpus of Greek and Latin Fathers, one would no doubt chance upon references to named and unnamed Jewish believers, but probably not much more than that. It is also possible to make a systematic search for names with a Semitic background, and Greek and Latin names known to be used frequently by Jews. Such a search would give us some likely candidates for classification as Jewish believers, but no certain ones. In this survey I have chosen to focus on the fewer, and more well known, cases in which Jewish believers are referred to with some emphasis because the author deemed them significant in one way or other.

1. Ignatius (ca. 110 C.E.?)

Ignatius¹ opposes propagators of “Judaism” among Christians, i.e., “Judaizers,” in two of his letters (*Ign. Magn.* 8–11; *Ign. Phld.* 6–9). It is sometimes

¹I here presuppose the dating of Ignatius’s martyrdom given in Eusebius, *Chronicle* (GCS 20:216), 10. or 11. year of Trajan’s reign = 107 or 108 C.E. Recently Reinhart Hübner and Thomas Lechner have challenged this date, and proposed a rather late one for the letters, the late 160s or the early 170s. See Reinhart M. Hübner, “Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien,” ZAC 1 (1997): 44–72; Thomas Lechner, *Ignatius aduersus Valentinianos? Chronologische und theologiesgeschichtliche Studien zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien* (VCSup 47; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 3–117. I am not convinced by their arguments, but the matter must presently be said to be *sub judice*. General bibliography on Judaizers and Jewish believers in Ignatius include, Hans-Werner Bartsch, *Gnostisches Gut und Gemeindetradition bei Ignatius von Antiochien* (BFCT 2/44; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1940), 34–52; Einar Molland, “The Heretics Committed by Ignatius of Antioch,” JEH 5 (1954): 1–6; repr. in Molland, *Opuscula Patristica* (Bibliotheca Theologica Norvegica 2; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1970), 17–23; Virginia

assumed that these opponents are Jewish Christians, but this seems to be ruled out by what he says in Ign. *Phld.* 6:1: “It is better to hear Christianity (Χριστιανός) from a man who is circumcised than Judaism (Ἰουδαισμός) from one who is uncircumcised.” This would seem to imply that the “Judaizers” were themselves uncircumcised, i.e., Gentile Christians. What seems to have been at stake was an inter-Gentile-Christian debate between Ignatius and some other Gentile Christians in the churches of Magnesia and Philadelphia. Ignatius seems to presuppose that these Gentile Christians were (1) still part of the congregations,² that they had (2) separated themselves from the common Eucharist,³ had (3) sought Ignatius out to confer with him, and (4) that there was still hope of correcting them and reestablishing the unity of believers. In other words, it seems Ignatius treats these Judaizers in a more conciliatory way than he does the docetic heretics of his other letters.

In what, exactly, their “Judaizing” consisted, is not easy to gather from Ignatius’s sparse remarks in *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians*. There is no indication that they tried to impose all the Mosaic laws on believers. The only exception to this may be Sabbath observance (see Ign. *Magn.* 9.1). It would seem that the “Judaism” of the “Judaizing” party had to do with their interpretation of the (Old Testament) Scriptures, and the authority they accorded the Scriptures over against what Ignatius called “the Gospel.”

The most informative passage occurs in Ign. *Phld.* 8.2:

Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (Yale Publications in Religion 1; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 52–87; Charles Kingsley Barrett, “Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies* (ed. R. Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 220–44; Paul J. Donahue, “Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,” *VC* 32 (1978): 81–93; Lloyd Gaston, “Judaism of the Uncircumcised in Ignatius and related writers,” in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity* (ed. S. G. Wilson; 2 vols.; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier, 1986), 2:33–44; Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia* (SBEC 29; Lewiston, New York: Mellen 1992), 169–94; Wolfram Uebel, “Viele Verführer sind in die Welt ausgegangen”: *Die Gegner in den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien und in den Johannesbriefen* (BWANT 151; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 58–66 and 74–82; Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Judaism without Circumcision and ‘Judaism’ without ‘Circumcision’ in Ignatius,” *HTR* 95 (2002): 395–415; Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 203–11; Michele Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 13; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), 82–91. The modern standard commentary is William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

² Ign. *Phld.* 3.1.

³ Ign. *Phld.* 4. This was possibly because the “Judaizers” celebrated the Eucharist during Sabbath rather than on Sunday, cf. Ign. *Magn.* 9.1 and the interpretation of this passage given in Bartsch, *Gnostisches Gut*, 38–44. This is uncertain, however, because Ignatius may have meant no more than to say that the Apostles once converted from Sabbath observance to Sunday observance, this being one example of their over-all turning from “Judaism” to “Christianity.” See Schoedel’s commentary, 123–24.

But I urge you to do nothing in a contentious way, but in accordance with what you have learned in Christ. For I heard some saying: “If I do not find it in the ancient records [ἀρχεῖα], I do not believe in the gospel.” And when I said to them, “It is written,” they replied to me, “That is just the question.” But for me, Jesus Christ is the ancient records, and his resurrection, and the faith that comes through him—by which things I long to be made righteous by your prayer.⁴

First of all, this passage confirms that the “Judaism” of Ignatius’s Gentile Christian opponents had to do with their exegesis and evaluation of the ἀρχεῖα—very likely another word for the Scriptures. They accorded the Old Testament a supreme authority, which in Ignatius’s view put down the authority of the “Gospel.” One should note, however, that Ignatius does not say they disbelieved the Gospel or that they openly denied that the Gospel had support in the Old Testament. But while for Ignatius the “Gospel” was the ultimate authority, to the extent that a reference to it terminated all discussion, for his opponents it was rather the other way around: the decisive arguments were to be found in the Old Testament.

As has been argued in recent scholarship, this means that the “deviation” of these Judaists from “mainline” theology in this period need by no means have been great at all.⁵ Ignatius is in many ways an extremist in the opposite direction. He would probably have taken offense at the way *Barnabas* bases Christianity almost exclusively on exegesis of Old Testament texts, and perhaps even at Justin’s insistence that the credibility of Christian Christology is largely based on Old Testament predictions (*1 Apol.* 30–31).

This means that if we are to look for evidence of Jewish believers in Ignatius, it should not be in his sayings about the Judaizers, but rather in his short saying that “it is better to hear Christianity from the circumcised than Judaism from the uncircumcised” (*Ign. Phld.* 6.1). Taken at face value, this would seem to imply that Ignatius knew Jewish believers who had a practice and a doctrine he could fully endorse as “Christianity.” This would certainly mean they were not at any fundamental variance with Ignatius’s own brand of Christianity.

In order to safeguard this reading of his text, two other possible readings have to be ruled out: (1) Ignatius could be taken to mean that better than the actual case of hearing Judaism from uncircumcised would be the *hypothetical* case of hearing Christianity from the circumcised. (2) Ignatius repeatedly says that the Old Testament prophets were really Christians and proclaimed Christ; they could be the “circumcised” propagating Christianity. Or he may have had Christ’s Apostles in mind.

For clues to Ignatius’s meaning, let us look at the context:

(A) But if anyone should interpret Judaism to you, do not hear him.

⁴Text and translation according to Ehrman, LCL.

⁵See, e.g., Trevett, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 176–94, with further references to recent scholarly treatments of the issue.

(B) For it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from one who is uncircumcised.

(A') But if neither one speaks about Jesus Christ, they both appear to me as monuments and tombs of the dead, on which are written merely human names.⁶

The passage has a simple chiastic structure, beginning and ending with a general saying that anyone who “interprets Judaism” or does not “speak of Jesus Christ,” is to be rejected. As the middle (B) saying makes clear, this “anyone” means any person—regardless of whether the person is circumcised or not, i.e., regardless of whether the person is Jewish or Gentile. The concluding saying (A') is very difficult to reconcile with the interpretation that takes “the man who is circumcised” to be one of the Old Testament prophets, or one of Christ’s apostles. To Ignatius, the two types of deniers and the two types of confessors, i.e., circumcised and uncircumcised, are both contemporary to himself. In addition, his argument would be weaker if the case of a circumcised man proclaiming Christianity was unreal and only constructed as an imagined contrast to the real case of uncircumcised people proclaiming “Judaism.”

The interpretation that makes best sense of the passage as a whole, and the middle clause in particular, seems to be the following: Ignatius’s opponents made much of their status as uncircumcised. In this they would be similar to other Gentile Christians of a slightly later period. They combined this, however, with a regard for the Scriptures as ultimate authority, to such an extent that Ignatius deemed it unchristian. Ignatius brands them as people who “interpret Judaism,” i.e., interpret the Old Testament in a Jewish manner. It is here that he brings in the real case of Jewish believers who support the right brand of Christianity. If Jewish believers agreed with Ignatius in confessing the reality of Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection, and agreed with him in finding this to be the only hermeneutical key to a right reading of the Scriptures, then these Jewish believers would be “men having circumcision, but proclaiming Christianity.”⁷

It is very likely that Ignatius knew just such Jewish believers, whom he considered his allies in his fight against the “Judaizers.” There is nothing problematic with this supposition. The *Didache* and Ignatius should be considered close neighbors in space and time, and there is a good possibility that Ignatius was familiar with the type of Jewish believers speaking through this document. This lends credence to the view that we should take his words about Jewish believers propagating Christianity instead of Judaism at face value. These Jewish believers could well be similar to those speaking to us through the *Didache*; in fact, they could be the very same.

There is one often overlooked passage in Ignatius’s epistle to the Smyrneans that supports the interpretation proposed above:

⁶ Translation according to Ehrman, LCL. I have structured the passage by inserting the (A) and (B) in order to bring out its chiastic pattern.

⁷ Ign. Phld. 6.1 freely rendered.

I know that you have been made complete in a faith that cannot be moved—as if you were nailed to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ in both flesh and spirit—and that you have been established in love by the blood of Christ. For you are fully convinced about our Lord,

that he was truly from the family of David according to the flesh,
Son of God according to the will and power of God,
truly born from a virgin,
and baptized by John that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him.

In the time of Pontius Pilate and the tetrarch Herod, he was truly nailed for us in the flesh—we ourselves come from the fruit of his divinely blessed suffering—so that

through his resurrection he might eternally lift up the standard for his holy and faithful ones, *whether among Jews or Gentiles, in the one body of his church* (Ign. Smyrn. 1.1–2).⁸

Ignatius here clearly includes Jewish believers among those who make the facts of the christological creed their own norm and rule of faith. This unreserved inclusion of the Jewish believers in the one body of the Church is in marked contrast to the corresponding passage in one of Justin Martyr's “creeds”:

In the books of the Prophets . . . we found Jesus our Messiah foretold as
coming to us born of a virgin,
reaching manhood,
curing every disease and ailment, raising the dead to life,
being hated, unrecognized,
and crucified, dying,
rising from the dead,
ascending into heaven,
and being called and actually being the Son of God,
and that he would send certain persons to every nation to make known these things,
and that the Gentiles rather [than the Jews] would believe in him (*1 Apol.* 31.7).⁹

In Justin it is part of the definition of the church that it is mainly made up of Gentile believers; in Ignatius this is not the case.

⁸ Translation according to Ehrman, LCL; spacing and italics are mine.

⁹ Translation according to Thomas B. Falls, *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr* (FC 6; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 67, slightly modified.

To conclude, it seems Ignatius knew Jewish believers who were themselves circumcised, and may have been quite observant with regard to Jewish customs, but who did not require the same of Gentile Christians, and who embraced a Christology similar to Ignatius's own. He recognizes them as Jews who proclaim Christianity, and prefers them many times to Gentile believers who proclaim "Judaism"—probably a selection of Mosaic observances (the Sabbath?) combined with an over-emphasis on the sole authority of the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. Justin Martyr (150–160 C.E.)

Some of Justin's evidence has been touched upon in the chapter on the Ebionites, and will only briefly be summarized here.¹⁰

In *Dial.* 46.1 Trypho asks Justin if a Jewish believer who believes Jesus to be the Savior, but at the same time wants to keep the Mosaic commandments, will be saved? After a digression on the question of whether Mosaic practice is now possible and necessary for salvation (46.2–7), Justin answers the question in 47.1:

(A) "In my opinion, Trypho" I replied, "I say such a man will be saved, unless (B) he exerts every effort to influence other men (I have in mind the Gentiles whom Christ circumcised from all error) to practice the same rites as himself, informing them that they cannot be saved unless they do so. You yourself did this at the opening of our discussion . . ."¹¹

Trypho retorts that Justin, by saying "in my opinion," has here indicated that there are other Christians who do not tolerate such people the way Justin does (47.2).

"Yes, Trypho," I conceded, "there are some Christians who boldly refuse to have conversation or meals with such persons. I don't agree with such Christians."

(1) But if some, due to their instability of will, desire to observe as many of the Mosaic precepts as [now] possible . . . while at the same time they place their hope in Christ, and if they desire to perform the eternal and natural acts of justice and piety, yet wish to live with us Christians and believers . . . , not persuading them to be circumcised like themselves, or to observe the Sabbath, or to perform any other similar acts, then it is my opinion that we should receive them and associate with them in every way as kinsmen and brethren.

¹⁰ For all of the following see Adolf von Harnack, *Judentum und Judenchristentum in Justins Dialog mit Trypho nebst einer Collation der Pariser Handschrift Nr. 450* (TU 39,1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913), 47–98; especially 84–90. Cf. now also Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game*, 91–99.

¹¹ Greek text, Miroslav Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone* (Patristische Texte und Studien 47; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 146; translation according to Thomas B. Falls, *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (rev. T. P. Halton; ed. M. Slusser; Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 71.

(2) But if any of your people, Trypho, profess their belief in Christ, and at the same time force those of the Gentiles who have believed in Christ, to observe the law instituted through Moses, or refuse to share with them this same common life, I certainly will also not approve of them.

(3) But I think that those Gentiles who have been induced to follow the practices of the Jewish law, and at the same time profess their faith in the Christ of God, will probably be saved" (47.2–4).¹²

After this, Justin adds two categories who will not be saved: (4) Gentiles who first converted to Christianity and professed belief in Jesus, but who afterwards have converted to a Jewish way of life and no longer confess Jesus as the Messiah; and (5) Jews who never professed belief in Jesus, especially those who curse believers in Jesus in their synagogues.

It is evident from this that Justin here strives to give an exhaustive review of the different attitudes that Jews and Gentiles can possibly take in regard to belief in Jesus and observing the law. He has no great problem recognizing Jewish believers as true believers even if they, for their own part, continue observing the law, as long as they do not require of Gentile believers that they do the same (category 1 above). He holds that when Jewish believers do persuade Gentile believers to observe the law, the former (category 2) are condemned as having misled others, but the latter (category 3) are probably not, since they are victims rather than perpetrators of this error. It is clear from the entire context in *Dial.* 47, and also *Dial.* 46, that the decisive criterion for Justin is whether one thinks salvation comes through observing the law or not. For all those who require of Gentile believers that they observe the law, the real reason behind this requirement is that they think and say that one cannot be saved unless one keeps the law. This amounts to saying that salvation comes through the law rather than through Jesus the Messiah and faith in him. On the other hand, when Jewish believers do not require of Gentile believers that they observe the law, this amounts to a recognition in practice of the view that salvation does not come through observing the law. The fact that they themselves nevertheless continue keeping the law is judged by Justin to be a forgivable inconsistency due to an excusable "instability of will." But he says explicitly that other [Gentile] Christians disagree with him on this point and do not recognize even such Jewish believers as brethren.¹³

It clearly follows from this that Justin knew two categories of Jewish believers. Both of them observed the law for their own part, but they differed with regard to whether Gentile believers were also required to observe the law.¹⁴ Does

¹² Marcovich, 147; Falls, 71–72

¹³ Von Harnack argues that these Christians were in the majority, since Justin would not have bothered to mention this position at all had they been in the minority, *Judenchristentum*, 86.

¹⁴ Von Harnack thinks that the small space allotted to Justin's discussion of the Jewish believers, and the fact that he never says the Jewish believers are "here among us" (in

this mean that Justin did not know any Jewish believers who did not observe the law themselves, or who at least abandoned strict observance of the law when having fellowship with Gentiles, according to the example of Paul (1 Cor 9:21)? One should not take his silence concerning this category as positive evidence that he did not know any such Jewish believers, since the entire discussion in *Dial.* 46–47 is in response to Trypho's question whether observance of the law is compatible with faith in Jesus. The case of those Jewish believers who quit observance after having believed in Jesus is not addressed in Trypho's question, and is therefore not in Justin's response. As in many other cases, absence of evidence for a particular category of people should not automatically be taken as evidence of the absence of this category of people.

As I have shown elsewhere, there is every reason to think that some of Justin's arguments concerning the abolition of the ceremonial part of the law after Christ's coming derive from Jewish believers.¹⁵ The nature of these arguments is such that Justin is quite right to point out that for a person to think this way about the law and at the same time continue to practice the ritual commandments would be inconsistent. The main point is that the ritual commandments were understood to be temporary measures until the coming of the Messiah. To continue with them after his coming would amount to a practical denial of the efficacy of his coming. It could well be that if Justin knew (as we know he did) Jewish believers who nevertheless kept on observing the ritual commandments due to "instability of will," he also knew Jewish believers who did not, i.e., who drew the full and logical consequences of this theory concerning the law and abandoned all or most of the ritual observances. It should be noted that Justin sometimes speaks about Jews converting to Christianity in such a way that he seems to presuppose that they convert to *his way of practicing* Christianity.

Indeed, Elijah, when interceding for you before God, spoke thus: "Lord, they have slain your prophets . . . and I am left alone, and they seek my life." And God answered: "I still have seven thousand men, whose knees have not been bowed before Baal" [1 Kings 19:10.14.18 conflated].¹⁶ Therefore, just as God did not show his anger on account of those seven thousand men, so now he has not yet exacted judgment of you [Jews], because he knows that every day some of you are forsaking your erroneous ways to become disciples in the name of Christ, and this same name of Christ en-

Ephesus or Corinth), must mean they were to be located in the periphery of the Roman Empire, probably in the land of Israel and Syria. This could well be the case, especially considering the fact that Justin came from Samaria and Trypho from Judea. It is Trypho who brings such Jewish believers into the discussion. Justin may have wanted his readers to infer that Trypho knew such people from his home country. This would agree with the hypothesis that Justin is talking here about those called Ebionites by Irenaeus. The Hebrew name indicates a location in the land of Israel.

¹⁵ See Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition* (NovTSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 295–326.

¹⁶ Justin probably depends on Romans 11:3f for this quotation, cf. Skarsaune, *Proof*, 95.

lightens you to receive all the graces and gifts according to your merits (*Dial.* 39.1–2;¹⁷ cf. similar sayings about Jewish belief in 28.2–3; 32.2; 44.4; 92.6; 120.5–6).

The special interest of a passage like this is not only that Justin expresses a clear conviction that his arguments might actually impress “you”—Trypho and other Jews—to convert to Justin’s brand of Christian faith and practice, but that he says this is actually happening καθ' ἡμέραν, “every day.” He is here talking against his main tendency, which is to depict the Jews as hardened by heart and impervious to the Christian message. On the other hand, if his mention of frequent Jewish conversions to Christian faith were to serve a propagandistic purpose—see how powerful this message is, it even conquers the most hardened of hearts!—one would expect him to highlight it, not tuck it away in this one saying, which is singular in the whole *Dialogue*. In other words, there is no reason to discount the simple implication of this passage that Justin knew that not a few Jews had joined and were joining the type of Christian faith that he himself adhered to.

Returning to Justin’s evidence in *Dial.* 47, we have to raise the question whether any of the two categories of Jewish believers mentioned there could be the same as those envisaged in *Dial.* 48, i.e., Jewish believers who denied the divine preexistence and the virginal birth of Jesus and preferred to regard him as an ordinary man being elected to the office of Messiah because of his just life according to the law. I discussed this and related passages quite extensively in the chapter on the Ebionites in the present work (ch. 14), and here presuppose the conclusions of that discussion. Justin does indeed seem to know Jewish believers with an “Ebionite” type of Christology, and he often makes Trypho express their point of view. The question now is, are these identical with those Jewish believers of *Dial.* 47 who enjoin the law on Gentile believers, or is there no such correspondence? The evidence in Irenaeus and the heresiologists following him would strongly indicate that such a combination is warranted, and that Justin is here in fact describing two characteristics of the same group, the Irenaean “Ebionites.” The Irenaean and the later material also points to the common denominator of the two characteristics, namely, the significance of law-observance for the Ebionite group. Jesus was elected Messiah *because* of his perfect law-obedience; his disciples (Jewish or Gentile) should emulate their master and observe the law like him. Justin’s report on Jewish believers who require law-obedience of all believers (in *Dial.* 47) and support an adoptionist Christology (in *Dial.* 48) tallies well with the picture of Ebionites in later Fathers, but the lack of explicit identification of the people referred to in Justin’s two chapters in the *Dialogue* precludes absolute certainty.

To conclude, Justin seems to have known at least three categories of Jewish believers, (1) those who assimilated more or less completely into the mixed community of Gentile and Jewish believers to which Justin himself belonged, not insisting on observance of the ritual commandments of the law for their own part; (2) those who, as believers in Jesus, still observed the law the way they

¹⁷ Marcovich, 134–35; Falls, 60–61.

were used to, but did not require Gentile believers to do the same; and (3) Jewish believers who not only kept the law themselves, but required Gentile believers to do the same. The latter category may well be identical with those Jewish believers who held an adoptionist Christology of an “Ebionite” type. It is possible that the latter two categories of Jewish believers were located in the land of Israel and/or Syria.

3. Celsus

Celsus was a philosopher belonging to the school of Middle Platonism. Possibly during the years 177–80 (or at least during the latter half of the second century) he wrote, probably in Rome or Alexandria, a work he entitled *The True Doctrine* (ἀληθῆς λόγος). This book is not preserved as such in any manuscript, but Origen quoted 70–80 percent of its text in his refutation of it; it is therefore possible to reconstruct its main points and line of argumentation with some degree of confidence.¹⁸ While it is a treatise written to refute Christianity, Celsus also has some very critical remarks concerning the Jews. He thinks, however, that the Jews have one clear advantage over Christians: they can rightly claim an old national tradition for their customs and their religion, while the Christians cannot. The Christians are apostates from the common wisdom tradition of humanity by two steps. First the Jews, under Moses’ leadership, apostatized from the Egyptians; then the Christians apostatized from the Jews.

Celsus is thus well aware of the Jewish origins of Christianity. This is mainly because he is well read in the Jewish Bible and the main New Testament writings, and knows that most Christians use the Jewish Bible as their holy writ (he also knows, however, of the rejection of the God of the Bible by gnostics and Marcion). He quotes from or alludes to all four gospels, as well as to several passages in the Pauline letters. He also mentions a now lost early Christian writing, Aristo of Pella’s *Dialogue between Jason and Papiscus*. He may have been acquainted with the writings of Justin Martyr, without naming him.¹⁹

¹⁸ The classical text edition of Origen’s *Contra Celsum* is still Paul Koetschau, *Die Schrift vom Martyrium; Buch I–IV Gegen Celsus* and *Buch V–VIII Gegen Celsus; Die Schrift vom Gebet* (GCS 2–3; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899). It is now in part superceded by the more recent Sources Chrétiennes edition, Marcel Borret, *Contre Celse* (SC 132, 136, 147, 150, 227; Paris: Cerf, 1967–1976). Attempts at reconstructing or translating Celsus’s text as a separate text include: Robert Bader, *Der Alethes logos des Kelsos* (Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 33; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1940); R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Celsus, On The True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). In what follows, I quote Henry Chadwick’s English translation in his magisterial *Origen: Contra Celsum* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

¹⁹ See the extensive argument for this in Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos: Die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 30; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1955), 308–400.

Through this reading, Celsus was acquainted with the intense debate between Jews and Christians, and concluded (like many modern scholars) that it had begun as a debate between Jesus and his Jewish kinsmen and then continued between Jewish believers and non-believers in Jesus. Partly inspired, probably, from the two dialogues he had read (Aristo's and Justin's), he created a mini-dialogue within his own work between a Jew on the one side, and Jesus and some of Jesus' Jewish followers on the other. It is concerning the latter group that Celsus seems to make statements of relevance for our theme.

We propose to write this book in reply to the charges brought by him [Celsus' Jew] against *those of the Jewish people who have believed in Jesus*. It is this very point to which we first call attention: why, when Celsus had once decided to introduce an imaginary character, did he not represent the Jew as addressing *Gentile instead of Jewish believers*? If his argument were written against us, it might have seemed very convincing. But perhaps this fellow, who professes to know everything, did not see what would be appropriately attributed to an imaginary character. Notice, then, what he says to *Jewish believers*. He says that "deluded by Jesus, they have left the law of their fathers, and have been quite ludicrously deceived [by Jesus], and have deserted to another name and another life." He failed to notice that *Jewish believers in Jesus* have not left the law of their fathers. For they live according to it, and are named [Ebionites] from the poverty of their [literal] interpretation of the law. . . . Those Jews who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah are called Ebionites (*Cels.* 2.1, italics mine).²⁰

The meaning of Origen's passage is clear: Celsus's imaginary Jew accuses *Jewish believers* of forsaking the law given to their fathers. This accusation might be appropriate for Gentile Christians who do not in fact observe the law, but it is entirely misplaced as an accusation against Jewish believers, who keep it. The point is that Celsus has succeeded in creating an imaginary Jew who is as misinformed about Jewish believers as Celsus himself. A real Jew would have known better, and would have accused only the Gentile Christians of forsaking the law.

On closer reading of Celsus's passages which are attributed to his "Jew," one observes that Origen is not entirely justified in this criticism. Celsus's Jew is first addressing Jesus, blaming *him* for making his disciples apostatize from the law, and then continues by blaming Jesus' first followers for doing the same. Clearly Celsus's Jew is basing his polemics on the picture of Jesus and his disciples gained from reading the Gospels and the letters of Paul. The following rebuke clearly is aimed at the first generation of Jewish disciples of Jesus: "Quite recently, when we punished this fellow who cheated you, you abandoned the law of your fathers" (*Cels.* 2.4). Apart from the New Testament writings, Celsus's Jew also knows the type of anti-Christian polemics later found in rabbinic writings and in the *Toledoth Yeshu* tradition in which a standard accusation was that Jesus had deceived Israel away from the law.²¹ It should be noted that apart from referring—

²⁰ Translation according to Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 66.

²¹ See, e.g., R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Jesus Outside the Gospels* (New York: Prometheus, 1984), 36–60.

somewhat malapropos—to the Ebionites, Origen in his counter-polemics makes much of the (more relevant) fact that Peter and the other disciples of Jesus continued to live as Jews.

It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that the Jewish believers whom Celsus's imaginary Jew addresses are the Jewish believers Celsus meant to find in the New Testament writings and in Jewish polemics against Jesus and his disciples. It does not tell us much about Celsus's knowledge of contemporary Jewish believers in Jesus. He may evince such knowledge, however, in *Cels.* 5.61, where he enumerates different deviants within the Christian movement. Having referred to Valentinians and named gnostics, Celsus continues (in Origen's report): "some also accept Jesus . . . although they still want to live according to the law of the Jews like the multitude of the Jews."²² Origen thinks this is a reference to the Jewish believers (Ebionites of both kinds), and he may well be right. It is difficult to know, however, whether Celsus would have been able to distinguish between Jewish believers and Gentile Judaizers. His short notice could well cover both categories. In addition, one cannot be absolutely sure that Celsus had any firsthand knowledge of this. If he had read Justin's *Dialogue*, he would know from that source that there were Jewish believers who still kept the law.

To conclude, apart from the fact that Celsus clearly attests the Jewish origins of Christianity and portrays it as a movement that has apostatized from Judaism, there is little concrete information on Jewish believers after the New Testament period in Celsus. He seems to know that there are some Jewish believers that still observe the law, but that these are clearly in a minority situation. Whether this knowledge is firsthand or taken from written sources is impossible to say.

4. Polycrates of Ephesus (ca. 195 C.E.) on the Quartodecimans

From the beginning, believers in Jesus had two main foci for their regular worship, one weekly—the first day of the week—and one annual—Passover. The “problem” here is that the weekly celebration and the annual festival of Passover in part overlapped, in that both celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. In naming the day of Jesus’ resurrection “the first day,” this day is from the very beginning related to the cycle of the week, not the year. This in itself probably reflects the weekly celebration of Jesus’ resurrection. If the annual dimension of the day had been in focus, the day of the resurrection could be called “the second/third day of Mazzoth.”²³ But no trace of any such designation survives. It was almost

²² Translation according to Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 311.

²³ The third day according to synoptic chronology, the second according to Johannine. This difference between Johannine and synoptic chronology would hardly have been possible had the day of resurrection from the beginning been determined by its place within the sequence of Passover/Mazzoth.

certainly never used.²⁴ Celebration of the Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week seems to have been universal among believers in Jesus from the very beginning. There was no equivalent to this in the Jewish week. It was a Christian *novum*.

But there was also the annual festival of Passover. Among believers in Jesus, this celebration by necessity had to have some relationship to the Lord's resurrection. This implied a possible conflict: the cycles of the week and the annual cycle of Passover would most often not coincide. In this case, which cycle should be given priority? If the Christian *novum* of the first day as the day of the resurrection was given priority also in Christian Passover celebration, it would mean that the Christian Passover became detached from the Jewish one by a number of days. The natural solution would be to designate the Sunday after the 14th of Nisan as a special paschal Sunday. But no doubt this would be perceived as a rather radical break from the Jewish Passover celebration altogether. It would mean that believers in Jesus no longer celebrated Passover. The way to compensate for this would be to emphasize the paschal dimension of the main event of regular Sunday worship, the Eucharist. The Jewish Passover became "new" among believers in Jesus by being transposed to the weekly Eucharist. But this also would mean that the Eucharist, celebrated on Sunday, could not primarily be seen as a commemoration of the events of Good Friday, but rather as a commemoration of Jesus' last meal with his disciples, now transposed to the weekly worship on Sunday.

This, no doubt, would be easier to achieve among Gentile believers who had no strong ties to Jewish Passover in any case, than among Jewish believers who would have had similar feelings about Passover as modern Christians have about Christmas. It is therefore a great *a priori* probability that Jewish believers would continue some form of Passover celebration, and that they would celebrate Passover simultaneously with their non-believing fellow Jews. The factual proof that such was the case is seen in the practice of the so-called "Quartodecimans," those who celebrated their Christian Passover on the same day of the year as other Jews—the 14th of Nisan. According to the available evidence, this practice was the norm in the province of Asia, and is specifically connected with the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Laodicea and Hierapolis.²⁵ But why was this

²⁴ It is certainly significant that the disagreement between synoptic and Johannine chronology only concerns the annual cycle of Passover, not the weekly cycle. All four gospels agree that Jesus was executed on Friday, the παρασκευή, and that he arose from the dead on the first day of the week, the day after the Sabbath. But according to John the day of his death was the day of the Passover meal, i.e., the 14th of Nisan, while according to the synoptics it was the day after, i.e., the 15th of Nisan, the first day of Mazzoth.

²⁵ On Quartodeciman Passover celebration, see, e.g., Wolfgang Huber, *Passa und Ostern: Untersuchungen zur Osterfeier der alten Kirche* (BZNW 35; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969); Gerard Rouwhorst, "The Quartodeciman Passover and the Jewish Pesach," *Questions liturgiques* 77 (1996): 152–73; Rouwhorst, "Liturgical Time and Space in Early Christianity in Light of Their Jewish Background," in *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (ed. A. Houtman, M. J. H. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz; Jewish and

Quartodeciman practice more widespread in these locations? The simplest explanation would be that the quota of Jewish believers among the church leadership of this province was greater than elsewhere. With this in mind, let us review a passage from one of the spokesmen of the Quartodecimans, bishop Polycrates of Ephesus, writing to bishop Victor of Rome (189–199) to defend the Quartodeciman position against a strong attack by the Roman bishop (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 5.24.2–7):

(1) As for us, then, we keep the day [of the 14th] without tampering with it, neither adding, nor subtracting.

(2) For indeed in Asia great luminaries *have fallen asleep*, such as shall *rise again on the day of the Lord's appearing* . . . : to wit,

(a) *Philip*, one of the twelve apostles, who has *fallen asleep in Hierapolis*,

[as have] also his two daughters who grew old in virginity, and his other daughter who lived in the Holy Spirit and rests at Ephesus; and, moreover,

(b) *John* too, he who leaned back on the Lord's breast,

who was a priest, wearing the sacerdotal plate, both martyr and teacher.

He *has fallen asleep at Ephesus*. Moreover,

(c) *Polycarp* too at *Smyrna*, both bishop and martyr; and

(d) *Thræseas*, both bishop and martyr, of Eumenia, who *has fallen asleep at Smyrna*. And why need I mention

(e) *Sagaris*, bishop and martyr, who *has fallen asleep at Laodicea*? or the blessed

(f) *Papirius*,²⁶ or

(g) *Melito* the eunuch who in all things lived in the Holy Spirit, who *lies at Sardis*,

awaiting the visitation from heaven, *when he shall rise from the dead*? These all observed the fourteenth day for the Pascha according to the Gospel, in no way deviating therefrom, but following the rule of faith

(3) And moreover I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, [do] according to the tradition of my compatriots, some of whom I also succeeded. Seven of my compatriots (*συγγενεῖς*) were bishops, and I am the eighth. And my compatriots always kept the day when the people put away the leaven.

Christian Perspectives Series 1; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 265–84; esp. 269–76; Karl Gerlach, *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History* (Liturgia condenda 7; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 319–87; and Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Origins of Easter,” in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times* (ed. P. F. Bradshaw and L. A. Hoffman; vol. 5 of *Two Liturgical Traditions*; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 81–97.

²⁶ Papirius is said to have become Polycarp’s successor in *Vita Polycarpi* 27.

(4) Therefore I for my part, brethren, who number sixty-five years in the Lord and have conversed with the brethren from all parts of the world and traversed the entire range of holy Scripture, am not affrighted by threats. For those better than I have said, “We must obey God rather than men” [Acts 5:29].²⁷

The main question concerning this document is whether the seven compatriots (or relatives) mentioned in passage 3 are identical with the seven leaders enumerated in passage 2.²⁸ If so, the occurrence of Philip and John among the seven must mean the “compatriots” are all Jewish and that this is why Polycrates calls them all his συγγενεῖς. His use of the term would then correspond exactly to Paul’s use of the same term in Rom 9:3; 16:7, 11, 21: “my [Jewish] compatriots.”²⁹ The following arguments speak in favor of this interpretation.

In debates between Rome and Asia, appeal was more than once made to those apostolic authorities whose tombs were revered by the respective communities: Peter’s and Paul’s in Rome, John’s in Ephesus and others in Asia.³⁰ It was therefore urgent for the Asian participants in such debates to establish the highest “martyr-tomb” authorities they possibly could in order to compete with Peter and Paul in Rome. In this contest, the seven authorities enumerated in passage 2 make good sense, but if the seven bishops mentioned in passage 3 are different from these and are only unnamed (because they are unknown) relatives of Polycrates, it is difficult to see how they could add any authority at all to Polycrates’ cause. It is difficult to see why Polycrates would say that he followed the tradition of seven unnamed relatives right after he has named seven illustrious predecessors. His reference to himself following the tradition of “my relatives/ compatriots” does make sense, however, if it means that he followed the tradition of the seven luminaries he has just been enumerating. It would also be a strange coincidence if Polycrates should have exactly the same number of bishops in his family as the seven famous predecessors he has just described. Finally, the selection of the seven who Polycrates has chosen among the celebrities of Asia is difficult to explain if fame because of martyrdom was the only criterion. Papirius and Melito, for example, are not known to have been martyrs. So why not substitute these by known martyrs? If, however, an unspecified but implied criterion was that these celebrities were all Jewish believers, the list makes sense. Polycrates would

²⁷ Translation according to Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History and The Martyrs of Palestine* (2 vols.; London: SPCK, 1954), 1:169. I have inserted numbers and letters to make clear the structure of the passage.

²⁸ In favor of this interpretation, see especially Richard Bauckham, “Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel,” *JTS* 44 (1993): 24–69; esp. 28–30.

²⁹ For this interpretation, see extensive argument in Alistair Stewart-Sykes, “Melito’s Anti-Judaism,” *JECS* 5 (1997): 271–83; esp. 275–79; and in Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb’s High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha and the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis* (VCSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 3–6.

³⁰ From the Roman side, we have Gaius arguing with the Phrygian Montanist Proclus, pointing out that the “trophies” of Peter and Paul are in Rome (*Hist. eccl.* 2.25.7).

value the number seven, and therefore be willing to include a few non-martyrs to reach this number. (It is hardly necessary to point out the strong preference for sevens in the literature of Ephesus and Asia in general, and in the book of Revelation in particular.³¹

It therefore seems most natural to take the second and third sentences in passage 3 to be a summary of the argument so far: “[Thus,] seven of my compatriots were bishops [as I have enumerated above], and I am the eighth. And [these] my [Jewish] compatriots always kept the day when [our] people put away the leaven.” The terminology of the last sentence is entirely Jewish and would be surprising from a non-Jewish author.

The implication of this argument is far-reaching. It means that among bishops in Asia there were several Jewish believers, among them Polycarp and Melito. As we have seen, this fits well with the strong dominance of Quartodeciman Passover celebration in Asia; but how well does it fit the preserved writings of these two bishops? On the basis of the Epistle of Polycarp, few if any have suggested that Polycarp was a Jewish believer, and in Melito’s case his strong anti-Judaic polemic would seem to exclude the possibility that he was a Jew. We shall have to face these two objections in due course. Here I anticipate my conclusion: There is nothing in the work of these two writers which would prevent them from being Jewish believers. On the contrary, there are some features in each case which would make best sense if they were. For the present, however, let us pursue the matter of the Quartodecimans a little further.

The intervention on their behalf by Irenaeus and others apparently did not help much.³² They were soon to be regarded as full-fledged schismatics and/or heretics. This in itself should be considered an indicator of to what extent “acting similar to Jews” was becoming a self-sufficient criterion of heresy in many quarters of the church. The first inclusion of Quartodecimans in a heresiology occurs in Hippolytus. Despite its stridency, his information is of considerable interest:

Others—by nature fond of strife, uneducated and of quarrelsome manners—claim that the Passover should be observed “on the fourteenth [day] of the first month” [Ex 12:1.6] in accordance with the commandment in the Law, regardless on which day [of the week] it should occur. In this they [only] paid attention to what was written

³¹ The link to Revelation might explain another characteristic of Polycrates’ list of the seven luminaries: they are either said to be *martyrs* or *virgins* or living “*in the Spirit*” (Melito was a eunuch [celibate], and Philip’s daughters, although not included in the list of bishops, are said to be virgins). In Revelation 20:4–6 it is the *martyrs* who have part in the “first resurrection” (before their millennial reign with Christ); in 14:4 the “firstfruits” of the believers are the 144,000 “*virgins*” (here referring to celibate men?); in 19:10 it says that the Spirit enabling believers to hold fast to the witness [*μαρτυρία*] about Jesus is the *Spirit of prophecy*. In other words, when Polycrates twice emphasizes that the martyrs or virgins who “sleep” or “wait” in their tombs for the resurrection at the parousia of the Lord, it could well be the special “first resurrection” of the martyrs he has in mind. His terminology seems in general to conform to the martyr terminology of Revelation.

³² Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 5.24.10–18.

in the Law, that “he shall be cursed who does not observe [the Passover] the way it was commanded” [Deut 27:26; cf. Ex 12:19; Num 9:13]. They did not notice that this was enjoined on the Jews, those who would take away the true Passover,³³ which has been transferred to the Gentiles. It is understood by faith, and is now not observed according to the letter. They only pay attention to this one commandment, and do not observe that which the Apostle says, “I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to observe the whole Law” [Gal 5:3]. In other respects, however, these consent to all the traditions delivered to the Church by the Apostles (*Haer.* 8.18.1–2).³⁴

The argument of this passage may be reconstructed like this:

(1) The Quartodeciman position was that the scriptural saying (that the one who neglects to observe Passover at the right time and according to the scriptural regulations shall be cut off from Israel) is not to be restricted to Jews only, because in both occurrences of this commandment [Exod 12:19; Num 9:11–14], the aliens (*gerim, γειωραί*) are specifically included, and the latter passage says, “An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord’s Passover must do so in accordance with its rules and regulations. You must have the same regulations for the alien and the native-born.”³⁵ This is summed up in a slight reformulation of Deut 27:26, which in the LXX reads: “Cursed is every man who does not remain in all the words of this Law, so that he does them.” Hippolytus’s Quartodecimans quoted them in the following form: “he shall be cursed who does not observe [the Passover] the way it was commanded.” The interesting feature of this is that the reasoning is very similar to the one behind the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15: Gentiles are not in general obliged to keep the Law of Moses, only those commandments are to be kept by Gentiles which are explicitly enjoined on non-Jews in the Law itself. The context for this view concerning Passover in Asia could well be mixed communities with a substantial fraction of Jewish believers who kept Passover at the same time as their compatriots, and who had succeeded in persuading their Gentile brethren to celebrate together with them, on the basis of the arguments rendered above.

(2) Hippolytus’s (= Roman?) counterposition was that the scriptural threat of cutting off from Israel anyone who does not celebrate Passover the right way does indeed stand. It refers, however, to those Jews who reject the true celebration of Passover. This Passover is now the one which believers in Jesus celebrate in faith and according to the spiritual, not the carnal-literal, understanding of the Law. Anyone insisting on a literal observance of any commandment in the Law must be circumcised and then keep the entire Law literally (a slight modification of Paul’s argument in Gal 5:3).

³³ Greek: τὸ ἀληθινὸν πάσχα ἀναίρειν, either: “kill the true Passover [= Jesus]”; or: “abrogate the true [festival of] Passover [= the Christian festival].” The text following this phrase would seem to support the latter interpretation.

³⁴ My own translation.

³⁵ Rendered according to the Hebrew text; the LXX quite similar.

In the actual debate between the Quartodecimans and their opponents, the differences of opinion might be less than immediately appears in the above report. Quartodecimans would agree that the Passover is now not to be observed according to all its regulations, first and foremost not by sacrificing a paschal lamb. The one and only point concerning which they insisted upon a literal observance, was the *time* of Passover. Either you observe it at the time prescribed in Scripture, or, if not, you observe something that should not be called Passover.

It is evident from this that the Quartodeciman question was a question of whether to celebrate Passover simultaneously with the Jews or not. It was *not* a debate between adherents of the Synoptic chronology versus adherents of John's chronology.³⁶ The question of the Gospel chronology of the passion came into view in another way. If one agreed that believers in Jesus should celebrate their Passover at the same time as the Jews celebrated theirs, what was to be the main *object* of the celebration? (1) One could take Synoptic chronology as a point of departure. In this case, what happened during the Jewish Passover was that Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover meal. But this event from early on had been appropriated for the first day of the week as the Sunday Eucharist (whether celebrated during an evening meal or in the morning worship). It does not seem to have occurred to anyone in the early centuries that an annual Christian Passover was in memory of Jesus having "instituted" the Eucharist on Passover Eve. (2) If, however, one followed John's chronology, what happened at the Jewish Passover was much more momentous. At the same time as the paschal lambs were sacrificed in the temple, the true Paschal Lamb, Christ, was slaughtered by dying on the cross. Old and new pascha, old and new lamb—all the traditional contents of the Jewish Passover could be put in immediate and direct juxtaposition to the new Passover. This seems to be the reason why Quartodecimans seem in general to have preferred the Johannine chronology.

4.1. Polycarp of Smyrna

It is true that nothing in Polycarp's epistle is difficult to explain as coming from the pen of a Gentile Christian author. But this in itself is no criterion according to which one can exclude the possibility that Polycarp was Jewish.³⁷ He might simply be one of those Jewish believers who adhered to "mainstream" Asian Christianity.³⁸ The fact that he advocated the Quartodeciman position at

³⁶ An extensive discussion of the Synoptic chronology versus the Johannine is found in Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (rev. ed.; New York: Scribner, 1966), 41–79.

³⁷ Polycarp was a rare name in antiquity until the latter half of the second century C.E. (cf. Johannes B. Bauer, *Die Polykarpbriefe* [KAV 5; Göttingen, 1995], 33). It is of interest to note that one of the occurrences is as a Roman Jewish name (3d–4th cent.), *Corpus inscriptionum iudaicarum* (ed. J. B. Frey; 2 vols.; Rome, 1936–1952), 1: 96.

³⁸ Polycarp, associated with John by Irenaeus, appears in his letter as a theologian very close to the Pauline Pastorals, and is in general more Pauline than Johannine. See two recent studies on this: Kenneth Berding, *Polycarp and Paul: An Analysis of Their Literary*

the very least does not speak against his being Jewish.³⁹ And there is one feature in the story of his martyrdom that has vexed scholars a great deal, but which becomes meaningful if we assume that he was Jewish: that is the role local Jews are said to have played during his martyrdom at Smyrna. If Polycarp was a Gentile presiding over a community of (mostly) Gentile believers, the Jews should have had no reason to be particularly concerned with him. This is the problem pointed out by modern scholars who are skeptical of the historicity of Jewish participation in the persecution of Polycarp.⁴⁰ But let us assume that Polycarp was himself Jewish, and further that he was not atypical of his community (i.e., that there were many Jewish believers in the Christian community at Smyrna). With this in mind, let us then observe the exact nature of Jewish involvement in the persecution of Polycarp. We hear nothing in the account about any Jewish involvement until Polycarp is about to be burned. Then the Jews are said to eagerly *gather wood for his burning*.⁴¹ When the burning of Polycarp does not succeed and he is killed by stabbing instead, the Jews again take action and prevent the governor from handing the body over to the Christians. They persuade the Governor to burn it *postmortem* instead. The consistent concern in this seems to be that the Jews are afraid Polycarp will be killed in a way that allows his body to remain intact. Therefore they assist actively in the gathering of wood for his burning, and then they urge the governor to burn his body after he is dead. The reason they are said to have given for this is very interesting: the governor should by no means hand the body over to the Christians, “lest they leave the crucified one and begin to worship this man.”⁴² Obviously the *Christian cult of martyrs* is at the center of Jewish concern here. Why? (1) They probably took it to be idolatry. The Jews at Smyrna would be concerned about this if many of their Jewish compatriots were involved in it, and particularly if the object of this cult was a Jew himself.⁴³ (2) They could

and Theological Relationship in Light of Polycarp’s Use of Biblical and Extra-Biblical Literature (VCSup 62; Leiden: Brill, 2002); and Paul Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament: The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to New Testament Literature* (WUNT 2.134; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2002).

³⁹ Cf. Irenaeus in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.16–17.

⁴⁰ The classic statement of this critique occurs in Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel* (3d impr.; Paris: Boccard, 1983), 150–51. Simon explains the role of the Jews in Polycarp’s trial and death as a conscious imitation of their role in the trial and death of Jesus. For a recent critique of this theory, see Gerd Buschmann, *Das Martyrium des Polycarp* (KAV 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 209–13.

⁴¹ *Mart. Pol.*, 13.1: “The crowds immediately gathered together wood and kindling from the workplaces and the baths, with the Jews proving especially eager to assist, as is their custom” (trans. Ehrman, LCL).

⁴² *Mart. Pol.* 17:1–2. This reason is voiced by the chief of police, Niketas, but according to the Martyrdom, he said so as spokesman for the Jews, who had also “watched” and presumably prevented the Christians from recovering the body immediately after the fire.

⁴³ I therefore disagree with Buschmann, *Das Martyrium des Polycarp*, 330–31, who deems this worry meaningless in the mouth of Niketas and takes it to reflect only intra-Christian controversy about the martyr cult. That the Jewish participation in Polycarp’s

also be concerned about possible political repercussions for all the Jews of Smyrna if a conspicuous martyr cult developed. The annual celebrations at the martyr's tomb often sparked new conflicts with the pagan society, and this could trigger actions from the Roman authorities with negative effects on the Jewish community. Such considerations would have prompted the Jewish community of Smyrna to distance itself as much as possible from the Christian community and to try to prevent the development of a Christian martyr cult in this case. All this presupposes that the Christian and Jewish communities in Smyrna were quite close in many respects, and that the Jewish community felt they had too many of their own among the Christians to remain indifferent about what happened among the latter.

I have here tried to make sense of the report on the involvement of the Jews of Smyrna on this particular occasion. The obvious alternative to this interpretation is to take the report on this point to be fictitious, reflecting a stereotyped cliché that the Jews always took part in the persecution of Christians. The problem is that no such cliché can be found in any other martyr accounts of the second century,⁴⁴ nor does the role of the Jews in Polycarp's martyrdom correspond to the role of the Jews in this martyrdom's obvious model, the persecution of Jesus.⁴⁵ I am therefore, on the whole, inclined to prefer the interpretation given above.

martyrdom was aimed at destroying his bodily remains has received little attention in much recent discussion, but was clearly seen by David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1956; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, n.d.), 304–9. Daube notes a reform carried out by the Pharisees-Rabbis in the period ca. 100 B.C.E.–100 C.E., the purpose of which was to provide alternative methods of execution that would not destroy the body of the victim, and especially to allow the skeleton to remain intact. The motive behind this reform, Daube argues, was “to strengthen the belief in physical resurrection among the masses: the masses would accept the dogma more readily if the religious leaders did everything to save the most durable parts, the bones, from destruction. This seems to be the object also of the warning against dissection in the Pseudo-Phocylidean poem: ‘not to break up the structure of a human body, because we hope the remains of the departed will again come forth from the earth.’ The hostility to cremation shown up to our day by orthodox Judaism and several branches of Christianity offers something of a parallel.” (Daube, 307–8). Viewed from this perspective, the fact that the Christians were able to collect Polycarp's bones after the cremation could be seen to imply that the Jews' strategy was not entirely successful, cf. Daube, 309.

⁴⁴ See on this, and for further arguments in favor of the basic historicity of *Mart. Pol.* on this point, Buschmann, *Martyrium*, 208–13. See also the very extensive survey of acts of martyrdoms in which it is claimed that Jews instigated and/or participated actively in persecution of Christians in James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (London: Soncino Press, 1934), 121–50. It appears from this survey that Jewish participation was not a topic of such acts until a very late stage, when the acts had become very legendary and stereotyped. When Tertullian calls the Jews “the fountain of persecutions,” (*Scorp.* 10.10) he is referring to the New Testament book of Acts, not contemporaneous events (cf. Timothy D. Barnes, “Tertullian's Scorpiae,” *JTS NS* 20 [1969]: 105–32; esp. 132).

⁴⁵ Despite Buschmann's claim to the contrary, *Martyrium*, 333. The contrast between *Mart. Pol.* and Matthew 27 is on this point almost complete. In Matthew it is *the Jewish*

4.2. Melito of Sardis

It is evident to every reader of Melito of Sardis's *Peri Pascha* (Περὶ πάσχα) that the continuity and the contrast between Jewish and Christian Passover is precisely what this document is all about. The similarities between the Christian passover and the Jewish *pascha* are so great that everything hinges on Melito's ability to explain the differences that exist after all. How new and how different is the new Passover? By focusing on this problem, Melito's new Passover haggadah evinces its deep roots in the Quartodeciman Passover celebration.⁴⁶ This at once explains the two features of the document that have struck commentators: On the one hand, there is Melito's closeness to and great familiarity with elements in the Jewish Passover celebration of the period⁴⁷; and on the other his often virulent attacks on those Jews who continue with the "old" Passover as if nothing new had happened. More than that, "Israel" or "the people" (οἱ λαός) were instrumental in killing the true Paschal Lamb, a necessary task, no doubt, but not necessarily to be undertaken by *Israel*. They ought to have asked God to find someone else, someone "uncircumcised," to carry it out (PP 74–77). It is precisely the bitterness of the anti-Israel polemic in Melito that makes excellent sense on the assumption that Melito himself was Jewish. It was the bitterness of a family feud.⁴⁸

In Melito, there is no definition of Christianity over against Paganism. In *Peri Pascha* this may not be surprising, but the same holds true of Melito's preserved fragments. The only religious and ethnic entity over against which Melito defines his faith and practice is Jews and Judaism. There is no statement in Melito which says that the Gentiles have believed and thus have replaced Israel.⁴⁹ What he contrasts is "the People" (οἱ λαός) versus "the Assembly" (ἡ ἐκκλησία).⁵⁰ That the latter comprises Jews and Gentiles who believe is tacitly assumed. The ἐκκλησία represents all those of *Adam's* offspring who are saved.

Scholars have for a long time observed the obvious parallels between Melito's homily and the Jewish Passover Haggadah.⁵¹ The matter was admirably treated in

leaders who are eager to *keep* the body of Jesus in order to *prevent* any claim of his resurrection. In the Martyrdom it is the Jews who fear the Christians will *keep* the dead body in order to institute a cult around it.

⁴⁶ In recent times, the most consistent, and in my view convincing, interpretation of Melito from this perspective is Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha & the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis* (VCSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998).

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Stuart G. Hall, "Melito in the light of the Passover Haggadah," *JTS* 22 (1971): 29–46; and Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast*, *passim*.

⁴⁸ Cf. especially Alastair Stewart-Sykes, "Melito's Anti-Judaism," *JECS* 5 (1997): 271–83.

⁴⁹ The only place where the attitude of a Gentile people is contrasted with that of Israel is in PP 91–92, where Israel's betrayal of their king is contrasted with Gentile loyalty towards one's king and Gentile admiration of Jesus.

⁵⁰ PP, 40–43. The contrast is contained in Justin, for whom it has become an article of faith that the Gentiles will replace the Jews as the true believers, e.g., *I Apol.* 31:7.

⁵¹ On the complicated question of how the Passover meal was celebrated among Diaspora Jews in the days of Melito, see Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast*, 34–36.

Stuart G. Hall's classical article on the subject, as well as in his standard edition of Melito's homily. Here only some of these parallels can briefly be mentioned:

(1) Most striking, perhaps, are the quite parallel passages "He brought us out . . ." in *m. Pesah.* 10:5 and *Peri Pascha* 68. Both texts look like variations and expansions of a common core.

(2) The Haggadah has a 14-link enumeration of God's miracles at the Exodus and Israel responding with thankfulness for each of them—the so-called *dajenu* prayer. Melito has a similar enumeration; in his, however, Israel is chastized for her ungratefulness (*Peri Pascha* 87–88).

(3) According to *m. Pesah.* 10:5, "Rabban Gamaliel used to say: Whosoever has not said [the verses concerning] these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are they: Passover, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs."⁵² In Melito there is extensive comment upon the Passover in which he also comments upon the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, but on no other elements of the meal.

(4) Following Wis 10–11, Melito portrays the Son of God as the acting agent in God's deliverance of Israel: "It was he who guided you into Egypt, and watched over you and there sustained you. It was he who lit your way with a pillar and sheltered you with a cloud . . ." [continuing with the same acts as enumerated above] (*Peri Pascha* 84–85). The counterversion occurs in the Haggadah: "'And the Lord brought us out of Egypt' [Deut 26:8]—not by the hand of an angel, and not by the hand of a seraph, and not by the hand of a messenger, but the Holy One, blessed be he, in his glory and in his person, as it is said [quotation of Exod 12:12, italics mine]."⁵³

There are more parallels. Some scholars also mention the enigmatic *afikoman* that appears in the Haggadah and also in Melito: "He is the one who comes [Greek: ὁ ἀφικόμενος] from heaven . . ." (*Peri Pascha* 66).⁵⁴ The suggestion is that the breaking of the middle *mazza* (the *afikoman*) during the meal, to be hid and found again later, was originally a symbol of the Messiah, and further that Melito has preserved an allusion to this. This whole issue, however, is extremely complicated, and there is not space enough to treat it adequately in this essay.

One could hold against all this that Melito betrays elementary ignorance when he derives the Aramaic name of Passover, *Pascha*, from Greek πάσχειν (= "to suffer"). But this is no necessary conclusion. To the contrary, the main principle of ancient "etymologies" was the likeness of sounds,⁵⁵ and this could oper-

⁵² Translation according to Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 150.

⁵³ Here and above I quote the Haggadah according to Cecil Roth, *The Haggadah, A New Edition* (London: The Soncino Press, 1959).

⁵⁴ That ὁ ἀφικόμενος amounted to something like a Messianic title for Melito, is confirmed by its recurrence in *PP* 86.

⁵⁵ The term "etymology" is, of course, misleading, since the ancients had no ambition to explain the linguistic origin and root meaning of words. They rather played with words and names, investigating which meanings they were able to hear (rather than read) out of words.

ate across linguistic borders without difficulty. For any Greek-speaking believer in Jesus, the association between *pascha* and πάσχειν would be more or less self-evident. Such “etymologizing” was widespread in Jewish literature of the period. In rabbinic writings one could say it developed into a highly valued art form.

From all or some of the evidence here presented, scholars have concluded that Melito was intimately familiar with the Jewish Passover celebration, probably from personal acquaintance. The easiest explanation would of course be that he knew it from childhood, being a Jew himself.

In an intriguing article, Israel Yuval presents a different perspective, however.⁵⁶ He argues that in all available evidence prior to Melito there is no trace whatsoever of anything like a Haggadah (meaning the Passover narrative proper) in the Jewish Passover meal, nor of any words of explanation being attached to any of the foods served. He thinks the believers in Jesus, perhaps Jesus himself, were the innovators here. *They* had a need to make explicit the entirely *new interpretation* they now attached to a pre-existing tradition. For them, the bread was the body of Christ; for them, the entire meal celebrated the sacrifice of the True Passover Lamb. They were the ones who had the need to tell a *new story* for Passover. Accordingly, Yuval reads the Jewish narrative as a conscious rejoinder to the Christian story, and understands the Jewish words of interpretation attached to the bread as counterpolemic. This is not the body of Jesus, it is the bread of affliction which the ancestors had eaten. Through ingenious exegesis of details in the texts of the Jewish Haggadah, Yuval seeks to demonstrate subversive polemic against the Christian story throughout.

It may be too early to evaluate the strength of this approach, and it is certainly beyond our competence to do so. But if Yuval’s perspective is sound, it would be, in this writer’s opinion, additional evidence that Melito was a Jewish believer. Who else, one could ask, would the Rabbis take seriously as rival creators of an alternative Passover meal if not people who were Jewish themselves?

To conclude, the most straight-forward reading of Polycrates’ letter to Victor of Rome seems to be that he enumerates seven of his predecessors, at least two of whom (Philip and John) were Jewish believers, calling all of them “my kinsmen,” meaning his Jewish compatriots. Since Polycarp and Melito are among them, we have tested this reading on these two and found that the hypothesis that they were Jewish believers explains aspects of the documents connected with them quite well. We have found nothing that speaks decisively against it. This essay does not claim to have presented final and compelling proof; only to have made the possibility that these eight named leaders were Jewish a likely hypothesis. In any case, I believe the above argument has substantiated a point of view long held in scholarly literature: the early communities of Asia Minor, with their

⁵⁶ Israel J. Yuval, “Easter and Passover As Early Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times* (ed. P. F. Bradshaw and L. A. Hoffman; vol. 5 of *Two Liturgical Traditions*; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 98–124.

Quartodeciman Passover and other characteristics, were in close and intense contact with the local Jewish communities and had in their midst a not insignificant number of Jewish believers.⁵⁷

5. Epiphanius on Joseph of Tiberias

As shown elsewhere in this volume (ch. 14, section 4.4), Epiphanius's material on Ebionites and Nazoreans is most often secondhand and of varying value. He has, however, some firsthand material on Jewish believers in his native land of Israel, first and foremost on "Count" Joseph of Tiberias. This material has received less attention than it deserves.⁵⁸

In one ancient source, Epiphanius himself is said to have been a Jewish believer. This is hardly correct, but cannot be ruled out completely.⁵⁹ What is certain is that he was born around 315 C.E. in the land of Israel at Beth Zadok near Eleutheropolis [now Beit Guvrin] in Judea, and that he was raised there. He later trained as a monk in Egypt. He spoke Syriac (Aramaic) as his mother-tongue, later mastered Greek, and even knew some Hebrew and Coptic. He founded a

⁵⁷ According to chronological sequence, the next father to be treated here would be Origen. His quite rich material concerning Jewish believers, however, has been treated extensively elsewhere in this volume, and is therefore omitted here. See chapters 9, 12, and 14.

⁵⁸ The following cannot claim to be a complete bibliography, but to the best of my knowledge no major recent contribution has been left out: Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden vom Untergang des jüdischen Staates bis zum Abschluss des Talmud* (vol. 4 of *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, 4th ed.; Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1908), 308–12; 441–49; Kaufmann Kohler and Richard Gottheil, "Apostasy and Apostates from Judaism," *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (ed. I. Singer; 12 vols.; New York, 1925), 2:12–18; Leopold Lucas, *The Conflict between Christianity and Judaism: A Contribution to the History of the Jews in the Fourth Century* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1993; orig. ed. *Zur Geschichte der Juden im Vierten Jahrhundert*; Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1910), 84–85; Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine: A Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 166–69; Glenn Alan Koch, "The Count Joseph Story as a Possible Source for the Knowledge of the Ebionites," in Koch, *A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius' Knowledge of the Ebionites* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania 1976), 374–83; Ray A. Pritz, "Joseph of Tiberias: The Legend of a 4th Century Jewish Christian," *Mishkan* 2 (1985):47–54; Timothy C. G. Thornton, "The Stories of Joseph of Tiberias," *VC* 44 (1990):54–63; Stephen Craft Goranson, *The Joseph of Tiberias Episode in Epiphanius: Studies in Jewish and Christian Relations* (PhD diss., Duke University, 1990); Martin Jacobs, *Die Institution des jüdischen Patriarchen. Eine quellen- und traditionskritische Studie zur Geschichte der Juden in der Spätantike* (TSAJ 52; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 308–12; Stephen Craft Goranson, "Joseph of Tiberias Revisited: Orthodoxies and Heresies in Fourth-Century Galilee," in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (DJSS 1; ed. E. M. Meyers; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 335–43; Günter Stemberger, *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century* (transl. R. Tuschling; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 71–81.

⁵⁹ Jewish historians of the older school tended to take this for granted, as, e.g., Graetz, *Geschichte*, 309, and Lucas, *Conflict*, 2.

monastery in Eleutheropolis in his twenties and headed it until he was appointed bishop of Constantia (= Salamis, near modern Famagusta) of Cyprus in ca. 367 C.E. This means he lived in the land of Israel until he was about 50 years of age. He should, accordingly, be well informed about local matters in the land of Israel during this period.

In the middle of the long treatise on the Ebionites in his *Panarion* (30.1–34), Epiphanius inserts an extended digression (30.4–12) that really has nothing at all to do with the subject. (Epiphanius seems to have been well aware of this.)⁶⁰ His pretext for inserting this material is a remark that the Ebionites use Matthew only, but call it “according to the Hebrews,” “and it is true to say that *only Matthew* put the setting forth and the preaching of the Gospel into the New Testament in the Hebrew language and alphabet.”⁶¹ Epiphanius’s point here is that the Gospel used by the Ebionites, and often called “According to the Hebrews,” is really Matthew, since Matthew alone was originally written in Hebrew. Having said this, however, Epiphanius immediately anticipates an informed objection that more New Testament books than Matthew exist in Hebrew versions. Epiphanius himself is very aware of this. He happens to know, firsthand from Jewish believers, that the Gospel of John and even the Acts of the Apostles also exist among the Jews in Hebrew translations, and that these books in fact are stored among other holy books in the secret store-rooms used by the Jews—at least in the one Epiphanius has heard of in Tiberias.⁶²

Born story-teller that he is, Epiphanius cunningly inserts oblique, tantalizing hints, knowing that the reader would like to hear more about how he came upon this exciting knowledge. Epiphanius then quickly gets into the story, himself being carried away by the fascinating tale he has to tell. It is told with the digressions and flash-backs of an authentic story. This particular story is, in fact, three stories: the first about Epiphanius’s encounter with Joseph of Tiberias (and one other Jewish believer); the second is Joseph’s own story about his life as a Jew and his conversion to faith in Jesus; and interpolated within this story is a third account about how Epiphanius himself had met with some secret Jewish believers in Jesus.

It is within Joseph’s story that we find his description of how he found the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles in Hebrew versions in the secret store-room for books [γαζοφυλάκιον] of the Jewish Patriarch at Tiberias (30.6.9). In Epiphanius’s treatise on the Ebionites, this is the only point in the whole story that is of any relevance to his argument concerning the Ebionite gospel and Epiphanius is aware of this. He knows that by telling his story he strays

⁶⁰ Greek text in GCS 25:338–48; English translation in Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1–46)* (NHS 35; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 122–29. I use Williams’s translation in quotations, unless otherwise indicated. There is also a translation of the whole of *Pan.* 30.1–34 in Koch, *Critical Investigation*, 112–90.

⁶¹ *Pan.* 30.3.7; GCS 25:337–38; Williams, 122; italics mine.

⁶² *Pan.* 30.3.8–9; GCS 25:338; Williams, 122.

from his main argument. He also knows, however, that the reader won't mind: "... concerning the matter of the books in the *genizoth* translated into Hebrew, we considered the affairs of the man [Joseph] (in general) *worthy of mention for the edification of the faithful*, for we were informed about his affairs quite extensively (italics mine)."⁶³

(1) We shall look at Epiphanius's story of his own meeting with Joseph first (30.5.1–8). It took place in Scythopolis (ancient Beth Shean) in the land of Israel in 355 C.E. or shortly afterwards. In 355 bishop Eusebius of Vercelli (Italy) was banished to Scythopolis by order of Emperor Constantius (337–361), after he had valiantly opposed Arianism at the synod of Milan that year.⁶⁴ The bishop of Scythopolis, Patrophilos, was a powerful Arian himself, so the exiled bishop had to stay with someone else, and found refuge in the house of none other than Joseph. "For in that city . . . he alone was orthodox, while all the rest were Arians." At that time Joseph was at least seventy years old, which means he must have been born around 285 C.E. Epiphanius, on the other hand, was by then a monk of about forty years of age, living in a monastery he had founded himself at his birthplace.⁶⁵ It was probably to visit the exiled bishop, not his host Joseph, that Epiphanius went to Scythopolis, but he soon became fascinated more by the host than the guest. We can imagine the evenings of prolonged conversations in the lavish house of Joseph, the visiting bishop and his host probably being the leading speakers. While Epiphanius wants to have us believe Joseph's stories were intended for his ears in particular,⁶⁶ he may be flattering himself. Joseph was no doubt addressing, first and foremost, his distinguished guest from Italy, while Epiphanius and a few others were a mesmerized audience.⁶⁷ Here is what fascinated Epiphanius about Joseph:

Now when we met Joseph at his home, asked him about himself, and found that he had been a prominent Jew, we also inquired his reason, and why it was that he had come over to Christianity . . .⁶⁸ (5.3). Joseph was not only privileged to become a

⁶³ *Pan.* 30.5.4; GCS 25:340; my own translation.

⁶⁴ Koch in his translation of *Pan.* 30.5.1–8, as well as in his comments (pages 378–79), consistently says "Constantine," creating no small chronological confusion in his reader.

⁶⁵ This means that Epiphanius's report of the meeting is written some twenty years after the event. He excuses himself for possible slips of memory "due to the passage of time" (30.4.3).

⁶⁶ "Joseph told this to me" (5.1); "I was instructed by him in Scythopolis" (5.2).

⁶⁷ ". . . both I and the other brethren who were there, as well as those with him [Eusebius], were instructed upon his visit" (5.2).

⁶⁸ At this point Koch (page 120) translates differently, in a way that significantly affects Epiphanius's portrait of Joseph: "Now when we met with Joseph at his house and asked questions about him *and knew that in regard to his public life he lived in accordance with the Jews, we discussed both his way of life and how he converted to Christianity . . . (italics mine)*." The Greek of the italicized words is: καὶ γνόντες ὅτι τῶν ἐμφανῶν ὑπῆρχεν παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις, ἀνετάζοντες . . . τὴν κατ' αὐτὸν ὑπόθεσιν . . . Knowing how strongly Epiphanius disliked Jewish believers who continued to live a Jewish way of life, and considering that "way of life" is a rather unusual meaning of ὑπόθεσις, whereas

faithful Christian, but a despiser of Arians as well. In that city, Scythopolis, he was the only orthodox Christian—they were all Arians. Had it not been that he was a count, and the rank of count protected him from Arian persecution, he could not have undertaken to live in the town, especially while Patrophilus was the Arian bishop . . . (5.5–6). But there was another, younger man in town too, an orthodox believer of Jewish parentage. He did not even dare to associate with us in public, though he used to visit us secretly (5.7). [The Arians had tried to win Joseph over to their side by offering him ordination as a bishop, when he became a widower and thus eligible. In order to evade their machinations, Joseph took a second wife!] (5.8).⁶⁹

In a city dominated by an authoritarian Arian, presumably Gentile, bishop, the Jewish believer was the only Nicene Christian! But there was one more, a younger fellow, who also happened to be a Jewish believer. To modern readers, who are wont to associate Jewish believers with a more or less Ebionite, or at least “low,” Christology, this comes as somewhat of a surprise. But it is interesting to notice that Epiphanius himself does not seem at all surprised. After all, as a native of the land of Israel, he had probably had some former experience with the same type of Jewish believers that we meet in Origen, people who had a non-deviant theology, judged by the standards of average ecclesiastical orthodoxy, and were well integrated into a local church made up of Gentile and Jewish believers.⁷⁰ The reason Joseph and the other Jewish believer were not integrated in the Christian community at Scythopolis was not their Jewish lifestyle (if they practiced one), but rather the Arian stance of this community.

(2) There is a second story within Joseph’s story which is Epiphanius’s own intervention:

But I have also heard this sort of thing from someone else.⁷¹ He was still a Jew, from fear of the Jews, but he often spent time in Christian company, and he honored Christians and loved them. He traveled with me in the wilderness of Baithel and Ephraim, when I was going up to the mountains from Jericho, and I said something to him about Christ’s incarnation, and he did not dispute it. I was amazed—he was learned in the Law and capable of disputation—and I asked why he did not dispute, but agreed with me about Jesus Christ our Lord. I had got no further than this when he too revealed to me that he had been dying himself, and that they had told him secretly, in a whisper, “Jesus Christ, the crucified Son of God, will judge you” (9.4–5).⁷²

“reason for doing something” (in this case, converting) is very common, I am inclined towards Williams’s interpretation. It may also be argued in favor of Williams that Epiphanius in the subsequent context is presenting the sentence in question as something he *heard* from Joseph, not something he observed. But according to Koch’s translation, only the latter mode of knowing would be relevant.

⁶⁹GCS 25: 340; Williams, 123, slightly altered.

⁷⁰See ch. 12, section 6.

⁷¹Namely, other Jews exhorting dying Jews to believe in Jesus because Jesus is going to be their judge.

⁷²GCS 25: 344; Williams, 126.

Again, there is hardly any problem with the authenticity of this report. Epiphanius's casual mention that one of his conversations with this Jew took place while they walked together from Jericho up into the Ephraimite hill country gives the episode an unmistakably authentic flavor. The man who Epiphanius depicts may perhaps best be described as a Jewish "sympathizer" with Jesus and, from his own perspective, perhaps even a believer. The fact that he was still a practicing Jew may have been sufficient to make Epiphanius regard him a secret believer, and not, strictly speaking, a Christian, especially if he could point to no recognized ecclesiastical baptism. The scene in which the man depicts himself as seriously ill and on the verge of dying with some of his friends or relatives urging him to faith in Jesus (as his future judge) has nothing intrinsically unlikely about it. Epiphanius obviously took it to mean that there was much secret belief in Jesus among the Jews. That cannot be excluded, but his story is also open to the interpretation that among this man's relatives or friends there were some Jewish believers. If these people continued to live as pious, observant Jews, fairly well integrated in their local communities, they may not have considered themselves *secret* believers, but would be regarded as such by Epiphanius.⁷³ One final observation: the Jew with whom Epiphanius conversed had no objection to Epiphanius's views on Christology and specifically "the incarnation" of Christ. This must mean that the man advocated no Ebionitic, adoptionist messianology. We can hardly press this point, since Epiphanius may have made the man more forthcoming on this topic than he actually was. On the other hand, Epiphanius emphasizes his own amazement at the time: how could a learned Jew agree so willingly to an orthodox Christology?

Read this way, Epiphanius's story tallies well with some rabbinic stories about friendly contact between rabbinic Jews and Jewish believers, a contact that was frowned upon by leading Rabbis. But such contacts took place even between leaders on both sides. Daniel Boyarin has recently proposed a new reading of the famous story of Eliezer ben Hyrkanos being arrested for heresy and having to admit that he had friendly contacts with heretics, *minim*, who were obviously Jewish believers in Jesus. Boyarin thinks that Eliezer's refusal to acquit himself by cursing Jesus is very significant in that it indicates that he did not want to do this.⁷⁴ It is not far-fetched to make an inference "from the more difficult to the easier" from this story: if a leading Rabbi could have such contacts, how much more the rank and file members of the Jewish community.

(3) We now must turn to Joseph's own story, which is no less interesting than Epiphanius's. We have here an obvious possibility of error in Epiphanius's memory, for he may have mixed and confused different details. In fact, he quite openly

⁷³ The contrast between this portrait and that of Joseph, is another argument in favor of Williams's interpretation of 5.3, discussed above in note 70.

⁷⁴ Daniel Boyarin, "Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism," *JECS* 6 (1998): 577–627; Boyarin, *Dying For God: Martyrdom And The Making Of Christianity And Judaism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 26–41.

admits that because of the long time which has passed, he may recall some things, especially names, incorrectly. Then we have the problem of the credibility of what Joseph told his audience. I prefer to return to this latter question after I have rendered the main points of his story.

In his younger years, before his conversion to Christianity, Joseph was one of the “apostles” (*shelichim*)⁷⁵ of the Jewish Patriarch in Tiberias.⁷⁶ It was during the last days of the Patriarch’s life that Joseph began having experiences that slowly but relentlessly pushed him in the direction of embracing faith in Jesus.⁷⁷ The first of these was something strange that he observed while attending the dying Patriarch. The Patriarch was on friendly terms with the nearest Christian bishop, who visited him during his last days, ostensibly to attend to his illness.⁷⁸ Joseph, however, while peeping through a crack in the door, saw the bishop baptizing the Patriarch and administering the Eucharist to him. This troubled Joseph a great deal. Before his death, the Patriarch entrusted Joseph and another Elder with the care for his infant son. After the Patriarch’s death, Joseph made the second disquieting experience: upon opening the secret book chamber of the Patriarch, he found there a Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, as well as Hebrew translations of John and Acts. When Joseph read these, “he was once more distressed in mind, for he was somehow troubled over the faith of Christ.” But, says Epiphanius, his heart was still hardened. The third disquieting experience took place when the son of the Patriarch matured. He had been corrupted by bad companions and was a constant worry to Joseph. (Epiphanius believes his name was Judah, but is not sure.) Once the young lad visited the hot baths at Gadara⁷⁹ [now Hamath Gader], and was enthralled by a beautiful woman he happened to encounter in the baths. She was a Christian and resisted his advances, protecting herself by making the

⁷⁵ “Allein bei Epiphanius heisst es, die ἀπόστολοι seien höchste Würdenträger und engste Vertraute des Patriarchen gewesen. Der *Codex Theodosianus* nennt als Funktion der ‘Apostel’ lediglich die Eintreibung von Geldern. Da aber der Patriarch mit einer solchen Aufgabe nur Personen seines Vertrauens beauftragt haben dürfte, ist diese Aussage des Epiphanius glaubhaft” (Jacobs, *Institution*, 308).

⁷⁶ Epiphanius gives the name of the Patriarch as “Ellel” (rendering, probably, Hebrew *Hillel*), but admits that he is not quite sure he remembers the pronunciation correctly, 30.4.3. On his identity, see below, pp. 537–38.

⁷⁷ Epiphanius is careful to assign a numbered sequence to the first few of these experiences, probably a reflection of Joseph’s own story. In other words, Joseph’s story was the story of his conversion.

⁷⁸ While admitting that “it is true that Christians in general (and Judaeo-Christians in particular) were popularly supposed to be in possession of mysterious healing powers and magic formulas,” Avi-Yonah objects that “it is very doubtful if Tiberias had a bishop at all at that time” (*The Jews of Palestine*, 168). This objection is beside the point. Joseph’s story clearly states there were only Jewish residents in Tiberias, and that therefore the bishop was not a resident of Tiberias but of some other city.

⁷⁹ “Vom Aufenthalt verschiedener *nesi’im* in Hammat Gader ist auch in der rabbinischen Literatur die Rede. Mit den dortigen Bäder verknüpfen sich eine Reihe von Traditionen, welche die Auseinandersetzung der Rabbinen mit der nichtjüdischen Umwelt reflektieren” (Jacobs, *Institution*, 309).

sign of the cross. Some of his companions resorted to magical spells in order to overpower the woman, but these also failed. This made the junior Patriarch very angry with his friends and Joseph very thoughtful, because he knew the woman was a Christian. It seemed she had, in the sign of the cross, supernatural protection against magic and demons. After this Joseph began having dreams in which Jesus appeared and spoke to him saying things like, "I am Jesus whom your fathers crucified, but believe on me." Not being persuaded by this, Joseph fell ill. Again Jesus appeared to him in a dream. This time Joseph confessed faith in Christ, became well, but again refused to give in. He fell seriously ill a second time, and was on the point of dying when "an elderly scholar of the law came and told him secretly, and said, 'Believe in Jesus, crucified under Pontius Pilate the governor, Son of God first yet later born of Mary; the Messiah of God and risen from the dead. And believe that he will come to judge the quick and the dead.'"⁸⁰ This was not sufficient to make Joseph believe, but then Jesus again appeared to him in a dream, promising him healing if he believed. He became well, but still did not believe. Jesus now offered him proof by a miracle of his own choice. There was a maniac in the city. Joseph decided to put the power of Jesus' name to the test by exorcizing the demon by water over which he made the sign of the cross, bidding the demon depart in the name of Jesus. This was successful, but "Joseph still remained hardened of heart." Joseph was now appointed "apostle" of the new Patriarch, and sent to Cilicia to collect revenue for the Patriarch, as well as to reform the leadership of local synagogues.⁸¹ This he did, apparently somewhat heavy-handedly, which made the local Jews of Cilicia persecute him. At the same time he was reading the Gospels, which a bishop, whom he had befriended, had handed him. Caught reading the Gospels he was scourged in a synagogue, rescued by the bishop, but then thrown into the Cydnus River and left for dead because his persecutors considered him drowned.⁸² (This reference to the Cydnus could locate these events to Tarsus, the main commercial center along the Cydnus). At this point the story becomes surprisingly vague: ". . . he was given holy baptism a little later." He "went up" to the imperial court, told Constantine the story of his conversion, and persuaded the Emperor to give him an official position and enough money to build Christian churches in the Jewish cities of the land of Israel—Tiberias, Sepphoris, Nazareth, and Capernaum—where only Jews were living, and there accordingly were no churches. This the Emperor granted, making him a royal "*comes*" or count. He returned to Tiberias, and was able to

⁸⁰ 9.3; GCS 25: 344; Williams, 126, slightly altered. The Jewish Elder whispering the second article of a Nicene baptismal creed into the ear of Joseph is rather symptomatic of the high degree of Christian styling of the story, and Epiphanius in fact admits as much by adding: "I can truthfully say that, *in outline*, that same Joseph distinctly told me this (italics mine)."

⁸¹ On this function of the *shaliyah*, see Jacobs, *Institution*, 311.

⁸² In Graetz' rendering of the story, he says that "nur durch ein Wunder [soll er] dem Tode entgangen sein . . ." (*Geschichte*, 309), this is repeated in Kohler's and Gottheil's passage on Joseph in their *Jewish Encyclopedia* article on apostates. But there is nothing said about any miraculous rescue in Joseph's story.

finish an unfinished building that had begun as an Adrianeion and was now used as a public bath, and to build a small church within it. Again a miracle happened. The Jews had cast a spell on the furnaces that provided unslaked lime so that the fire in them would not burn properly. Joseph sprinkled the ovens with water over which the sign of the cross had been made, and the spell was broken. He continued to have much trouble in Tiberias, however, and settled in Scythopolis, where he seems to have been prosperous. According to Epiphanius he also built something—presumably churches—in Sepphoris and some other Jewish cities,⁸³ but Epiphanius is vague here.

Before discussing the historical references contained in Joseph's story, along with its possible correlations to outside evidence, I would like to add some remarks on its general character. First of all, one should not evaluate this story as if it had been intended for literary dissemination. Had it not been for Epiphanius giving in to his urge to tell a good story in *Pan.* 30, the story would have remained what it was, a good story, well told, to a friendly audience of fellow-believers. If it had remained so, we should never have known it. What Epiphanius offers us in this passage is a rare glimpse into the *oral* storytelling culture of the early fourth century land of Israel. We meet a Christian mentality in which extensive missionary arguments from fulfilled prophecies (as, e.g., in Justin's *Dialogue*) and other such argumentative strategies play virtually no role at all. Instead, we are in a world in which dreams, miraculous healings, visions, the blunting of magical spells, and—quite significantly—apotropaic use of the sign of the cross are the important spiritual factors. These represent the spiritual power which convinces Joseph first of the *power* and then of the truth of the Christian message. Contrary to some rationalistic critics of the story,⁸⁴ I think one has to say that precisely this characteristic gives the story an unmistakable ring of authenticity. It truthfully mirrors the world of Joseph and his own perception of this world. Except for the Jewish dimension (and the non-ascetic tendency!) of Joseph's story, its mentality is very much the same as one encounters, e.g., in Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* (which is roughly contemporary with Joseph's story-telling, and geographically not too distant). With its emphasis on portents, magic, spells and apotropaic use of the sign of the cross, Joseph's story is very "folkish" and true to its time and culture.

⁸³The only Byzantine church structure in the cities mentioned by Epiphanius that can reasonably, on chronological grounds, be attributed to Joseph is the Byzantine "house-church" in Capernaum, which is commonly dated to the middle of the fourth century. See this suggestion in Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church* (3d ed.; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978 [1st ed., 1969]), 56; later repeated in Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, *Archaeology, The Rabbis and Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 127. For suggestions (by F. Manns and Joan Taylor) that Joseph may also be the man behind early Byzantine church buildings in Sepphoris and Nazareth, see Stemberger, *Jews and Christians*, 77, notes 82 and 84.

⁸⁴Graetz knows beforehand that Joseph's conversion was due to opportunistic reasons, and therefore deems his whole conversion story a series of lies, designed to convince credulous Christians about his sincerity, *Geschichte*, 309.

For this reason alone, it would be a mistake to regard the story as a contrived fiction. That is not its *genre*. It contains (1) some historical information that can be correlated with evidence outside the story. It also contains (2) much useful information on how Christians—Jewish believers and others—perceived their own situation and that of Judaism in the early Constantinian era in the land of Israel. I shall treat these two points in succession.

(1) We have seen already that the one piece of information that is most easy to date of all three stories is the visit of Eusebius of Vercelli to Scythopolis ca. 355–357/58 C.E. At that time Joseph was at least seventy years old, which places his birth at 280–287. His conversion had to be before the death of Constantine in 337, but was probably not long before, since Epiphanius says Joseph was contemporary with the old Constantine (30.4.1). This apparently refers to the point in time when Constantine gave Joseph the office of *comes* in addition to the other favors granted him. Besides, it is obvious that Constantine was in full command of the East and that the Christianity to which Joseph converted was committed to the Nicene creed. This places his conversion and baptism in the period 325–337 C.E. He would then have been some forty to fifty years old at his conversion. Independent confirmation of a meeting between Joseph and Constantine during this period *may* be contained in one law enacted by Constantine (in Bergule) in 329:

Emperor Constantine Augustus to Evagrius: We want the Jews, their principals and their patriarchs informed, that if anyone—once this law has been given—dare attack by stoning or by other kind of fury one escaping from their deadly sect and raising his eyes to God's cult, *which as we have learned is being done now*, he shall be delivered immediately to the flames and burnt with all his associates . . . (italics mine).⁸⁵

There is nothing impossible, nor even unlikely, in assuming that the reference here to contemporary events may be based on things told Constantine by Joseph.⁸⁶ This possibility is not, of course, the same as positive proof that such was the case. Other attempts at connecting Joseph with Constantinian legislation concerning the Jews are more hypothetical.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.1, Latin text and English translation in Amnon Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 126–27. In the Codex, this law is dated to 18 October 315, and this date is accepted by many scholars, e.g., by Karl Leo Noethlichs, *Das Judentum und der römische Staat* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 102 (though with a question mark). Linder, however, argues convincingly that this date is incompatible with other historical references in the law, first and foremost its addressee. Evagrius was installed as *praefectus praetorio* no earlier than 326. The only year Constantine could have been in Bergule on the 18th of October was 329.

⁸⁶ This is assumed by, e.g., Lucas, *Conflict*, 84; Kohler and Gottheil, "Apostacy," 14; Ray Pritz, "Joseph of Tiberias," 51 (having trouble reconciling Joseph's conversion with the early date of 315 C.E.), and Linder, 125.

⁸⁷ Ray Pritz, "Joseph of Tiberias," has proposed to see the hand of Joseph behind one other Constantinian law favorable for the Jews. In 331 Constantine legislated that "priests, rulers of the synagogues, fathers of the synagogues, and all others who serve the syna-

Without great difficulty it is also possible to square Joseph's story about a senior Patriarch and a junior Patriarch with what little we know of the Jewish Patriarchs of the period. The death of the first Patriarch under whom Joseph served should be placed quite a few years before Joseph's conversion to allow sufficient time for the Patriarch's son to reach maturity before Joseph was sent as his envoy to Cilicia. This would accord best with the Patriarch's death taking place early in the 320s or a little before.

In a classic study, Heinrich Graetz reconstructs the succession of Patriarchs and their dates like this:⁸⁸

Judah II ca. 230–270

Gamaliel IV ca. 270–290

Judah III ca. 290–320

Hillel II ca. 320–65/70

Gamaliel V ca. 365/70–385

Judah IV ca. 385–400

If we take this list at face value, it is immediately evident that Epiphanius's story about the succession of Hillel by Judah is impossible to fit into Graetz's schema. But if we assume that Epiphanius has confused the names of father and son here, then the succession of Judah by Hillel makes chronological sense.⁸⁹ If Judah III died around 320, this allows for some 10 years during which Joseph's conversion happened, as well as for the maturing of the young Hillel to take over the Patriarchate and send Joseph as envoy to Cilicia. But this convenient correlation is deceptive. As Martin Jacobs has shown recently, Graetz's reconstruction of the succession of Patriarchs in the third and fourth centuries is based partly on quite late medieval sources of very doubtful value, and thus is no more than a bold conjecture.⁹⁰ Even the sequence of names is far from secure. According to the common rules of source criticism, one could well give preference to Epiphanius's roughly contemporary evidence and change Judah (III) and Hillel (II) in Graetz's list. In any case, one cannot say that Epiphanius's evidence about a father and son among the Patriarchs of Tiberias is impossible to match with what

gogues shall be free from every compulsory service of a corporeal nature" (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.4). This, Pritz suggests, could be due to successful lobbying by the former member of these categories, Joseph. While not impossible, this is somewhat speculative.

⁸⁸ *Geschichte*, 444–49 (= Note 22: "Die Reihenfolge der Patriarchen aus dem Hillelschen Hause").

⁸⁹ This was the solution of Graetz himself, who in this way could cash in Epiphanius's evidence in support of his own very hypothetical reconstruction of the succession of Patriarchs, *Geschichte*, 448.

⁹⁰ Jacobs, *Die Institution*, 205–11; see also the same criticism in Stemberger, *Jews and Christians*, 266–67.

we know of the Patriarchs of the period, since we know next to nothing in any case. This also means any argument from the fact that Judah's (or Hillel's) character is incompatible with what Epiphanius tells of the son of the Patriarch being corrupt during his youth is of little substance. We know virtually nothing about these persons anyway, and Joseph did not say the young Patriarch did not reform his behavior on reaching maturity. A "wild" period during the Patriarch's young days would hardly have been recorded in friendly sources.⁹¹ In conclusion, it seems that one can state that Joseph's story is not impossible to reconcile with known historical facts.

(2) What do we learn about attitudes and perceptions of the early 4th century situation in the land of Israel among Jewish believers from Joseph's story? In general, many Christians felt that the Christianization of the Roman Empire under Constantine was an event of eschatological significance. No less than the nearby bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius, thought this way. How Jewish believers in general reacted towards this situation we have no means of knowing, but Joseph, at least, must have seen the Christianization of the Empire as positive. Conversely, it would be no surprise if many Jews took it to be ominous. One senses in Joseph's story a conviction that Judaism is on the defensive, that many Jews are already secret believers in Jesus, and that their respect for their own leaders is waning.

I have already commented upon the role that magic spells, spirits, exorcisms and apotropaic signs play in Joseph's narrative. These are signs of authenticity rather than the opposite. There is nothing unbelievable in the picture Epiphanius paints of social contact and quite amicable relations between Jews and Christians. That secret or declared believers in Jesus should visit Joseph when they thought he was dying and urge him to believe in Jesus is also quite believable. We know from rabbinic sources that even non-believing scholars could call Jewish believers

⁹¹ There are, however, rabbinic sayings that attribute somewhat rash behavior to Judah II and his brother Hillel during their youth (for details, see Koch, *Critical Investigation*, 376–77). If we take this as relevant, one could contemplate the possibility that Joseph told stories of more than two Patriarchs, and only *compared* some of them to things he had experienced himself. Another identification of the young Patriarch is proposed by Avi-Yonah. He prefers to identify the young Patriarch with Judah IV. Critical remarks about him are preserved in rabbinic literature. "Rabbi Jeremiah sent a letter to Rabban Judah [IV] the Patriarch saying: 'You should hate those who love you and love those who hate you' [y. *Meg.* 3:2 (74a)]. Avi-Yonah therefore considers Joseph's allegations about the young Patriarch as exaggerated, but with some truth in them, *Jews of Palestine*, 167. All these suggestions are highly speculative, intended to square Epiphanius's evidence with evidence in rabbinic sources, evidence that is difficult to attribute to datable Patriarchs in any case. Jacobs, *Institution*, 311, prefers to correlate Epiphanius's information with critical remarks on a Patriarch in Eusebius, *Comm. Isa.* on Isa 3:4 ["I will make boys their officials, mere children will govern them"]: "Whoever observes the so-called Patriarchs among the Jews—who are indeed 'boys,' not only because of their physical age, but also because of the immaturity of their souls and their spiritual shortcomings—would not say about their other teachers that they only play children's games . . ." (GCS 57:22, my own translation). This could well refer to a young heir to the Patriarchate contemporary with the reign of Constantine, and thus the same person of whom Joseph spoke.

to heal them in times of deep need. There is also no great problem with the Patriarch being depicted as being on friendly terms with the nearest Christian bishop, and even socializing with him.⁹²

What does strain the confidence of the modern reader, however, is Joseph's story of the secret baptism of no less a figure than the Jewish Patriarch of the land of Israel. One instinctively suspects that this is a typical missionary's exaggeration of the size of the biggest fish caught by Christian preaching, as well as being an effective means of undermining the authority of official anti-Christian polemics by the Jewish leadership—in secret, they are really believers!⁹³ It does not enhance the credibility of Joseph's story at this point that he claims to have been the only witness to what happened secretly to the Patriarch. Joseph was, we understand, the only one to peep through the crack in the door and to see what was really going on, so there was no one else to corroborate or deny his story. On the other hand, Joseph does not explicitly attribute the secret faith of the Patriarch to any missionary preaching, and he certainly claims no credit for himself at all. He was still a firm non-believer at the death of the old Patriarch. What he actually observed during the last days of the Patriarch, then, must be seen as beyond the possibility of independent confirmation or falsification.

Before concluding this discussion on Joseph of Tiberias, I should add a few words about the possibility that he might be the author of a curious piece of writing, the so-called *Hypomnesticon biblion Ioseppou* ("Josephus' Notebook"), a kind of Bible handbook, which the title of the book attributes to one Joseph. Possibly produced in the fifth century, the book is written in Greek and is based on the Septuagint, Josephus the Jewish historian, Hippolytus, Eusebius (from whom the author gets information on the Hebrew names of the biblical books!), and the *Summary* ('Ανακεφαλαίωσις) of Epiphanius's heresiological writings. Nevertheless, Jacques Moreau,⁹⁴ Stephen Craft Goranson,⁹⁵ and Simon C. Mimouni⁹⁶ have argued that the author should be identified with our Joseph of Tiberias. This is not likely for a number of reasons. First, a native Jew of the land of Israel would hardly need to consult Eusebius to get (in part faulty) information on the Hebrew

⁹² Avi-Yonah accepts without question that the Patriarch's library contained Christian books. He assumes they were used in preparation of polemic against Christians, *Jews of Palestine*, 168.

⁹³ The modern reader may easily overestimate the religious role of the Jewish patriarch of this period. In reality he was much more of a political leader than a religious authority. If Joseph had invented the "biggest fish" freely, he would have chosen one of the leading Rabbis of his early days.

⁹⁴ "Observations sur l'*Hypomnestikon biblion Ioseppou*," in *Scripta Minora* (ed. W. Schmitthenner; Annales Universitatis Saraviensis, Reihe Philosophische Fakultät 1; Heidelberg: Carl Winther, 1964), 150–73 (originally published in *Byzantion* 25/27 (1955/57): 241–76).

⁹⁵ *The Joseph of Tiberias Episode in Epiphanius: Studies in Jewish and Christian Relations* (PhD diss., Duke University 1990), 140–60.

⁹⁶ "L'*Hypomnesticon de Joseph de Tibériade*: une oeuvre du IVème siècle?" *StPatr* 32 (1997): 346–57.

alphabet and Hebrew names. Second, Goranson assumes that Joseph used Epiphanius's *Panarion* as a source, hence that he published his own book *after* Epiphanius published his in 377. But in 377 Joseph was 90 years of age or more, if he was still alive! Third, if the list of heresies known to the author is anything to go by, the *Hypomnesticon* was more likely published after the year 400 than before. Accordingly, I think there is no doubt that Robert M. Grant and Glen W. Menzies are right in their recent new edition of the *Hypomnesticon* to reject the identification of the author with Joseph of Tiberias.⁹⁷ They also question the certainty about the author's name, concluding that the name of the author need not have been Joseph. The title of the book could also be translated: A Notebook [excerpted from] Josephus [the Jewish Historian].⁹⁸

In conclusion, Epiphanius's most direct evidence on Jewish believers is not contained in his descriptions of Ebionites and Nazoreans, but in his inserted passage (*Pan.* 30.4–12) on Count Joseph and other Jewish believers in the land of Israel with whom he had personal contact. Here we meet two types: (1) Jewish believers who live as Jews among other Jews, and whom Epiphanius therefore considers secret believers; secret because of fear of their fellow Jews (like Nicodemus). This may not have been their own understanding. Their keeping a Jewish lifestyle that did not make them conspicuous *vis a vis* other Jews may have been deliberate and affirmative of who they were and no accommodation out of fear. Epiphanius's interpretation of their Jewish lifestyle may also be his way of "excusing" them for keeping the Law, an option Epiphanius otherwise considered heretical for Christians having free choice, be they Jewish or Gentile. (2) Orthodox Nicenes, who seem to have made no secret of their Christian faith (in the eyes of Epiphanius probably indicating they did not, on all points, lead a Jewish lifestyle).⁹⁹ Epiphanius met two of these Jewish believers in Scythopolis. One of them, Joseph, had an official position as *comes* of the Christian Emperor and was modestly successful as a builder of churches in towns until now exclusively Jewish. (This would not exclude the presence of Jewish believers of the first type in these cities prior to Joseph). Had the Christian (and predominantly Gentile?) community at Scythopolis been Nicene in their faith, we could easily imagine that Joseph and the anonymous Christians there would have been well integrated members of this community. How "rare" such Jewish believers were in the land of Israel in the fourth century we have no means of telling, but if Epiphanius's evidence is anything to go by, they were probably fewer than the first type.

⁹⁷ Robert M. Grant and Glen W. Menzies, *Joseph's Bible Notes (Hypomnestikon)* (SBL Texts and Translations 41; Early Christian Series 9; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1996), 16–26.

⁹⁸ Goranson came back to the issue in "Joseph of Tiberias Revisited: Orthodoxy and Heresies in Fourth-Century Galilee," in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (DJSS 1; ed. E. M. Meyers; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 335–43. He here upholds his view that the *Hypomnesticon* was written around 380, apparently not observing that at that time the supposed author would have been ninety-five years old or more!

⁹⁹ The anonymous Nicene Jewish believer in Scythopolis met secretly with Epiphanius and his comrades not for fear of the Jews, but for fear of the Arian Christians in the city.

6. Jerome (331–420)

Jerome was born at Stridon in Dalmatia (modern “former Yugoslavia”) in 331 C.E. to Christian parents who may have been Greek immigrants from somewhere further east and south. The exact location of Stridon is unknown.¹⁰⁰ In his teens he was sent to Rome to be educated in the grammar-school of the famous Aelius Donatus, an education of which he remained proud for the rest of his life. During that time he received education in rhetoric. Little is known about his early adolescent years. He visited Trier, Gaul, Dalmatia, and Aquileia. During this period he felt a strong calling to the new ascetic type of Christian life advocated by the monastic movement. In 372, at a little more than forty years old, he traveled to Antioch of Syria. This stay in the East lasted some four to six years and it took him into the desert of Chalcis east of Antioch where he established himself as a monk among other monks. Here the native monks spoke Syriac only, and Jerome probably picked up some elementary knowledge of the language. “Either I must learn the barbarous gibberish or I must keep my mouth shut.”¹⁰¹ For a man like Jerome, the latter was not an option.¹⁰² More importantly, however, he found his first mentor in Hebrew:

In my youth when the desert walled me in with its solitude I was still unable to endure the promptings of sin and the natural heat of my blood; and, although I tried by frequent fasts to break the force of both, my mind still surged with [evil] thoughts. To subdue its turbulence I betook myself to a brother who before his conversion had been a Jew and asked him to teach me Hebrew. Thus, after having familiarized myself with the pointedness of Quintilian, the fluency of Cicero, the seriousness of Fronto and the gentleness of Pliny, I began to learn my letters anew and to study to pronounce words both harsh and guttural. What labor I spent upon this task, what difficulties I went through, how often I despaired, how often I gave over and then in my eagerness to learn commenced again, can be attested both by myself the subject of this misery and by those who then lived with me. But I thank the Lord that from this seed of learning sown in bitterness I now cull sweet fruits.¹⁰³

In all its amusing frankness, this is the only passage in all of Jerome’s writings in which he clearly characterizes one of his mentors as a Jewish believer.

¹⁰⁰ On Jerome’s biography, see John Norman Davidson Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975); Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome* (The Early Church Fathers; London: Routledge, 2002), 1–59.

¹⁰¹ Letter 7.2 in Kelly’s translation, *Jerome*, 49.

¹⁰² Cf. Jerome in the Preface to Daniel: “. . . in my youth, after having read the flowery rhetoric of Quintilian and Cicero, I vigorously began to study this language [Aramaic]. The expenditure of much time and energy barely enabled me to utter the puffing and hissing words. . . . And, to confess the truth, to this day I can read and understand Chaldee better than I can pronounce it” (Vulgate, *Prol. in Dan.*; Latin text in Robert Weber, ed., *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* [2 vols.; Stuttgart: Würtembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969], 2:1341; translation from *NPNF²* 6:493, slightly adapted).

¹⁰³ *NPNF²* 6:248.

Obviously he was one of the monks in the desert near Chalcis—and that is all Jerome lets us know about him. The reason Jerome mentions his Jewish descent is probably to make understandable the man's competence in Hebrew. The regular monks in the Syrian desert would have Syriac as their mother-tongue but would not have known any Hebrew, the learned and sacred language of the Jews. Jerome would have other Jewish mentors of Hebrew later (see below)..

In what version would these Syrian monks read their Bible, especially the New Testament? In the 370s they probably read a Syriac version.¹⁰⁴ Thus Jerome would, for the first time in his life, see Syriac versions of the New Testament books, including the Gospels. Maybe he was also shown, perhaps by his Hebrew mentor, a Syriac Gospel said to be Matthew but written in Hebrew characters. In nearby Beroea there was a community of Jewish believers. Perhaps Jerome was told this Syriac-Hebrew "Matthew" was used by them. This might explain the following remark, written in 392:

Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and afores times publican, was the first to compose a gospel of Christ in Judea in Hebrew letters and words for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed. This was afterwards translated into Greek though by whom is uncertain. The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library at Caesarea which Pamphilus the martyr so diligently gathered. *From the Nazoreans who use this book in Beroea, a city of Syria, I also received the opportunity to copy it.* In this [Gospel] it is to be noted that where the evangelist . . . quotes the testimonies of the old Scripture he does not follow the authority of the translators of the Septuagint but the Hebrew. Among these testimonies are the following two: "From Egypt I called my Son" [Matt 2:15 = Hos 11:1 Heb.] and "For he shall be called a Nazorean" [Matt 2:23 = Isa 11:1 Heb., alternative vocalization: read not *nezer*, but *nozri*.]¹⁰⁵

When trying to understand this passage, it is important to remember that Jerome, when writing his *Illustrious Men*, had constant recourse to Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*.¹⁰⁶ This means that when he was writing his passage on

¹⁰⁴ At least some of them. On the frequency of Semitic names and on the ethnic and social background of the monks of the Syrian desert, see Pierre Canivet, *Le Monachisme syrien selon Théodore de Cyr* (*Théologie historique* 42; Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 235–53.

¹⁰⁵ *Vir. ill.* 3; Latin text in A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (NovTSup 36; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 210; I use their translation here (page 211) slightly adapted.

¹⁰⁶ On the "Hebrew Gospel" in Jerome, I find Timothy C. G. Thornton's analysis most convincing: "Jerome and the 'Hebrew Gospel according to Matthew,'" StPatr 28 (ed. E. A. Livingstone; Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 118–22. Cf. also Gustave Bardy, "Saint Jerome et l'évangile selon les Hebreux," *MScRel* 3 (1946): 5–36; Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (StPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 51–53; Peter Lebrecht Schmidt, "'Und es war geschrieben auf Hebräisch, Griechisch und Lateinisch': Hieronymus, das Hebräer-Evangelium und seine mittelalterliche Rezeption," *Filologia mediolatina* 5 (1998): 49–93.

Matthew, Jerome could build on the following passages in Eusebius: “[Papias:] Matthew compiled the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language; but everyone interpreted them [into Greek] as he was able” [*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16], and “[Hegesippus] sets down certain things from the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Syriac and, in particular, from the Hebrew tongue . . .” [*Hist. eccl.* 4.22.8]. If while Jerome was in the Syrian desert he was shown a Hebrew-Syriac Gospel said to be Matthew and said to be used by the Jewish believers in Beroea, he would naturally combine this with the two Eusebian passages from Papias and Hegesippus, concluding that the Gospel he had transcribed was the Syriac version of the original Hebrew Matthew, especially if quotations from the Hebrew Bible were rendered in it in the original Hebrew. It could well be that Jerome’s Hebrew mentor provided him with a copy of this Syriac-Hebrew Matthew in Hebrew characters as an exercise in reading and writing Hebrew letters, and possibly in reading a Syriac text as well.

Corroborative evidence for this interpretation is to be found in the following passage (written ca. 415):

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews which is written in the Chaldaic and Syriac language but with Hebrew letters, and is used up to the present day by the Nazoraeans, I mean that “According to the Apostles,” or, as some maintain, “According to Matthew,” which Gospel is also available in the library of Caesarea . . .¹⁰⁷

It seems evident from this passage that Jerome in 415 is still speaking of the same Gospel that he praised as being the original Matthew in 392, but that he has had some grave second thoughts about it, and is consequently no longer sure it is Matthew at all. His calling it “According to the Apostles” could indicate he found it to be a harmonistic version in which material from all four Gospels, and additional material beyond that, had been employed. Between these two references to this Gospel (in 392 and 415 respectively), Jerome referred to it repeatedly and called it by different descriptive names: “the Hebrew Gospel” (*Comm. Eph.* 5.4, ca. 386)¹⁰⁸; “the Hebrew Gospel according to Matthew” (*Tract. Ps.*, 135; ca. 392)¹⁰⁹; “the Gospel which is called “According to the Hebrews” (*Comm. Matt.* 6.11, ca. 398)¹¹⁰; “the Gospel which the Nazoraeans use” (*Comm. Matt.* 23.35); “the Gospel written according to the Hebrews” (*Comm. Matt.* 27.16)¹¹¹; “the Gospel which is written in Hebrew letters” (*Epist.* 120.8, ca. 407)¹¹²; “the Gospel read by the Nazoraeans which was written in the Hebrew language”¹¹³ (*Comm. Isa.*

¹⁰⁷ *Pelag.* 3.2; text and translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 226–29.

¹⁰⁸ Klijn and Reinink, 206–7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 214–15.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 218–19.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 202–3.

¹¹³ As Timothy Thornton has noted, Jerome can sometimes use “Hebrew” as meaning Hebrew, not Syriac/Aramaic; in other cases in an inclusive sense, as comprising Syriac/Aramaic. This latter, somewhat loose use of “Hebrew” to denote Aramaic seems to have been quite widespread in early Christian literature.

11.1–3, ca. 408)¹¹⁴; “the Gospel written according to the Hebrews which is read by the Nazoraeans” (*Comm. Isa.* 40.9–11)¹¹⁵; “the Gospel which is that of the Hebrews and is read by the Nazoraeans” (*Comm. Isa.* 65, prol.)¹¹⁶; “the Hebrews’ Gospel which is read by the Nazoraeans” (*Comm. Ezech.* 16.13, ca 410/15)¹¹⁷; and “the Gospel which is according to the Hebrews, which the Nazoraeans are accustomed to read” (*Comm. Ezech.* 18.5–9).¹¹⁸ As one can see, after 392 Jerome no longer connects this Gospel with Matthew, and in 415 he explicitly distances himself from any such designation. The Gospel is called “according to Matthew” by *some*, but by 415 Jerome clearly does not count himself among their number.

This clearly suggests that Jerome acquired a more intimate knowledge of this Gospel early in the 390s, and that he then recognized this was not Matthew’s Gospel but a strongly harmonistic and periphrastic one. This was partly an embarrassment to him, because the putative “original” Matthew was important to Jerome in his argument for the necessity of basing the Latin Bible directly on the *hebraica veritas*. The real linchpin of Jerome’s case was the observation that the “Apostles” (meaning the different New Testament writers) had often quoted the Hebrew text rather than the LXX, especially when the Hebrew text disagreed with the LXX translation. What a triumph to be able to bolster this with the proof that the only apostolic writing known to have been written in Hebrew originally, Matthew, also quoted *verbatim* from the Hebrew Old Testament! Having recognized that the Aramaic/Syriac Gospel read by the Nazoraeans of Beroea was not after all the original Hebrew Matthew, Jerome nevertheless tried to exploit some of its readings as testifying to readings in Matthew’s autograph. In one instance he states this in so many words: “... we believe that the evangelist [Matthew] in his original edition wrote what we now read in the Hebrew itself: ...” (*Comm. Matt.* 2:5, ca. 398).¹¹⁹

This increased knowledge of the details of the “Hebrew” Gospel used by the Nazoraeans lends credence to Jerome’s repeated assertions in the early 390s that he had in fact quite recently translated the Gospel: “... the Gospel which is edited according to the Hebrews and which we translated recently (*nuper*) ...” (*Comm. Mich.* 7.5–7; ca. 391)¹²⁰; “... the Gospel which is called “According to the Hebrews” and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin, of which Origen often makes use ...” (*Vir. ill.* 2; ca. 392)¹²¹; and “in the Gospel which the Nazoraeans and the Ebionites use which we translated recently from Hebrew to Greek and which is called the authentic text of Matthew by a good

¹¹⁴ Klijn and Reinink, 222–23.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 224–25.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 226–27.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 214–15. “The Hebrew itself” could mean either “the Hebrew Gospel” or “the Hebrew text of Micha,” quoted in Matt 2:5–6. The first seems the more likely.

¹²⁰ Klijn and Reinink, 208–9.

¹²¹ Ibid.

many, it is written . . ." (*Comm. Matt.* 12.13, ca. 398, italics mine).¹²² There would seem to be three good reasons why Jerome was eager to make a translation of what he initially took to be an Aramaic/Syriac Matthew: (1) as a useful exercise in preparing for the greater task of translating the Bible (which contained some Aramaic passages); (2) in order to be able to argue from the text form of the biblical quotations in this "Hebrew" Matthew; and (3) to be able to use "Hebrew" Matthew's text the same way in a commentary on Matthew as he would use the Hebrew text of the Old Testament in his Old Testament commentaries.

Jerome often claimed to have completed a translation of a work or a collection of works when the truth was that he had begun but by no means finished the work. This might be true about his claim to having translated "Hebrew" Matthew as well. He may have aborted the project when he discovered that there was less to have from it than first expected, and may only have translated and used passages that were useful to him. This disappointment with the text may also explain why he did not publish the text either in Greek or Latin. He had enough problems already with publishing non-canonical versions (= new, non-LXX translations) of canonical writings!

But now, let us return to Jerome's career after his one and only sojourn in the Jewish Christian "heart-land" of the Syrian desert east of Antioch. Returning to Antioch from the desert around 378, he attended lectures by Apollinaris of Laodicea. Apollinaris at this time was already considered a heretic, but Jerome valued his abilities as an expounder of texts, and especially valued his competence in literal exegesis (Antiochene style) based on the Hebrew text. "At Antioch I frequently listened to Apollinaris of Laodicea and held him in high regard."¹²³ Apollinaris may also have transmitted to him an eschatological doctrine of a "primitive," millenarian and "Jewish" slant.¹²⁴ Schmidtke has also speculated that all of Jerome's references to and quotations from the "Hebrew" Gospel, as well as a Nazoraean commentary on Isaiah, were directly lifted out of Apollinaris's works by Jerome. There are good reasons to associate Apollinaris with the Nazoreans in the Beroea area, and he may indeed have functioned as a transmitter between the Jewish believers in the area and Jerome. But it seems hypercritical to dismiss all Jerome's references to personal knowledge of the "Hebrew" Gospel, along with his claim he had translated [probably parts of] it, as mere bragging.

In 379–381 we find Jerome in Constantinople eagerly translating Origen's Bible commentaries and Eusebius's *Chronicle* into Latin. More importantly, we find him writing small tracts of biblical exposition, sometimes drawing upon Jewish interpretations taught him by "my Hebrew master," and although some of these are actually borrowed from Origen, including the reference to "my Hebrew

¹²² *Ibid.*, 216–17.

¹²³ *Ep.* 84.3, quoted here after Kelly, *Jerome*, 59, n.7.

¹²⁴ On this see section 1.3 of chapter 13 and also section 3 of chapter 15 of this book.

(master)," we can observe Jerome supplementing the material from Origen with new Jewish material, which he probably got directly from Jewish friends and teachers.¹²⁵

The bishop of Rome, Damasus, noticed the new scholarly light now in Constantinople, and called Jerome back to Rome to become his personal secretary. It was then that Jerome began his career as a Bible translator by translating several books of the New Testament. He also continued his lessons in Hebrew and Jewish literature, and has the following interesting story to tell his employer Damasus:

¹²⁵ After Gustave Bardy, in a now classical article, had shown that several of Jerome's references to exegeses taught him by "his" Hebrew master were in fact taken from Origen's reports on what *his* Hebrew master had told him, it became customary in scholarly literature to dismiss Jerome's claim to have been extensively informed concerning Jewish traditions by Jewish teachers. See G. Bardy, "Saint Jerome et ses maîtres hébreux," *RBen* 46 (1934): 145–64. Similarly, Pierre Nautin tried to discount Jerome's knowledge of Hebrew as at best superficial, and surmised that his translations from Hebrew were actually done by Hebrew-speaking amanuenses. See P. Nautin, "Hieronymus," *TRE* 15:304–15; esp. 309. The most recent trend in scholarship moves in the opposite direction, however. Jerome is now vindicated both as quite competent in Hebrew and as remarkably knowledgeable in Jewish exegesis and Jewish traditions, including inter-rabbinic debates. See, e.g., Jay Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel: A Study of Comparative Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Hebrew Bible* (CBQMS 7; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1978); Benjamin Kedar, "Jerome and the Vulgate," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. M. J. Mulder and H. Sysling; CRINT 2.1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 313–38; Dennis Brown, *Vir Trilinguis: A Study in the Biblical Exegesis of Saint Jerome* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992); Ralph Hennings, "Rabbinisches und Antijüdisches bei Hieronymus Ep 121,10," *Christliche Exegese zwischen Nicaea und Chalcedon* (ed. J. van Oort and U. Wickert; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992), 49–71; Sarah Kalmin, "The Theological Significance of the *Hebraica Veritas* in Jerome's Thought," "Sha'arei Talmon": *Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East* (ed. M. Fishbane and E. Tov; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 243–53; Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Questiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (Oxford Classical Monographs; Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Gianfranco Miletto, "Die 'Hebraica Veritas' in S. Hieronymus," in *Bibel in jüdischer und christlicher Tradition* (ed. H. Merklein, K. Müller and G. Stemberger; Bonner biblische Beiträge 88; Frankfurt a. M.: Anton Hain, 1993), 56–65; Stefan Rebenich, "Jerome: The 'Vir trilinguis' and The 'Hebraica veritas,'" *VC* 47 (1993): 50–77; Günter Stemberger, "Hieronymus und die Juden seiner Zeit," in *Begegnungen zwischen Christentum und Judentum in Antike und Mittelalter* (Schriften des Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 347–64; Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, "Jewish Traditions in the Writings of Jerome," in *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context* (ed. D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara; JSOTSup 166; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 420–30; Christoph Marksches, "Hieronymus und die 'Hebraica Veritas,'" in *Die Septuaginta zwischen Judentum und Christentum* (ed. M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer; WUNT 72; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 131–81; Alison Salvesen, "A Convergence of the Ways? The Judaizing of Christian Scripture by Origen and Jerome," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed; TSAJ 95; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2003), 233–58; esp. 248–58.

"He had been about to start dictating a translation (from Greek) when a Jewish friend unexpectedly turned up with a parcel of books he had borrowed from his synagogue on the pretext of wishing to read them himself. He was in such a hurry that Jerome felt obliged to throw all his other work aside in order to transcribe the precious volumes."¹²⁶ The special interest of this episode in our context is the light it throws on Jewish-Christian relations in Rome in the 380s. In general, the relationship between a church dignitary like Jerome and the local Jewish leadership was not such that Jerome in person could visit the local synagogue and lend copies of books (presumably Bible manuscripts). Even his Jewish friend could not lend him the books openly. In fact, he seems to have been rather nervous to have them returned soon. On the other hand, this Jewish friend was willing to risk a lot to help Jerome. He was hardly a Jewish believer in Jesus himself (at least Jerome does not identify him as such), but he was sufficiently sympathetic towards this Christian student of the Hebrew Bible to go to great lengths to help him. He must have had standing within the local Jewish community that could be lost if his friendly assistance to Jerome became known. Contact of this type was not very popular in all Christian circles either (see next page), but obviously Jerome could rely on the support of his bishop and the enthusiastic recipients of such information in a Bible-study group comprising some Roman noblewomen.

In 385 Jerome embarked on a voyage that would lead him to Bethlehem, where he settled for good in a monastery close to the Church of Nativity.¹²⁷ It was during this journey that he made a guided tour to many biblical sites in the land of Israel and beyond in the company of two Roman noblewomen, Paula and Eustochium, a mother and daughter. John Wilkinson has shown that most of Jerome's detailed information on biblical sites, obtained by visiting the places himself, was gained on this tour.¹²⁸ Having settled in Bethlehem, he seems to have made no extensive excursions far from his monastery, but to have made only short visits to Caesarea to visit the famous library there, along with frequent visits to nearby Jerusalem for ecclesiastical matters.

It is at this point that he begins on the largest translation project of his life, a Latin translation of the whole of the Old Testament directly from "the Hebrew truth." For many years already, Jerome had consulted with Jewish Hebrew speakers concerning Hebrew terms in Scripture. Now he hired his own private Jewish translation consultant, Baraninas (certainly Bar Chanina).

What trouble and expense it cost me to get Baraninas to teach me under cover of night. For by his fear of the Jews he presented to me in his own person a second edition of Nicodemus. . . . If it is expedient to hate any men and to loathe any race, I have a strange dislike to those of the circumcision. For up to the present day they

¹²⁶ *Ep.* 36.1, here rendered according to the paraphrase in Kelly, *Jerome*, 84.

¹²⁷ Not situated in the caves below the Church of Nativity, as many tourist guides and a plaque on the spot now tell tourists.

¹²⁸ John Wilkinson, "L'Apport de Saint Jérôme à la Topographie," *RB* 81 (1974): 245–57.

persecute our Lord Jesus Christ in the synagogues of Satan. Yet can anyone find fault with me for having had a Jew as a teacher?¹²⁹

In this case there can hardly be any doubt that Bar Chanina was not a believer in Jesus. The situation in Bethlehem was much the same as in Rome. Jerome's Jewish helper could not openly assist him in his translation project because of "his fear of the Jews." But again this fear may have been generated primarily by the Jewish leadership rather than by the rank and file Jews of the day. That relations at grass-root level could be quite amicable may be inferred from Jerome's repeated exhortation to readers skeptical of his Hebrew expertise: go and ask the first and best Hebrew!

There were, however, Christian leaders who took exception to Jerome's "having a Jew as a teacher." Jerome's former friend Rufinus took him to task for it in an immediate rejoinder to the epistle quoted above. According to Rufinus, Jerome was guilty of great audacity when he dared to make a new translation (not in agreement with the LXX sanctioned by the Apostles) "under the influence of the Jews."¹³⁰ Jerome, according to Rufinus, could be taken to say that "this other [Baraninas], though he is a Jew, and of the synagogue of Satan, and is hired to sell words for gain, yet . . . is my master who must be preferred to all others, because it is among the Jews alone that the truth of Scripture dwells."¹³¹ Not satisfied with this blast, Rufinus lashes out at Jerome's Hebrew teacher, writing that by choosing Baraninas's authority at the expense of the LXX translators, Jerome has chosen "Barabbas" instead of Christ!¹³²

Bar Chanina was not the only Jewish scholar Jerome consulted during his many years in Bethlehem (386–420). In the preface to his translation of the book of Job, he writes:

I remember that in order to understand this volume, I paid a not inconsiderable sum for the services of a teacher, a native of Lod, who was among the Hebrews reckoned to be in the front rank; whether I profited at all by his teaching, I do not know; of this one thing I am sure, that I could translate only that which I previously understood.¹³³

Jerome was also to become a prolific writer of biblical commentaries. In these, Jewish exegesis is quoted to an increasing degree, so that modern scholars on rabbinic exegesis declare Jerome a treasury of rabbinic exegeses not preserved in rabbinic literature.¹³⁴ In his commentaries on the Hebrew Old Testament he

¹²⁹ *Ep.* 84.3; translation according to *NPNF²* 6:176.

¹³⁰ Rufinus, *Apol. Hier.* 2.32; *NPNF²* 3:475.

¹³¹ *Apol. Hier.* 2.30; *NPNF²* 3:474.

¹³² *Apol. Hier.* 2.12; *NPNF²* 3:466–67. Rufinus, in infamous travesty, spells the name of Jerome's teacher Barabbas.

¹³³ Vulgate, *Prol. in Job*, Weber 1:731; translation according to *NPNF²* 6:491.

¹³⁴ See especially Braverman, *Commentary On Daniel*, 132–36. Braverman examines sixteen cases of Jewish traditions in Jerome's Daniel commentary. Ten of these have full or incomplete parallels in rabbinic literature (or Josephus), and are of help in restoring

lived up to what he wrote in the commentary on Zechariah: “I have made it my resolve to make available for Latin readers the hidden treasures of Hebrew erudition and the recondite teachings of the Masters of the Synagogue, as long as these things are in keeping with the Holy Scriptures.”¹³⁵

To conclude, Jerome had both direct and indirect personal contact with Jewish believers while he was in the Syrian desert, as well as later during his stay in the land of Israel. He had a Jewish-Christian mentor in the Syrian desert, and knew of the Jewish believers in Beroea (Aleppo) in Syria through acquaintance with the gospel used by them. He also had access to a (selective?) commentary on Isaiah which may have had its origin among the same “Nazoraeans” who used the Hebrew gospel.¹³⁶

7. Gennadius on Isaac the Jew

Gennadius (died 495 or 505 C.E.), a presbyter of Marseille, is known mainly for his supplement to Jerome’s *Illustrious Men*. Jerome’s work, which was completed in Bethlehem in 392, was a catalogue of ecclesiastical writers and their works. In about 480, Gennadius supplemented and continued the work up to his own time. For the 370s in Rome, he writes the following:

Isaac wrote a book *On the Persons of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Lord*, written in a very obscure style of argument and involved language, maintaining that three persons exist in one Deity, in such wise that any thing may be peculiar to each which another does not have, that is to say, that the Father has this peculiarity that He, himself without source, is the source of the others, that the Son has this peculiarity, that, begotten, he is not posterior to the begetter, that the Holy Spirit has this peculiarity, that he is neither made nor begotten but nevertheless is from another. Of the incarnation of the Lord indeed, he writes that the person of the Son of God is believed to be one, while yet there are two natures existing in him (Gennadius, *Vir. ill.* 26).¹³⁷

From other sources, we know that Isaac was a Jewish believer, active in the church politics of Rome shortly after the election of pope Damasus (pontificate 366–84). Isaac joined the party of Damasus’s rival Ursinus, and acted as advocate

a more complete picture of these exegeses. Six are without parallel in extant Jewish literature, but are no doubt Jewish. “Thus we can credit Jerome with the preservation of six more otherwise ‘lost’ Jewish traditions” (page 135). It is the cumulative effect of detailed studies like this one which has gradually turned scholarly opinion away from the skepticism created by G. Bardy’s article on Jerome’s “Hebrew masters” referred to above, note 125.

¹³⁵ *Comm. Zach.* 6:9; CCSL 76A: 827; Eng. translation according to Braverman, *Commentary on Daniel*, 135.

¹³⁶ On this, see section 7 of chapter 12 of this book.

¹³⁷ Latin text, Hans Zeuschner, “Studien zur Fides Isaatis: Ein Beitrag zur Ambrosiasterfrage,” *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen* 8 (1909): 128; translation according to *NPNF²* 3:391, slightly adapted. Cf. also A. Souter, “Fides Isatis ex Judaeo: A New Edition,” *JTS* 30 (1929): 1–8.

of this party during court proceedings against the pope. Damasus was the winner of these conflicts, and Isaac was consequently forced to leave Rome for Spain around 378. There he returned to Judaism (perhaps in deep frustration over his experiences in Rome).¹³⁸ Isaac's tract on the Trinity and Incarnation is preserved, and fully bears out Gennadius's characterization of it. It comprises some five pages in a modern edition,¹³⁹ and shows its author to represent "standard" Western orthodoxy, possibly with an anti-Priscillianist slant.¹⁴⁰

Here we encounter a Jewish believer whom Gentile ecclesiastical writers no doubt would describe as a *convert* to Christianity. There are no indications that he kept a Jewish lifestyle, and there are no very "Jewish" features of his small tract on the Trinity and the Incarnation. He would probably have received more attention from later ecclesiastical writers had it not been for his opposition to Damasus and his subsequent return to Judaism, which certainly did nothing to enhance his reputation within the church.

In modern times he has received a lot of attention, however, because of an influential attempt to identify him with the anonymous author of one pseudo-Ambrosian commentary on Paul's letters, along with one pseudo-Augustinian tract, *Questiones Veteris et Novi testamenti*. Since Erasmus of Rotterdam this author has been called Ambrosiaster (= Pseudo-Ambrosius). In 1899 G. Morin argued that Ambrosiaster was none other than Isaac the Jew, based mainly on stylistic comparison of Isaac's tract on the Trinity and the two works of Ambrosiaster.¹⁴¹ Others sought to strengthen this argument by pointing out good knowledge of things Jewish in Ambrosiaster.¹⁴² If this proposal were correct, it would mean that possibly the best commentary on Paul written in the Western church during the entire period of the early church was written by a Jewish believer.

¹³⁸ The primary sources for Isaac's conflict with pope Damasus are the following: (1) *Epistle 13, De rebaptizatoribus*, pages 54–58 in CSEL 35.1 (Otto Guenther, *Epistulae imperatorum, pontificum, aliorum inde ab a. CCCLXVII usque ad a. DLIII datae. Avellana quae dicitur collectio*, Pars 1, Prague/Vienna/Leipzig: Tempsky and Freytag, 1895); (2) entry "Damasus," pages 212–15 in Duchesne 1; (3) a letter from a Roman synod 380 C.E. to the emperors Gratian and Valentinian II, in Johannes Dominicus Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (59 vols.; Graz: Akademische Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, 1960–61 [orig. ed. 1758–98]), 3:626; also quoted in Duchesne 1:214, note 15.

¹³⁹ Zeuschner, "Studien," 110–14.

¹⁴⁰ This is argued extensively by Zeuschner, "Studien," 139–43.

¹⁴¹ G. Morin, "L'Ambrosiaster et le juif converti Isaac, contemporain du pape Damase," *Revue d'Histoire et de la Littérature religieuses* 4 (1899): 97–121. His proposal was accepted by, e.g., Theodor Zahn, "Der 'Ambrosiaster' und der Proselyt Isaak," *Theologisches Literaturblatt* 20 (1899): 313–17; A. E. Burn, "The Ambrosiaster and Isaac the Converted Jew," *The Expositor* 2 (1899): 368–75; and C. H. Turner, "Niceta and Ambrosiaster II," *JTS* 7 (1905–1906): 355–76. Morin later abandoned this proposal himself, and suggested several new ones: "Hilarius-Ambrosiaster," *RBén* 20 (1903): 113–21; "Qui est l'Ambrosiaster? Solution nouvelle," *RBén* 31 (1914): 1–34; "La critique dans un impasse: à propos du cas de l'Ambrosiaster," *RBén* 40 (1928): 251–55.

¹⁴² E.g., Burn in his article mentioned above, n. 141.

This identification of Isaac with Ambrosiaster, however, has come under escalating criticism,¹⁴³ and is today mostly abandoned, and perhaps rightly so.¹⁴⁴ This means we shall have to content ourselves with what little can be known of Isaac from the ancient references to him in historical works and from what we can know about him in his own small tract. It is not much more than has been reported briefly above.

This scant evidence on the temporary Jewish believer Isaac in Rome in the late 360s and 370s may indirectly strengthen our general impression that he was a loner, an isolated exception to the general rule of total separation of Judaism and Christianity at Rome from a quite early period. But in order not to impose an inappropriate perspective, one should keep in mind that Isaac is included in Gennadius's *Illustrious Men* only because he was active as an author, and that the group of Christian authors active in Rome during the 360s and 370s is not numerous. Their number included pope Damasus himself¹⁴⁵ and the anonymous "Ambrosiaster," and these two seem to be the only ones we know by name.¹⁴⁶ The faction in the Roman community who opposed Damasus's election in 366 and continued to fight him later was quite strong and influential, and apparently had no qualms about letting Isaac present their case.¹⁴⁷ This must mean that being a Jewish believer was by no means regarded by them a drawback in any sense. It was Isaac's return to Judaism later, not his origin *ex Iudaeo*, which put a stigma on his reputation.

8. Socrates

Socrates, the church historian of Constantinople (ca. 380–after 440), paid special attention in his *Church History* to the schismatic church of the Novatians.

¹⁴³ See Heinrich Brewer, "War der Ambrosiaster der bekehrte Jude Isaak?" ZKT 37 (1913): 214–16. Brewer quotes several passages from Ambrosiaster's commentary which clearly show that his background was Gentile. The same point is made in the extensive discussion in P. Coelestinus Martini, *Ambrosiaster: De auctore, operibus, theologia* (Spicilegium Pontificii Athenaei Antoniani 4; Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1944), 147–60. The alleged Jewish expertise of Ambrosiaster is reexamined by Lydia Speller, "Ambrosiaster and the Jews," StPatr 17.1 (Oxford: Pergamon 1982), 72–78. She concludes that Ambrosiaster's reports on Jewish practices are not always accurate, and rather are of the kind one would expect in a Gentile Christian author. "His knowledge of Jewish customs does not appear more detailed than, for example, that of Jerome, and is insufficient to support his identification with Isaac the Jew" (at page 76).

¹⁴⁴ Two authoritative examples are Heinrich J. Vogels in his introduction to the CSEL edition of Ambrosiaster (Vol. 81.1; Vienna: Hoelder/Pichler/Tempsky, 1966), IX–XVII; and the article on Ambrosiaster by Alfred Stuiber in *TRE* 2:356–62.

¹⁴⁵ On Damasus's works, cf. Berthold Altaner and Alfred Stuiber, *Patrologie: Leben, Schriften und Lehre der Kirchenväter* (6th ed.: Freiburg: Herder, 1966), 354–55.

¹⁴⁶ Both Rufinus and Jerome spent time studying in Rome in the 350s and 360s, but were, to our knowledge, not yet active as authors. Rufinus left Rome some years before 370, Jerome in 372.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Malcolm Green, "The Supporters of the Antipope Ursinus," *JTS* 22 (1971): 531–38.

This church originated in Rome under the presbyter Novatian around the middle of the third century. In the fourth century it had established itself with a church in Constantinople, and stood especially strong in Phrygia and Paphlagonia in Asia Minor. In these two provinces it seems that the Novatian church gained members strongly committed to an older tradition of celebrating Easter simultaneously with the Jews, even if this meant celebrating it before the spring equinox (in violation of the Passover regulation from Nicaea).¹⁴⁸

This question threatened to create a schism within the Novatian churches. Here is what Socrates says about the beginning of the conflict:

[While Novatians in the West observed Easter at the same time as the rest of the Church, after equinox], those in Phrygia . . . about this period [370s] changed the day of celebrating Easter, being averse to communion with other Christians even on this occasion. This was effected by means of a few obscure bishops of the sect convening a synod at the village of Pazum, which is situated near the sources of the river Sangarius; for there they framed a canon appointing its observance on the same day as that on which the Jews annually keep the feast of Unleavened bread (Socrates, *Hist eccl.* 4.28).¹⁴⁹

In the continuation of this passage, Socrates reports that the more prominent bishops of the Novatian Church—those of Constantinople, Nicaea, Nicomedia and Cotyaeum—were absent at this synod, and that when its decision became known, it created a schism within the Novatian church. It seems we are facing a local Phrygian rebellion within the Novatian church, and it would be interesting to know who these “obscure” local Phrygian bishops were. Some time

¹⁴⁸ Later ecclesiastical tradition has it that a formal canon on the Easter question was promulgated at Nicaea in 325. This is doubtful, however, since the only ruling that can be documented is a strong recommendation to unify Christian Easter celebration by all churches in an encyclical letter by Constantine, along with a warning not to celebrate “with the Jews.” The latter, at this period, did not mean celebrating Easter on the 14th of Nisan (as had been done by the Quartodecimans of the second century), but celebrating Easter on the first Sunday after 14th Nisan (in Alexandria, the first possible day was 15th Nisan, in Rome, 16th Nisan), following the Jews, however, in their calculation of the Passover term. In the fourth century, the Jews abrogated an older rule prohibiting the celebration of the Passover on the night before the spring equinox. Most churches responded by keeping this rule, thus creating a difference between ecclesiastical and the Jewish calendars. The resultant differentiation between Christian and Jewish terms of Easter/Passover was probably more important to ecclesiastical leaders than was mere conservatism with regard to an old tradition. See, e.g., V. Grumel, “La problème de la date pascale aux III^e et VI^e siècle,” *Revue des Études Byzantines* 18 (1960): 163–78; and Wolfgang Huber, *Passa und Ostern: Untersuchungen zur Osterfeier der alten Kirche* (BZNW 35; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969), 61–84. On the Novatian debate concerning the date of Easter, see also A. T. Kraabel, “Synagoga Caeca: Systematic Distortion in Gentile Interpretations of Evidence for Judaism in the Early Christian Period,” in “To See Ourselves As Others See Us”: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity (ed. J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs; Scholars Press Studies in the Humanities; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 219–46; esp. 232–41.

¹⁴⁹ English translation according to *NPNF²* 2:113.

afterwards, it seems they are represented in Constantinople by the presbyter Sabbatius. Socrates reports:

Marcian [the newly elected Novatian bishop of Constantinople] had promoted to the rank of presbyter a converted Jew named Sabbatius, who nevertheless continued to retain many of his Jewish prejudices . . . Sabbatius resolved to defend that innovation made by the Novatians in the time of Valens (364–78), at Pazum, a village of Phrygia, concerning the festival of Easter (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 5.21).¹⁵⁰

Because of this, Sabbatius felt constrained to recede from the church, and celebrate his own Eucharistic services. When summoned by his bishop to a synod of Novatian bishops to explain this practice, he affirmed “that he was troubled about the disagreement that existed respecting the feast of Easter, and that it ought to be kept according to the custom of the Jews, and agreeable to that sanction which those convened at Pazum had appointed” (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 5.21).¹⁵¹

The synod, at Angarum in Bithynia this time, responded with a canon called “Indifferent,” declaring that disagreement about the term for Easter was no valid reason for schism, “and that the council at Pazum had done nothing prejudicial to the catholic canon.” The bishops added that in the early times, close to the time of the Apostles, there had been disagreement on this issue, but “it did not prevent their communion with each other.” Accordingly, freedom was to reign in this matter, each being free to follow local tradition. This encouraged Sabbatius to continue his practice of celebrating Easter at the same term as the Jews.

Having watched all night, he celebrated the Sabbath of the Passover; then on the next day he went to church, and with the rest of the congregation partook of the sacraments.

He pursued this course for many years, so that it could not be concealed from the people; in imitation of which some of the more ignorant, and chiefly the Phrygians and Galatians, supposing they should be justified by this conduct imitated him, and kept the Passover in secret after his manner. But Sabbatius . . . held schismatic meetings, and was constituted bishop of his followers . . . (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 5.21).¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Translation NPNF² 2:129.

¹⁵¹ Translation NPNF² 2:129.

¹⁵² NPNF² 2: 130. As was explained above (note 149), the Phrygian Christians no longer practiced the Quartodeciman Passa, but celebrated Easter by conducting a fast and a vigil at the first Sabbath and the following night within the festival of Unleavened Bread. On the following Sunday they would celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. By following the Jews in disregarding the “after equinox” rule, they would thus ensure their celebration always fell within the Jewish seven-day festival of Mazzoth. On the occasions when Jews celebrated their Passover before equinox, Sabbatius would follow them and not the rest of the church. For him, the first Sunday within Unleavened Bread would be Easter Sunday; for the rest of the community, it would be an ordinary Sunday. For this analysis of the passage, see Huber, *Passa*, 80–82.

What is striking about this whole matter is how strong the local tradition in Phrygia must have been. It was able to challenge the near unanimous consent of other regions of the Novatian church, and it was strong enough to be tolerated by the rest of the Novatianist bishops. We have seen already how strong the Quartodeciman tradition was in the province of Asia in the second century, partly due to a strong element of Jewish believers within church leadership. One wonders if something similar was the case with some of the “obscure” local bishops dominating the synod at Pazum late in the fourth century. The one thing we do know is that once we are given a name for one of the leaders of this faction, he happens to be a Jewish believer: Sabbatius. We also note that the only thing that was deemed reprehensible with regard to Sabbatius, apart from his episcopal ambitions, was his regarding the question of the Passover term as of such importance that it merited a schism in the church. His position on the term itself was deemed legitimate enough. If as a Jewish believer he preferred to “keep” with the Jews, he was free to do so, as were the churches in Phrygia who had decided to do so as well, as long as no one insisted the whole church should follow him or them. There is no reason to decide a priori that this “Judaizing” of the Phrygian churches and of a local synod of bishops was due to Gentile Christians only and not also to a significant segment of Jewish believers in these churches, among the laity as well as among the bishops.

As far as Socrates’ evidence on the Novatians goes, this “Jewish” practice of celebrating Easter simultaneously with the Jews was limited to Phrygia and Paphlagonia in Asia Minor. There is other evidence, however, that testifies to similar practice before (and probably after) Nicaea in Cilicia, Syria and Mesopotamia,¹⁵³ or, more generally, “in the East.”¹⁵⁴ In his *Panarion*, Epiphanius mentions the monastic order of the Audians, who originated in Mesopotamia.¹⁵⁵ Epiphanius is actually full of praise for these Eastern Christians. The only two mistakes they make are (1) their insisting that the image of God in man is located in the body, and (2) their celebration of Easter “with the Jews.” Concerning the latter point, Epiphanius quotes them as saying to other ecclesiastical leaders: “You abandoned the fathers’ Paschal rite in Constantine’s time from deference to the emperor, and changed the day to suit the emperor” (*Pan.* 70.9.3). He also has them refer to a passage in the document we know as *Didascalia Apostolorum*, but apparently in a slightly different version: “Reckon ye not [the date of the Passover by yourselves], but celebrate when your brethren of the circumcision do; cele-

¹⁵³ Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* 5: “As to the Nicene Council, it was . . . convened upon a pressing necessity, and for a reasonable object. The Syrians, Cilicians, and Mesopotamians, were out of order in celebrating the Feast, and kept Easter with the Jews . . .” (*NPNF²* 4:452).

¹⁵⁴ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.8: “. . . the dispute . . . in regard to the Passover . . . was carried on in the regions of the East only. This arose from some desiring to keep the Feast more in accordance with the custom of the Jews; while others preferred its mode of celebration by Christians in general throughout the world” (*NPNF²* 2: 8).

¹⁵⁵ *Pan.* 70; Williams 2: 402–18.

brate with them" (*Pan.* 70.10.2).¹⁵⁶ This evidence confirms our conclusion above concerning the Novatians, that when Gentile Christians celebrated Easter at the same time as the Jews celebrated Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they did not mimic the non-believing Jews, but followed the precedent of the Jewish believers who all the time had celebrated with their compatriots. There is great probability that the Eastern churches kept this practice long after the western churches had abandoned it, because the Jewish believers continued to be a powerful influence for a longer period in the East than in the West. It seems that emperor Constantius tried to undermine this eastern practice by forbidding the Jewish Patriarch to dispatch messengers to Mesopotamia announcing the date for Passover.¹⁵⁷ The effect of this was that the beginning of Nisan had to be determined locally by observing the New Moon, thus making a coordinated Christian Easter celebration in the eastern provinces impossible, unless they all obeyed the Nicene ruling.

What we have observed here is, so to speak, the second chapter in the debate on the date of Passover/Easter, the first chapter being the Quartodeciman debate in the second century. The calendrical details were different in the two rounds of debate, but the principle involved was more or less the same, and all along the tradition represented by the Jewish believers was of paramount importance.

Socrates has three other reports which are of interest in this context. The first is told as follows:

A certain Jew being a paralytic had been confined to his bed for many years; and as every sort of medical skill, and the prayers of his Jewish brethren had been resorted to but had availed nothing, he had recourse at last to Christian baptism, trusting in it as the only true remedy to be used. When Atticus the [Novatian] bishop [of Constantinople] was informed of his wishes, he instructed him in the first principles of Christian truth, and having preached to him to hope in Christ, directed that he should be brought in his bed to the font. The paralytic Jew receiving baptism with a sincere faith, as soon as he was taken out of the baptismal font found himself perfectly cured of his disease, and continued to enjoy sound health afterwards. This miraculous power Christ vouchsafed to be manifested even in our times; and the fame of it caused many

¹⁵⁶ In substance, not in wording, this is close to *Didascalia Apostolorum* 5.17: "And do you make a beginning [of your paschal fast] when your brethren who are of the People keep the Passover" (translation: R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1929], 187). The ones addressed here by the Apostles are the Gentile Christians. "Your brethren from the People" is therefore a reference to Jewish believers. Epiphanius in a similar way takes "your brethren of the circumcision" in his quote to refer to the Jewish believers. He is very likely right. This means that in the *Didascalia*, it is taken for granted that Jewish believers unanimously synchronize their Easter celebration with that of the other Jews, and Gentile Christians are admonished to follow their brethren, the Jewish believers. It should be remembered that the *Didascalia* here represents third century "orthodoxy" in the Syrian Church.

¹⁵⁷ See Saul Lieberman, "Palestine in the Third and Fourth Centuries," *JQR* 36 (1945): 329–70; esp. 331–34.

of the heathens to believe and be baptized. But the Jews were not induced to embrace the faith, not even by such signs taking place (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.4).¹⁵⁸

Again we notice the major role the element of the miraculous played in the post-Constantinian period. Socrates focuses on this rather than on the healed man's Jewish identity. This identity plays only a minor role in the story until he remarks on the effects of the healing. Apparently, a Jewish convert as such is no sensational event. It is when he comments on the effects of the event that Socrates focuses on the ethnic question. One should "normally" expect that an event like this had greatest impact on the man's natural compatriots, inducing them to conversion *en masse*. This does not happen. Instead, what seems like a mass conversion takes place among the pagan Gentiles.

A second story of Jewish baptism has the opposite tendency. A certain Jew had specialized in obtaining Christian baptism by one Christian faction after the other "and by that artifice, he had amassed a good deal of money." When finally trying to obtain baptism from the Novatian bishop Paul (installed 419 C.E.), he was exposed as an impostor by a miracle: "a certain invisible power of God caused the water [in the font] suddenly to disappear." Having no clue as to why this had happened, the bishop had the font filled a second time, after ensuring that the exit tubes were plugged. But the miracle repeated itself. The bishop now understood that the man was either an impostor or had been baptized before. Then someone in the crowd recognized him as a Jew baptized before by bishop Atticus.¹⁵⁹ (This Jew is probably not understood by Socrates to be the same as the paralytic he tells about in 7.4, since the latter's faith is characterized as sincere.) This is probably the first case in which the post-Constantinian church faces the problem of "profitable conversions" head on.

Third, Socrates also relates a story of an apparent mass conversion of Jews. A certain Jewish impostor arrived in Crete, proclaiming to the Jews of the island that he was Moses who had returned to lead them dry-shod through the sea from Crete to the promised land. Having prepared for this event for a year, and having succeeded in making many believe him, the imposter led them to a promontory above the sea and ordered them to hurl themselves into the sea from there. Some did so and were either immediately killed by landing on cliffs or, if they succeeded in landing in the water, were soon drowning. Some Christian merchants and fishermen happened to be present in the neighborhood and succeeded in dissuading the other Jews from following the example of the first ones. They also saved some of those who were drowning in the sea. When the Jews came to their senses, they tried to track down and punish the false Moses, but he had disappeared. "In consequence of this experience many of the Jews in Crete at that time abandoning Judaism attached themselves to the Christian faith."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ NPNF² 2:155.

¹⁵⁹ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.17; NPNF² 2:161.

¹⁶⁰ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.38; NPNF² 2:174–75.

Since there is no other independent attestation of this event, we only have Socrates' report to go by. He, or his sources, may have exaggerated the quota of the Jews of the island who were persuaded by this false Moses, as well as the number of subsequent converts. But in itself the event represents a not uncommon and by no means incredible scenario. Once some Jews had become unsettled in their traditional ways of life by some kind of messianic pretender and then experienced deep disappointment, they might well have preferred not to return back to "normal" Judaism, but rather to seek another alternative to their traditional way of life.

9. Sozomen

This man of law wrote his church history in Constantinople between 439 and 450, but was born in the village of Bethelia near Gaza. His grandfather converted to Christianity, and it is sometimes assumed, based on Sozomen's words about his grandfather's great ability as an expositor of Scripture, that he was Jewish.¹⁶¹ This is no necessary conclusion, however, and it is directly contradicted by Sozomen's own description of his grandfather as being "of pagan parentage."¹⁶²

There is one excerpt from Sozomen that is probably of some relevance to our quest. In his *Hist. eccl.* 6.38, Sozomen relates events that took place towards the end of Valens's reign (364–78). When, upon the death of her husband, queen Mavia of the Saracens attacked Roman armies in Phoenicia and the land of Israel, negotiations took place between her and the Roman emperor. It is said, according to Sozomen, that she agreed to a truce on the condition that a monk named Moses, of Nicene faith and living in the Syrian desert, be consecrated bishop over her subjects. Moses was persuaded to let himself be ordained, but insisted it should take place at the hands of a bishop other than the Arian one appointed by the Romans. "He reconciled the Saracens to the Romans, and converted many to Christianity, and passed his life among them as a priest, although he found few who shared in his belief." Sozomen next gives his readers a small lecture on the background of the Saracens. The Saracens were originally descendants from Abraham and Hagar, but later claimed descendency from Sara instead, whence the name Saracens. They had originally followed the same laws as the Israelites, but had no part in the Mosaic legislation and gradually lapsed into the ways of the pagans surrounding them. Sozomen continues:

Some of their tribe afterwards happening to come in contact with the Jews, gathered from them the facts of their true origin, returned to their kinsmen, and inclined to the Hebrew customs and laws. . . . Some of the Saracens were converted to Christianity not long before the present reign. They shared in the faith of Christ by intercourse with the priests and monks who dwelt near them . . . in the neighboring deserts, and

¹⁶¹ Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.*, 5.15; NPNF² 2:337. Leopold Lucas mentions Sozomen's Jewish parentage as a fact, *The Conflict*, 61.

¹⁶² *Hist. eccl.*, 5.15; NPNF² 2:337.

who were distinguished by the excellence of their life and by their miraculous works. It is said that a whole tribe, and Zocomus, their chief, were converted to Christianity and baptized about this period.¹⁶³

What induced Zocomus to this step was the successful intervention by a monk who prayed for his childless marriage. Zocomus's wife soon gave birth to a son, and Zocomus was baptized. "Such are the details that I have been enabled to collect concerning the conversion of the Saracens and their first bishop."¹⁶⁴ One is tempted to speculate that Sozomen gathered this information while still living in the land of Israel.

Carsten Colpe has proposed a fascinating interpretation of this passage.¹⁶⁵ He thinks that the description of the "pre-Mosaic" or "extra-Mosaic" Judaism of the Saracene tribes really characterizes them as Jewish Christians.¹⁶⁶ The story Sozomen tells about the "conversion to Christianity" of the Saracens should thus rather be understood to be the story of the conversion of Jewish Christians to Nicene Christianity. But this reading of the text is very difficult to reconcile with its plain meaning, which seems historically quite plausible. The text seems to say that some of the Saracens, prior to their conversion to Christianity, had become sympathizers of Judaism (or "Godfearers," to use the Greek term). Perhaps some of them even regarded themselves "full" converts, and therefore changed their names from "sons of Hagar" into "sons of Sara." In this case, Christian converts among the Saracens could be regarded Jewish believers of some sort, although hardly by normative rabbinic standards. But to what extent rabbinic standards applied in practice at the time and place of these semi-Jewish Saracens remains uncertain. Again we are reminded how much more fuzzy realities were "on the ground" than in halakic theory. That the Saracene Christians may have had a Christianity that was quite Jewish in character is indicated perhaps by the notice that their first ordained bishop, the Nicene Moses, found few like-minded Christians among them.

The scenario depicted here reminds one of that contained in the sources that treat the history much further south on the Arabian peninsula in the kingdom of Yemen (ancient Himyar). Towards the end of the fifth century many rather fresh converts to Judaism became Christians, only later to be forcefully converted back to Judaism.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ NPNF² 2:375.

¹⁶⁴ Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.38; NPNF² 2:375.

¹⁶⁵ Carsten Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten. Historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 3; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1989), 167–70.

¹⁶⁶ "Hier ist also von Juden die Rede, welche einen Teil des Gesetzes aufgegeben haben, für welche der Ursprung im Auszug der Vorfahren aus Ägypten keine Rolle mehr spielte, und welche auf ein vor Moses gegebenes, also für alle Völker gültiges Gesetz rekurrirten. Schon diese drei Angaben würden genügen, die Hypothese aufzustellen, dass es sich um 'Judenchristen' handelte" (Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten*, 168–69).

¹⁶⁷ See section 1.11 of chapter 19 of this book.

10. Severus of Minorca

Bishop Severus of Minorca has secured for posterity a surprisingly detailed and interesting account of an unusual event that took place on the island during eight days in February 418 C.E., from 2 to 9 February.¹⁶⁸ His narrative has the form of an encyclical letter to other bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and probably was written only weeks after the events it reports.¹⁶⁹ These events resulted in the conversion of 540 Jews to Christianity, these 540 Jews representing the entire Jewish population of the island. Severus's narrative is extremely interesting, not only for the close-up perspective it gives us of a mass conversion and the mechanics behind it, but also for the rare glimpses it affords us into the relationship between a small Jewish Diaspora community and its Christian neighbors, mainly prior to the dramatic events of February 418.

On Minorca, Severus tells his readers, there are two cities only, Jamona on the west coast, and Magona on the eastern shore. In Jamona there are no Jews but in Magona there is a substantial amount of Jews.¹⁷⁰ Relations between Christians and Jews in Magona were amicable and peaceful, regrettably so, according to

¹⁶⁸ It is only during the last decades that this fascinating writing has received the scholarly attention it deserves, since earlier scholarship commonly regarded the document as a 7th century forgery belonging the *Adversus Iudeos* category of literature. The studies listed in the following note have, each from its own perspective, vindicated the authenticity of the document. By authenticity is meant that the document was actually written by bishop Severus in 418 C.E., shortly after the events it describes. This is not to say that Severus is free of bias and anything like "objective" as a narrator. But his biases and his tendency are often easy to observe. I will comment on this—in my text as well in my notes—as we proceed.

¹⁶⁹ The current edition of Severus's letter is Scott Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). In this work there is also an extensive, and to my mind conclusive, discussion of the date and authenticity of the letter, and also an excellent study of and commentary on it. For other studies, see, e.g., Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (The Haskell Lectures on History of Religions, New Series 2; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 103–5; E. Demougeot, "L'Évêque Sévère et les juifs de Minorque au Ve siècle," in *Majorque, Languedoc et Roussillon de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Montpellier: Fédération historique du Languedoc méditerranéen et du Rousillon, 1982), 13–34; E. D. Hunt, "St Stephen in Minorca: An Episode in Jewish-Christian Relations in the Early 5th Century AD," *JTS* 33 (1982): 106–23; M. Cohen, "Severus' Epistle on the Jews: Outline of a New Perspective," *Helmantica* 106 (1984): 71–79; F. Lotter, "The Forced Conversion of the Jewish Community of Minorca in 418 C.E.," in *Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1985), 23–37; J. Wankenne and B. Hambenne, "La Lettre-encyclique de Severus évêque de Minorque au début du Ve siècle," *RBén* 97 (1987): 13–27; and Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 196–99.

¹⁷⁰ Bradbury estimates that while there may have been roughly as many Jews in Magona as the figure of converts given by Severus, 540, the total population of the town may have been anything between one and three thousand, thus placing the Christians in the majority (supposing there were not many pagans), *Severus*, 28–29.

Severus. Christians and Jews were used to greeting each other, and friendships and warm feelings were common.¹⁷¹ The leader of the Jewish community in Magona, Theodorus, was respected and honored for his public services to the city not only by his Jewish compatriots, but also by the rest of the city's citizens.¹⁷²

These amicable relations are rather suddenly disturbed by a visitor to the island, the Spanish priest Paulus Orosius, early in 417. He carried with him relics of Stephen, the first martyr killed by the Jews. The relics had been discovered in Jerusalem recently (415 C.E.), and Orosius's journey was part of a greater plan to propagate the cult of St. Stephen. While he had planned to take them to Spain, unforeseen circumstances led Orosius to deposit the relics in the church of Magona. This is the one hint Severus gives as to what caused a sudden change of attitude on the Christian side with regard to the Jews.¹⁷³ The other hint comes later in his narrative when he suggests that a strong millennial hope of the end-time conversion of the Jews had taken hold of the hearts of many of the Minorcan Christians. This is how he ends his letter:

... if you accept . . . the word of an unworthy sinner, take up Christ's zeal against the Jews, but do so for the sake of their eternal salvation. Perhaps that time predicted by the Apostle has indeed now come when the fullness of the Gentiles will have come in and all Israel shall be saved. And perhaps the Lord wished to kindle this spark from the ends of the earth, so that the whole breadth of the earth might be ablaze with the flame of love in order to burn down the forest of unbelief (41.2–4).

During the narrative itself, Severus intersperses remarks like: “The hope of saving a multitude would spur us on” (4.4). Apart from these hints, Severus leaves us in the dark as to what motivated the new approach of Minorcan Christians to their Jewish neighbors. What is clear is that tension between the two groups mounted during the later part of 417 C.E. “In every public place, battles were waged against the Jews over the Law, in every house struggles over the faith” (5.2). Severus himself took part in this by producing a small missionary tract with proofs from the Bible and negotiating with the Jews to stage a public debate with them about the biblical prophecies. The Jews agreed on a date, and a truce was established until then. The Jews were awaiting the return of their leader Theodorus,

¹⁷¹ Severus complains of “our complacency,” which expressed itself in “greeting one another,” “old habit of easy acquaintance,” “longstanding affection” (ch. 5; Bradbury, *Severus*, 84–85).

¹⁷² “He had already fulfilled all the duties of the town council and served as *defensor*, and even now he is considered the *patronus* of his fellow citizens” (ch. 6; Bradbury, 84–85). This is remarkable, insofar as a Jewish head of synagogue should be exempted from these duties, according to a decree dating from 330 (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.2; Linder, 134–35). On Theodorus’s titles as leader of the Jews, see Bradbury, 30–33. He was clearly a teacher of the law and an ὅρχιστυνάγωγος, but not formally a rabbi.

¹⁷³ The effect of the new cult of St. Stephen’s relics on Minorca was not unique to this island. On the arrival of Stephen’s relics in Edessa, bishop Rabula dedicated the synagogue-made-church in his city to St. Stephen; marauding monks burned several synagogues in the wake of this, 419–22 C.E. See Demougeot, “L’évêque Sévère,” 21.

who was at Majorca attending to business at the time. When Theodorus returned, he was able to calm the tension in Magona considerably. After a while, so great was his authority that he even calmed Christian zeal there temporarily. However, Severus was able to raise the zeal of the Christians at Jamona, and on 2 February he led an unspecified number of his congregation¹⁷⁴ on a 30-mile walk across the island to Magona.¹⁷⁵ Severus brought with him his missionary pamphlet, apparently with the aim of presenting its argument in a public debate (probably the one agreed upon earlier). This debate never took place, however. According to Severus, the Jews of Magona had anticipated what was ahead and had begun to prepare for an armed fight to death by storing weapons in the synagogue, recalling the example of the Maccabean martyrs. At the arrival of the Jamona delegation, tensions soon reached a peak. Severus invited the local Jews to join him in debate in the local church. They declined by saying they would be breaking the law if they agreed to this.¹⁷⁶ Severus then offered to conduct the debate in the synagogue instead.¹⁷⁷ A delegation of Jewish leaders then gathered in the bishop's lodging and a debate took place, not over questions of faith but over the alleged gathering of weapons in the synagogue. When the Jews denied that there were weapons stored in the synagogue, Severus insisted on inspecting the synagogue himself.

The narrative continues:

Then we set out for the synagogue, and along the way we began to sing a hymn to Christ in our abundance of joy [Ps 9:7–8] . . . , and the throng of Jews also began to

¹⁷⁴ “. . . a throng of Christ’s servants, greater than was thought to reside in that town [of Jamona]” (12.1). Were there perhaps also some “professional mobsters” among them, eager for some good action? In 13.9 Severus himself admits that “the slave of a certain Christian . . . had come to that place [the synagogue of Magona], drawn not by love of Christ, but by love of plunder.”

¹⁷⁵ The modern reader can hardly help speculating that for this to be possible at all, a strong eschatological frenzy must have got hold of the community at Jamona, and that these people were hardly in a mood to return the 30 miles without having achieved something in Magona. They would thus be motivated to be rather unscrupulous in their choice of means. Also, the modern reader may speculate what significance it could have that there now came Christians to Magona who, in contrast to the local Christians, had no experience with close Jewish neighbors, and thus were not as easily calmed by longstanding friendships with them, or by the authority of Theodorus.

¹⁷⁶ Probably not only a reference to the Jewish law concerning the Sabbath but also to a longstanding Imperial law, renewed by Emperor Honorius in 412, which said Jews should not be compelled to take part in public or private business on the Sabbath. See *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.20: “Since the ancient custom and usage preserved the day of Sabbath, sacred to the said people of the Jews, we decree that this too must be avoided, that no summons shall constrain a man of the said custom under pretext of public or private business . . . ” (Linder, 264).

¹⁷⁷ Thereby risking violation of the first part of the same law: “No one shall dare to violate or seize and occupy what are known by the names of synagogues and are assuredly frequented by the conventicles of the Jews, for all must retain what is theirs with unmolested right and without harm to religion and cult” (Linder, 264).

sing it with a wondrous sweetness.¹⁷⁸ But before we reached the synagogue, certain Jewish women (by God's arrangement, I suppose) acted recklessly, and, doubtless to rouse our people from their gentleness, began to throw huge stones down on us from a higher spot.¹⁷⁹ Although the stones, marvelous to relate, fell like hail over a closely packed crowd, not only was none of our people harmed by a direct hit, but not one was even touched. At this point, that terrible Lion¹⁸⁰ took away for a short while the mildness from his lambs. While I protested in vain, they all snatched up stones, and neglecting their shepherd's warning, since they were united in a plan suggested more by zeal for Christ than by anger, they decided that the wolves had to be attacked with horns, although no one could doubt that this was done with the approval of Him who alone is the true and good shepherd. Finally, lest it seem that He had granted His flock a bloody victory, not one of the Jews pretended even to have been touched, not even to stir up ill will, as usually happens. . . . After the Jews had retreated and we had gained control of the synagogue, no one . . . even considered looting anything! Fire consumed the synagogue itself¹⁸¹ and all its decorations, with the exception of the books and silver. We removed the sacred books so that they wouldn't suffer harm among the Jews,¹⁸² but the silver we returned to them so that there would be no complaining either about us taking spoils or about them suffering losses¹⁸³ (13.1-7.12-13).

Destroying pagan temples or converting them into churches was a normal missionary strategy towards the end of the fourth century and well into the fifth and sixth. While this often had imperial support, imperial legislation forbade similar strategies with regard to Jewish synagogues. The frequency, however, with

¹⁷⁸ Bradbury comments: "No detail in the letter reveals so clearly the intimacy of the two religious communities as the fact that they can sing the same hymns" (Bradbury, 128, note 14). This is no doubt true, but the present setting for this common singing was far from idyllic. The text sung was "Their memory has perished with a crash and the Lord endures forever"—more like each party trying to "sing the enemy down"!

¹⁷⁹ This is the second time that Severus, for apologetic purposes, emphasizes that the Jews were to blame for the element of violence in the Christian action against them. First, they made the occupation of the synagogue necessary because they stored weapons in it. Second, it was they who started the stone-throwing, making a retribution in kind excusable. All of this was by God's design!

¹⁸⁰ Christ had been seen in a dream by Theodorus as the terrible Lion of Judah (cf. below).

¹⁸¹ Notice the careful wording: not "we set fire to the synagogue," but rather, "a fire, as if from God, consumed the synagogue." Severus is clearly nervous about this incident.

¹⁸² Is Severus implying that the Jews might destroy the Scriptures once they had been handled by Gentiles and had thus become ritually impure?

¹⁸³ The burning of the synagogue was no doubt the one incident of the whole event that caused Severus most trouble from an apologetic point of view, since it was clearly illegal. Between the lines, he invokes a biblical precedent of Joshua, who, when conquering Canaanite cities, was ordered to burn and destroy them completely rather than having his men loot them. In the preceding context, Severus has alluded directly to the story in Josh 7 by admitting there was one Christian "Achan" who had looted the synagogue. He was punished by being the one and only to be hit by a stone—an accident caused by "friendly fire," by the way (13.8-11). In this way, the arson in the synagogue is presented as a measure against illegal looting!

which legislation on this point had to be repeated during this period leads to the certain conclusion that synagogue burnings were by no means unusual. This is confirmed in historical sources. Legislation also vacillated somewhat. While arson of synagogues was illegal, Jews were often forbidden to rebuild a burned synagogue, and punishment for the burners of synagogues was often quite lenient. When Emperor Theodosius once had his military commander in the East order a bishop to rebuild a synagogue from church funds, the result was the famous confrontation between Theodosius and Ambrose, during which the bishop of Milan castigated the Emperor for this ruling.¹⁸⁴ On the level of “folk religion,” depriving some group of their sanctuary was probably regarded a very effective means of undermining their faith and commitment, and Severus shows himself not unaffected by this way of thinking when he continues the above narrative: “While the Jews stood stupefied at the destruction of the synagogue, we set out for the church to the accompaniment of hymns and, giving thanks to the author of our victory, we poured forth our tears and beseeched the Lord to lay siege to the true dens of their unbelief and to expose to the light the faithlessness of their dark hearts” (14).

On the following day, the first Jewish convert presented himself. Providentially his name befitted the “firstborn of Jacob,” Reuben. It took another three days before anyone followed him, and during this time there was much prayer warfare on both sides. On the third day Theodorus met with Severus in the ruins of the synagogue and boldly disputed with the bishop, refuting all his arguments. They were surrounded by a great many Christians as well as Jews, and when the Christians perceived their bishop did not make any progress with Theodorus, they began shouting: “*Theodore, credas in Christum*”—Theodorus, believe in Christ! By God’s miracle, according to Severus, the Jewish audience misheard this as “*Theodore in Christum credidit*”—Theodorus has believed in Christ (16.4–9). This terrified the Jews, as they believed Theodorus had apostatized, and they fled in all directions. Left alone and dumbfounded by what had happened, Theodorus was addressed by the first convert, Reuben, in these words: “What do you fear, Lord Theodorus? If you truly wish to be safe and honored and wealthy, believe in Christ, just as I too have believed. Right now you are standing, and I am seated with bishops; if you should believe, you will be seated, and I will be standing before you” (16.14–15).¹⁸⁵ Theodorus, for reasons Severus does not elaborate, decided he had by now no other choice than promising the bishop he would receive baptism within a few days. He asked only for some time to address his scattered flock of Jews. Perhaps he wanted above all to keep the Jewish community together and intact and saw no other way than mass conversion. When his decision became known among the Christians, they “ran to him affectionately and caressed

¹⁸⁴ Ambrose, *Epistle* 40, translation in NPNF² 10: 440–45.

¹⁸⁵ Even Severus seems to feel a slight embarrassment at the undisguised opportunism of these words. He says he will quote them despite their lack of “rhetorical adornment” and their “frankness,” 16.13.

his face and neck with kisses, others embraced him in gentle arms, while still others longed to join right hands with him or to engage him in conversation,” according to Severus (16.18). From this point on, a steady flow of groups of Jews approached the church outside Magona and asked the bishop for admission to the rite of baptism. According to Severus, this process was accompanied by remarkable signs in nature, observed by Christians as well as Jews. These signs included a pillar of light above the church of Magona, a sweet dew like honey on the ground, reminding everyone of the manna, water turned into sweet honey, and other signs. The Jews, Severus tells us, “compared what had happened to those wonders we read about in Exodus. They believed that the manna had been renewed for this people who, by their contemplation of God with a heart ready to believe, now merited the name of the true Israel”¹⁸⁶ (20.15). Severus finds it almost amusing that after a while the Christian flock that had gathered in the church at Magona claimed to recognize a pattern: bursts of rain regularly heralded the arrival of a new group of Jews asking to be baptized. “We would say to one another half-jokingly, ‘Look, it’s raining now. Mark my words, some Jews are sure to accept faith in Christ!’” (25.1–3). As for Theodorus, he wanted to postpone his baptism until his wife had returned to him from Majorca. He was afraid she would divorce him if she came home and found he had converted without consulting her. The bishop was willing to grant this, but not Theodorus’s compatriots who had already converted. Accordingly, Theodorus was baptized three days after his pledge to do so.¹⁸⁷ After that, it was like a dam had broken, according to Severus. The rest of the Jews followed suit as fast as was possible, except for a few noble women. Their husbands had already converted, but not without internal and external struggles and hardships. Meletius, the brother of Theodorus, along with one Innocentius, were only converted after much inner resistance and debate among themselves, and after being physically and psychically exhausted by an attempt to flee. Theodorus’s cousin Galilaeus seems to have given in more easily, mainly for opportunistic reasons. He was followed by Caecilianus, the present *defensor* of the city and second in rank in the synagogue, and his brother Florianus. Caecilianus gave a speech in which his concern for the unity of the Jewish community is conspicuous. Should they convert, they should do it unanimously. At last there were only three noble women who still held out. One was Meletius’s wife Artemisia, daughter of count Litorius. Angry and frustrated by her husband’s apostasy, she only gave in after having experienced the miracle of water turning into honey. The other two, Innocentius’s wife and her sister, were

¹⁸⁶In Severus—and apparently among his flock as well—there is nothing of that suspicion with regard to the sincerity of Jewish converts that would later become usual among Christians.

¹⁸⁷Severus never tells us what happened later between Theodorus and his wife. Perhaps he has forgotten to do so; perhaps he did not want to tell us because, from his point of view, it was not edifying; or perhaps the matter was still unresolved at the time of writing.

the last to surrender. The sister boarded a ship to leave the island (encouraged to this by the bishop, “because she could not be turned to faith in Christ by either words or miracles”). Innocentius’s wife only gave in after four days of intensive attempts to persuade her, and much prayer. Finally, on the last of the eight days Severus and his flock had been in Magona, the sister of Innocentius’s wife returned from sea (since this was in the winter season, the sailors may have returned to shore because the sea was too risky), and was now ready for conversion. Altogether 540 souls were in this way added to the church of Christ from the Jews on Minorca, and Severus gives us the impression that with this number the victory of Christ was complete: there were no other Jews left on the island to convert.

There is one feature in Severus’s story that has been left out in the above summary, but which he himself accords a crucial role in the whole event. Some of the main actors in the story had dreams some weeks before the dramatic event, heralding the event as well as its significance. Severus himself and a Christian noblewoman named Theodora had identical dreams about Severus tilling a woman’s (= the synagogue’s) fields (ch. 10). But most important of all, Theodorus, the Jewish leader, is said to have had a dream in which he saw the local synagogue full of singing monks after twelve men had warned him there was really a lion in the synagogue (ch. 11). Severus, of course, had no problems in interpreting this dream: the lion was Christ, his presence in the synagogue was symbolized by the singing monks.

One could regard these three reports of dreams as Severus’s attempt at making the whole event divinely pre-ordained. He is so specific, however, as to details about to whom these dreams were reported prior to the event, especially Theodorus’s, that one hesitates to regard them as pure inventions after the event. Severus must also have reckoned with the possibility that some of the involved persons might read his account. And there is one striking feature in Theodorus’s dream that rings authentic: he saw the synagogue full of *monks*. In the actual event, monks play no role at all,¹⁸⁸ but that is one of the points at which Severus’s story is non-typical. Theodorus may, in 417/418, have heard several stories of marauding bands of monks who first occupied and then burnt down synagogues, one of the most famous and recent examples being the burning of the synagogue in Callinicum in 388. This synagogue had afterwards been converted into a church. The event had become much publicized thanks to Ambrose of Milan and his confrontation with emperor Theodosius over the issue. Theodosius had ordered his military commander in the area to punish the perpetrators of the arson and to request from the responsible bishop that he pay for the reconstruction of the synagogue. Ambrose, in his Epistle 40 to the emperor, made the incident widely known and demanded both that the emperor let the bishop off scot-free

¹⁸⁸We only hear of two monks seeing a vision outside the church in Magona, 20.4–12. These could well be visitors from the neighboring island Capraria, see Demougeot, “L’évêque Sévère,” 23.

and that no church funds be used for repairing the house of Christ's enemies. This was in fact what happened, and although Theodosius in 393 reiterated a ban on destruction of synagogues, Theodorus on Minorca would have learned from all of this that if a Christian mob destroyed his synagogue, nothing much would happen to them and remuneration to the Jews would hardly materialize. Theodorus's dream, dressed in beautiful allegoric garb by Severus, looks very much like a nightmare to Theodorus—the nightmare that what he had learned had happened in other places might happen also on Minorca.

The overarching framework into which the incident on Minorca is to be placed is the process commonly called the "Christianization" of the Roman Empire in the post-Constantinian era. The process had, in the main, two dimensions: (1) the defining of Christian orthodoxy and the accompanying suppression of heresy; (2) the gradual wearing down of traditional paganism, sometimes boosted by coercive means, first and foremost the coerced conversions of pagan shrines into churches (or else their destruction). These measures had proved successful when it came to putting an effective end to public displays of pagan worship in cities and towns. They were often initiated by marauding bands of monks, and sometimes were even supported by imperial troops. When it came to the question of whether the same strategy would be effective against the Jews, the imperial authorities objected. Jewish synagogues were still housing a legal form of worship and should remain unharmed. But on the "folk" level, many seem to have thought that what had worked so well against the pagans should also work against the Jews. In addition, state action against those who broke the imperial decrees was sufficiently lenient (or non-existent) to give the Christian mobs confidence of immunity in practice.

The event on Minorca, so vividly and tendentiously told by Severus, in many ways heralded events to come, namely the forced mass conversions of the early Middle Ages. It is the first such event we know of, and it is better documented than many others. There is no doubt that physical violence was involved. There was a riot, stones were thrown, and the synagogue was burnt down. Severus obviously is aware that all of this was in flagrant contradiction to imperial law. He tries as best he can to blunt any criticism by moving the events into the realm of the miraculous. If the events happened through divine intervention, who can blame Severus and his flock? Severus is also convinced that the events are justified by their outcome. He clearly thinks that in Minorca Christians may now see the beginning of that eschatological conversion of the whole Jewish people that was predicted by the Fathers on the basis of Scripture, and Romans chapter 11 in particular.

In retrospect, the event on Minorca had some features peculiar to it. Burning of synagogues and other violent measures had been tried by local Christian mobs in other places and before the incident at Minorca. They had, as far as we know, been completely unsuccessful with regard to producing converts. According to Severus's account, these violent measures in themselves were not effective in Minorca either.

Mass conversions, on the other hand, had happened in other places and before the incident on Minorca. In such cases we are dealing with small and closely knit tribes following their chief in his or her change of religion (see above on the Saracen tribe). The mass conversion on Minorca has some similarities with such events: this was a small and closely knit Jewish community on a small and isolated island. It seems almost natural that if this community was to convert, they would do so collectively, and that the conversion of their leader would be of decisive importance.

In this respect, the mass conversion at Minorca was unlike later mass conversions produced by royal legislation, which gave each Jewish individual the choice of baptism or exile (as later happened in Visigothic Spain in the seventh century C.E.). When this type of coercion was applied, it always resulted in a large-scale “problem” with reluctant converts who continued Jewish practices underground. It would have been of great interest to know what happened on Minorca in this latter respect, but here the sources fail us. We simply do not know. Whether the absence of any evidence for such “problems” can be taken as evidence that no such problems existed is at best uncertain.

Evidence for Jewish Believers in the Syriac Fathers

Sten Hidal

1. The Emergence of Christianity in Syria

The oldest history of the Christian church in the Syriac speaking area is still problematic and probably is not one to be wholly solved in the near future. As is well known, in the New Testament Antioch plays an important role, and the incident in Antioch (Acts 14:24–15:35) can be seen as a crucial step towards a “dejudaization” of early Christianity. In Antioch the adherents of the Jesus movement were for the first time called “Christians” according to Acts 11:26.¹

Antioch was, however, a city profoundly influenced by a Hellenistic culture; a melting pot of different religions and cults in the eastern part of the Roman empire. The dialect of eastern Aramean known as Syriac was probably not the first language of the majority of the inhabitants, although most of them understood it. John Chrysostom, the famous presbyter of Antioch in the fourth century, later to become archbishop of Constantinople, obviously had no command of the native language, while his older contemporary Eusebius of Emesa spoke and wrote Syriac. In her description of the Paschal liturgy of Jerusalem in 384, Egeria points out that the bishop’s catechisms immediately were translated into “the Syriac language” (*Itinerarium Egeriae* 47.3). This, no doubt, reflects the bilingual character of Near Eastern Christendom.

Outside Antioch, the Christian church encountered a Semitic language and culture more or less influenced by its Greek vicinity. In the Abgar Legend, retold by Eusebius of Caesarea in *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.13, we get (or so it seems) a

¹ On Jews and Christians in Antioch, see the thought-provoking dissertation: Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (Routledge Early Church Monographs; London: Routledge, 2003). On the conflict in Antioch as a dividing point, see also Günter Stemberger, “Judenchristentum,” RAC 19:230.

clear picture of how the Christian message found its way into Syria. King Abgar of Edessa sent a letter to Jesus, who replied to him in a letter and sent Addai to preach the gospel. Needless to say, this is a simplified and highly legendary version of a complicated and in time extended procedure. It is, however, of interest to note that Christianity in Syria (or at least Edessa) is said to have its roots in a missionary activity from Palestine, and is thus Jewish in its origin.

In a sharp contrast to this view, in the 1930s W. Bauer put forward a theory according to which the oldest form of Christianity in Syria was entirely “heretical,” i.e., Marcionite,² and did not go back before ca. 150. A certain amount of support is provided from the fact that according to Ephraim the orthodox, i.e., Nicæan, party in Edessa was called the “Palutians” by its opponents, who obviously formed the majority. Palut was bishop at a time when “Christian” was a synonym of Marcionite.

This view underlines the highly pluralistic form of early Christianity in Mesopotamia. This is helpful, since all too often the orthodoxy of a later period has been retrojected into earlier times. Nevertheless, Bauer’s application of “orthodoxy” and “heresy” to the early Church scene involves a categorical anachronism and perhaps also a trace of romantic idealization of early “heretics,” as can be seen in Harnack in his monograph on Marcion.³ This has been pointed out by R. Murray, who in his important monograph *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1975) underlines the Jewish background of the early Syriac Church. This is a partial return to a central theme in the Abgar Legend. It is hardly credible that Syriac Christianity—as we know it in the fourth century—should have developed from a direct apostolic mission from Palestine. Murray reminds us of the existence of the kingdom of Adiabene, a buffer state between the Roman empire and Persia, and a neighbor to Osrhoene, which it met at the frontier-city of Nisibis (Ephraim’s hometown). In the first century the royal house of Adiabene was converted to Judaism, a fact proudly mentioned by Josephus (*Ant.* 20.17–48). A flourishing Jewish community existed in Adiabene since then. “Whatever is the truth about Jewish origins elsewhere in the Syriac speaking area, the Christianity of Aphrahat and Ephrem is best accountable for as a breakway movement among the Jewish community in Adiabene.”⁴

Murray’s theory has its weak points, but it correctly puts the spotlight on the Jewish background of Syrian Christianity. Our knowledge of Judaism in this area is much extended since the days of Bauer. We are familiar with a wide-ranging spectrum of Judaism from the Pharisaic movement and its successors to various

²Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (2d ed.; ed. G. Strecker; Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1964).

³Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion, das Evangelium vom fremden Gott: Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche* (TU 45; 2d rev. ed.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1924).

⁴Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 8.

gnostic circles. The community in Qumran has left an abiding impression and shows us that the ascetic ideal—so central to early Christianity in Syria—was not altogether without Jewish precedent. It is interesting to note that J. Carmignac has claimed that the anonymous author of the *Odes of Solomon* was a Jew from Qumran who was converted to Christianity. According to this theory, the original language of the *Odes* was Hebrew.⁵ Charlesworth also stresses the resemblance between the imagery of Qumran and the *Odes*.⁶

In such a milieu, the borderline between Judaism and Christianity was not easily drawn. Neither Judaism nor Christianity was in itself clearly defined, still less the distinction between them. We have to do with a gradual transition from Judaism to Christianity, but there was also movement in the other direction, from Christianity to Judaism. It has to be remembered that the Jewish community in this area was both vital and expansive.⁷ This goes particularly for the Persian empire, where the Jews as a rule were favored by the authorities in contrast to the Christian church. The Christian hegemony in the Roman Empire was not firmly established until the end of the fourth century, and during his short reign the emperor Julian made Judaism a privileged religion.

There are even signs of a proselytizing Judaism in the period under consideration.⁸ The Jewish academy in Edessa was widely renowned for its learning and attracted large numbers of students, maybe not all Jews. The sharp tone against the Jews in Ephrem's hymns is best seen from this perspective: the Jewish community was not a small, downtrodden group, but large, well organized and not without power of attraction.

2. The Sources

Our knowledge of Syriac Christianity up to ca. 400 is very limited with one exception: Ephrem has left us with a vast number of writings of different genres. Prior to Ephrem, however, we must rely on the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, Aphrahat, the *Pseudo-Clementines*, and the *Didascalia*. I leave the intriguing Bardaisan out of this list, since he constitutes a problem of his own and he is not relevant to the question of Jewish elements in the Syriac church.⁹ The evidence for Jewish Christian and Aramaic gospel tradition is difficult to interpret and must be left aside here.

⁵J. Carmignac, “Un qumrânen converti au christianisme: l'auteur des *Odes de Salomon*,” in *Qumran-Probleme* (ed. Hans Bardtke; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), 75–108.

⁶James H. Charlesworth, “Les *Odes de Salomon* et les manuscrits de la mer morte,” *RB* 77 (1970): 522–49.

⁷On the power of attraction emerging from the Jewish community, see especially Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1993), esp. 177–287.

⁸See Feldmann, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 288–415.

⁹On Bardaisan, see H. J. W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967).

(1) The *Odes of Solomon*, sometimes seen as the earliest extant work in Syriac, are notoriously difficult to pinpoint as to their dating and religious milieu.¹⁰ Many scholars have classified them as Gnostic, but nowadays a consensus seems to have emerged according to which they are close to Qumran and the Fourth Gospel.¹¹ A baptismal interpretation was early suggested and seems probable.¹² The motif of *descensus* and the repeated mention of the wreath are to be noted in this connexion.

The *Odes* bear the name of Solomon, although the odist is never identified. The odes certainly betray knowledge of both the Old Testament and the New, but citations are absent and allusions often hard to identify. The imagery is generally Jewish and the texts betray a thorough knowledge of Jewish thought-forms, but there are no hints of Torah observance and no sign of ethnocentricity. The patriarchs and the promise to them are mentioned once (31.13), but the law is altogether absent, and Israel is never mentioned. The odes are pervaded by a quiet and intensive awareness of the salvation in Christ, and although the imagery occasionally is antagonistic, there are no hints of oppositions within the community. The *Hodayot* in Qumran in many ways offer a good point of comparison. The *Hodayot* certainly have emerged in an environment marked with a high degree of ethnic consciousness, but they nevertheless betray few distinct signs of that. Like the *Odes*, the *Hodayot* are permeated by a profound thankfulness over God's salvation.

(2) The *Gospel of Thomas* has become the subject of a vast literature.¹³ The provenance of the gospel is till under debate, but it is at least not improbable that we must search for a Syriac original before 200. The Jewish character of the gospel must not be exaggerated, nor the gnostic one. The law does not constitute a central theme in the text.

(3) The Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas* (so called because Thomas is always called Judas) correspond closely the Greek *Acts of Thomas*.¹⁴ The gnostic

¹⁰ The *Odes of Solomon* are easily available in James H. Charlesworth's edition: *The Odes of Solomon: The Syriac Texts Edited with Translation and Notes* (SBLTT Pseudepigrapha Series 7.13; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977) and his English translation in OTP 2:725–71. See also Michael Lattke, *Die Oden Salomos in ihrer Bedeutung für Neues Testament und Gnosis* (OBO 25; 4 vols.; Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions Universitaires, 1979–1998).

¹¹ See James H. Charlesworth, "Qumran, John and the *Odes of Solomon*," in *John and Qumran* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; London: Chapman, 1972), 107–36.

¹² J. H. Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon* (Texts and Studies 8.3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912).

¹³ Among the more recent publications on the *Gospel of Thomas*, see, e.g., Richard Valantasis, ed., *The Gospel of Thomas* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1997), Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson, *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1998), and Risto Uro, ed., *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh; T&T Clark, 1998).

¹⁴ See A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* (2d rev. ed.; NovTSup 108; Leiden: Brill, 2003) and Jan N. Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 6; Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

elements in the Greek version have to a large extent been eliminated in the Syriac version. The Acts are very encratite and bear witness to the characteristic form of early Syriac ecclesiology: the nucleus of the church, the *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, is made up of celibate men and women, “the sons and daughters of the covenant.” Sometimes celibacy is claimed to be a condition for baptism, but how far this was practiced is a matter of uncertainty.¹⁵ This encratism and the monastic movement were in earlier research seen as creating a sharp borderline between Judaism and Christianity, but we are now better informed of Judaism before rabbinic orthodoxy emerged as dominant. In the writings from Qumran we find passages that bear resemblances with the imagery in the *Acts of Judas Thomas*. The holy war with its sexual abstinence is transformed into an eschatological level, and the community is pictured as a covenant.¹⁶

Whether or not the *Acts of Judas Thomas* is to be labelled as Jewish Christian depends on how far one is prepared to allow for encratite features in a Jewish context. Since the roots of Gnosticism nowadays often are sought in various marginal groups of Jewish origin, such a view of the *Acts* is perhaps not altogether improbable.

(4) Aphrahat, “the Persian sage,” lived in the Sassanide empire and was an older contemporary of Ephraim’s.¹⁷ It is a remarkable thing that the two portal figures of Syriac literature in all probability never met. Aphrahat was a monk, possibly a bishop, and his monastery was situated in Mar Mattai, north of Nineve and close to modern Mosul. Between 336 and 345 he wrote twenty-three theological texts that are called, in Latin, *demonstrationes*. They are extremely important since they betray no knowledge of Greek theology or philosophy. Aphrahat was a biblicalist, and his main source of knowledge as to religion was the Bible. His represented a Semitic version of Christianity, and so the Jews were of prime importance in his *demonstrationes*.

Aphrahat’s writings have been described as a form of “counter-exegesis.” Fully aware that they have been given to and transmitted by the Jews for a very long time, Aphrahat fights for his right to use and interpret those holy writings. As we have mentioned, the Jews in Persia were favored, at least at times, when

¹⁵ See Arthur Vööbus, *A History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East. 1. The Origin of Asceticism. Early Monasticism in Persia* (CSCO 184; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1958). This complicated matter has been treated in a balanced way by Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem* (CistSS 124; Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1985), 131–42.

¹⁶ For the connection between holy war and sexual abstinence, see 1QM VII, 5–7. Several times the community is referred as the “new covenant,” see CD VI, 19; VIII, 21; XIX, 34; 1QpHab II, 3–4.

¹⁷ On Aphrahat, see the introduction in Marie-Joseph Pierre, ed., *Aphraate le Sage Persan: Les exposés. Traduction du Syriaque, introduction et notes* (SC 349, 359; Paris: Cerf, 1988, 1989). The Syriac text of the demonstrations is found in *Patrologia Syriaca* 1.1 (ed. R. Graffin et al., Paris 1894).

compared to the church, and Aphrahat clearly writes from an inferior position. A thorough investigation of Aphrahat's theology and its relation to contemporary Judaism remains a *pium desideratum*, although a start has been made by J. Neusner.¹⁸

The titles of the *demonstrationes* reveal the dominating topics of the author's teaching. Examples of these titles include "On fasting" (*Dem.* 3), "On the penitents" (*Dem.* 7), "On humility" (*Dem.* 9), "On circumcision" (*Dem.* 11), "On the Sabbath" (*Dem.* 13), "On distinguishing between different kinds of food" (*Dem.* 15), and "On persecution" (*Dem.* 21). *Dem.* 18 and 19 carry the title "Against the Jews." Important is *Dem.* 16 "On the fact that the peoples have replaced the people." According to Aphrahat, the Jewish nation has been rejected by God because of its disobedience. An impressive amount of scriptural sayings is evoked in order to prove this. As is so often the case, Aphrahat's argumentation takes the form of a list of testimonies from the Bible, and the prophets' oracles of judgement against Israel serve his goal well. The Gentiles, on the other hand, listen to the Messiah and are saved. A number of Gentiles in the Old Testament have clearly been elected by God (e.g., Rahab, Oved Edom, Eved Melek and Ruth), and thus show that God is by no means bound to the election made at Sinai. The conclusion of this demonstration merits citing:

I have written to you this small reminder because the Jews boast saying: "We are God's people and sons of Abraham!" Let us then listen to what John tells them when they boast saying "We are the sons of Abraham!" John tells them: "Do not presume to say to yourselves: We have Abraham as our father, for I tell you, God is able from these stones to rise up children to Abraham" (Matt 3:9). Our Saviour tells them: "You have Cain as your father, and not Abraham! (John 8:44 Peshitta). And the apostle says: "The branches which sinned have been broken off, and we, we have been grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree" (Rom 11:17). Let us not boast, let us not sin, but fear that also we be broken off since we have been grafted in the olive tree! This is the answer to the Jews, who boast saying: "We are God's people and sons of Abraham!" (*Dem.* 16.8; my translation).

Aphrahat is the clear exponent of a theology according to which the Jews have been replaced by the Christian church in the covenant with God. According to him, the Jews continue to misinterpret their own holy writings. Food can in no way defile a human being, and the dietary laws were imposed upon the Jews solely in order to make them avoid idolatry in Egypt (*Dem.* 15.3). The Jews boast of circumcision, the Sabbath and the dietary laws, but they are all of no importance since the Messiah has appeared.

Among the Jews in the Sassanide empire during Aphrahat's time there seems to have been an eager expectation of returning to Palestine. The short reign of Julian may have reinforced such expectations; indeed, the emperor nursed a

¹⁸Jacob Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (StPB 19; Leiden: Brill, 1971).

scheme of rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem.¹⁹ It is uncertain whether Aphrahat lived until the reign of Julian, but in his 19th demonstration ("Against the Jews who says that it is established that they shall be reassembled") he violently opposes the hope among some Jews of returning. This demonstration, which argues that there have been two exiles of the Jewish people (in Egypt and in Babylonia) with returns, but there will never be a third return, is almost entirely made up by heaping biblical citations one upon another: there are no hints at alleged Jewish political untrustworthiness. Above all, the scriptural evidence is gathered exclusively from the Old Testament (a few citations from the New Testament appear as well) and the whole text may, perhaps, be read as a strong and somewhat biased intra-Jewish argument for not returning to the land of Israel, even if that were possible.

Many Jews, of course, would have felt alienated when reading this text—but perhaps not more than after having read some polemical statements of rabbis of a different school. Aphrahat remains on speaking terms with the Jews. He argues from the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and he never appeals to anti-Semitic prejudices, a tactic that was very common in the ancient world. He tries to understand his Jewish counterpart, but deplores his inability to accept the Christian argument. He is fully familiar with haggadic traditions and has a supreme command of biblical imagery, particularly of the Old Testament. But the borderline between Judaism and Christianity to him is clear, and the law—except the decalogue—is no longer valid.

It is quite possible that Aphrahat was a convert from Judaism. If so, he certainly is to be seen as an exponent of Jewish Christianity. His knowledge of the Jewish holy Scriptures and Jewish *haggadah* may be taken as evidence for this. But since we know next to nothing of his descent, this is a matter of pure conjecture.

(5) The Pseudo-Clementine writings were the foundation upon which F. C. Baur in the 19th century formed his picture of *Judenchristentum*, a strategy also followed by Schoeps and Strecker. It cannot be denied that these enigmatic writings in some respects easily lend themselves to such an interpretation. There are, however, many problems to be solved before the *Pseudo-Clementines* can be used, if at all, as sources for Syrian Jewish Christianity. In this connection, it suffices to refer to chapter 11 in this book.

The *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a church order mainly dealing with the episcopate, ordinations and the celebration of Easter, was originally written in Greek, but was early translated into Syriac since it is cited by Aphrahat in the 340s. Epiphanius attests that it was used in Syria. We do not know the place of its composition, but there are several traits pointing towards Syria. Being a sort of church order, this work has been thoroughly treated in chapter 20 of this book.

¹⁹ See A. Lippold, "Iulianus I," RAC 19:442–55, esp. 462.

The *Book of the Cave of Treasures* or the *Caverna Thesaurorum* is the name of a book in the genre of para-biblical literature or the “re-written Bible.”²⁰ The book exists in east-Syrian and west-Syrian recensions, while according to most scholars the nucleus of the book may go back to the fourth or even the third century, the present form hardly antedates the sixth century. The *Cave of Treasures* retells the Bible with many haggadic expansions from the creation to the Christian Pentecost. A particular interest in chronology (cf. the *Book of Jubilees*) and genealogy is easily discerned. The identity of certain persons is important to establish. The *Genesis Apocryphon* offers many parallels. As it now stands, it is difficult to characterize the *Cave of Treasures* as anything other than a Christian writing with a deep interest in and knowledge of *haggadah*, rather close to Ephrem in this respect. On the complicated question of the relationship between Jewish sources and Christian writings from this period, Van Rompay gives a balanced statement: “While it is certainly useful to investigate further the parallels between Jewish and Syriac exegetical literature, the juxtaposition of passages will not suffice to explain the nature of the interrelationship between the texts. If Syriac authors have borrowed from written Jewish sources, the latter are no longer extant. No doubt oral tradition may account for part of the parallels.”²¹

It is important to the author of the *Cave of Treasures* to establish a parallel between Adam and Christ. The cross of Christ was erected exactly on the place where Adam transgressed the commandment. It is also the place where Melchizedek served as a high priest and Isaac brought his son to be sacrificed. Behind this we can see not only the principle of “the last things shall be as the first,” *ta eschata hōs ta prōta*, but also a fixed determination to interrelate the two testaments as closely as possible.

(6) With Ephrem the Syrian, “the harp of the Holy Spirit,” we enter into the golden age of Syriac literature. Without Ephrem’s extensive writings, we would have been in a much worse position regarding our knowledge of Syriac Christianity in the fourth century. Ephrem lived between 302 and 373 and was ordained a deacon in Nisibis, where he taught at the Christian school of theology. When Nisbis was surrendered to the Persians in 363 Ephrem moved westwards to Edessa, where he settled and continued teaching and writing.

²⁰ The *Cave of Treasures* was first edited by C. Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle: Aus dem syrischen Texte dreier unedirten Handschriften ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1883). A modern edition is Su-Min Ri, *La Caverne des Trésors: Les deux recensions syriaques* (CSCO 486–87, Scriptores Syri 207–8; Leuven: Peeters, 1987). See L. Van Rompay, “The Christian Syriac Tradition of Interpretation,” in *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (until 1300): Antiquity* (ed. M. Sæbø et al.; Vol. 1.1 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 629–31. “Der Grundstock dieses Textes ist ubestritten judechristlich und reicht zumindest ins 4. Jahrhundert zurück,” G. Kretschmar, “Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden: Forschungsprobleme der ersten christlichen Jahrhunderte,” in *Juden und Christen in der Antike* (ed. J. van Amersfoort and J. van Oort; Kampen: Kok, 1990), 34–35.

²¹ L. Van Rompay, “The Christian Syriac Interpretation,” 617.

This is not the place even to outline Ephrem's literary heritage and his theology; investigations of this are in good supply.²² Only his relations to Judaism are of interest to us here, and particularly the question whether we can trace evidence of Jewish believers in Jesus in his writings. First of all it must be said that hardly any other father of the church has so many and so harsh statements on the Jews as Ephrem has. He calls them "crucifiers" and repeatedly accuses them of misunderstanding their own traditions. The Jews carefully scrutinize the Scriptures, he says, but fail to understand them. In the 50th hymn *Against the Heresies* this charge is formulated thus:

The Jews are put to shame
 for they failed to study and seek out
 the reason for the Law;
 instead they took up and dissolved
 the meaning of the commandments,
 clothing themselves without any understanding
 in the sounds of the words,
 for they did not labour to acquire
 that furnace of thought by which they might assay
 the truth and real meaning of the Scripture (*Haer.* 50.4).²³

To Ephrem the line dividing Judaism and Christianity is crystal clear: whoever has become Christian cannot in any respect remain a Jew. Ephrem takes pains to show that Jesus by his life and teaching has abolished the old dispensation. The following lines from the 8th hymn *On Virginity* sounds like a commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews:

By his sacrifice he abolished the sacrifices,
 and the libations by his incense,
 and the (Passover) lambs by his being slaughtered,
 the unleavened bread by his bread,
 and the bitter herbs by his suffering.
 By his solid food he weaned and took away the milk.
 By his baptism were abolished the bathing and sprinkling
 that the elders of the People taught.

²² Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, gives a good introduction. See also Robert Murray, "Ephraem Syrus," *TRE* 9:752–62; F. Rilliet, "Ephrem the Syrian," *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (ed. A. di Berardino; trans. A. Walford; New York, 1992), 1:276–77; and—as to his exegetical work—Van Rompay, "The Christian Syriac Tradition of Interpretation," 622–28. All the writings of Ephrem preserved in Syriac are edited (with a German translation) by Edmund Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones* (CSCO; 8 vols.; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1970–1973). A good selection of hymns (with introductions and commentary) is translated in Kathleen E. McVey, ed., *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (CWS; New York: Paulist Press, 1989).

²³ Translated by S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 48.

By his food tithes of food were rejected,
food is not unclean, but thought is. (*Virg.* 8.9–11a)²⁴

Ephrem is very outspoken when it comes to the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. The dispensation of the new covenant is intended to replace the old in all essential respects. But the teaching of Moses is good as far as it goes. Ephrem is one of the most anti-Marcionite among the Fathers, and any thought of separating the God of creation from the God of salvation is absolutely alien to him.

On the other hand, Ephrem's writings abound with Jewish traditions, mostly *haggadah*.²⁵ His scriptural interpretation is very much “counter-exegesis” like that in Aphrahat, but since Ephrem did not experience the Jewish community as a threat in the same way as did his scholarly colleague on the other side of the Persian border, he exhibits a much more uncomplicated use of Jewish traditions, as in the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*. It is by no means clear that he himself saw these traditions as being Jewish. From a methodological point of view, it is highly dubious to postulate that a tradition found in both Ephrem and, e.g., the Targum and the Midrash must be borrowed from the Jewish source (cf. above on the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*).²⁶ There were many ways for the *haggadah* to move around and adapt various forms in Mesopotamia in those days. Ephrem does not quote rabbinic writings; it is, indeed, uncertain if he ever read any Jewish writings at all. But he certainly was thoroughly familiar with Jewish traditions. No other father of the church—except perhaps Aphrahat—can be compared to him in that respect.

Ephrem was a poet and a polemicist. His hymns—the main bulk of his writings—are often long and detailed expositions of a biblical story or theme. The story or the theme is elucidated from every possible angle, the author marveling at all the symbols and mysteries embedded in the divine Scriptures and confessing himself unable to fully understand their richness. He fights against heresies of all kinds, particularly the Arians, the Marcionites and the followers of Bardaisan, whom he accuses of astrological fatalism. The Jews are another group of “heretics” frequently mentioned. But nowhere do we see any evidence of Jewish Christianity or Christians with emphasis on the abiding importance of Jewish ethnicity, observance of the torah, or a “low” Christology. This is not to say that “Jewish Christianity” is constituted by these factors, only that the borderline

²⁴ My translation. The Syriac text of the last stanza is uncertain and omitted by Beck (see note 20 in this chapter). “The solid food” is a reference to Heb 5:12–13. Christianity is the solid food, Judaism the milk.

²⁵ The *haggadot* in Ephrem's prose commentaries on Genesis and Exodus are analysed (with references to the hymns) in Sten Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca: Die Kommentare des heiligen Ephräm des Syrers zu Genesis und Exodus mit besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer auslegungsgeschichtlichen Stellung* (ConBOT 6; Lund: Gleerup, 1974). See also Tryggve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian with Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition* (ConBOT 11; Lund: Gleerup, 1978), and L. Van Rompay, “The Christian Syriac Interpretation,” 622–28.

²⁶ See Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca*.

between Christianity and Judaism according to Ephrem is unmovable. A Jew is a Jew, an orthodox Christian is an orthodox Christian, a heretical Christian is a heretical Christian. Never do they mingle. The juxtaposition of Jews and heretical Christians can sometimes create an impression that Jews are just another group of heretics, but as a rule they are clearly distinguished.

In his anthropology, Ephrem may sometimes remind us of his Jewish surroundings. The doctrine of hereditary sin is virtually absent from his theology; Adam and Eve did transgress a divine command in Eden but in no way did this inflict all humanity for time to come. Ephrem's anthropology is much more optimistic than Augustine's, but so is the Greek Fathers' as a whole, without having any Jewish influence.

Ephrem sees the Jews first of all as those who deny Jesus as the Messiah. Their obedience of God's commands is no problem in itself, but they do not understand that God has sent his Son into the world. The Jews form the ancient people, but in Christ, God has called a new people. The Old Testament properly understood, in Ephrem's opinion, clearly teaches that the Nation has been replaced by the nations, or as he sings in the already quoted eighth hymn *De virginitate*, stanza 20:

Melchizedek was nobler
than the high priests of the Nation.
He officiated and taught among the nations
that the High Priest who was to come to the nations
would be sacrificed by the Nation.

Although Israel in its history has provided many "types" (an important concept in Ephrem's theology), the reality is to be found only in the church, as is said in hymn 5 *De azymis*:

The type was in Egypt, the reality in the Church,
the reward will be fulfilled in the Kingdom.

Israel has been rejected in favor of the Gentiles. Aphrahat and Ephrem are of the same opinion, but Ephrem is more aggressive towards the Jews. To a certain degree the rhetorical language contributes to this fact: Ephrem is very fond of antitheses, hyperbata, and paradoxes not to be found in Aphrahat's prosaic and more sober language. It is a remarkable and so far not wholly explained fact, that the very father of the church who moves more easily in the world of the Old Testament than any other theologian in the ancient church does has taken over far more post-biblical traditions than any other Christian expositor of the Bible has done. He is also the most severe critic of the Jewish people.

3. Jewish Believers in Jesus in Syria?

In its earliest phase, ancient Syrian Christianity is an area in which the established dogmatic categories seldom are of any use. What would an "orthodox" Christian be in this extremely pluralistic milieu? Adherence to the Nicaean faith

is one thing, but only after 325, and conciliar decisions often traveled slowly and were interpreted in various ways. Information was not always reliable; for example, the Arian emperor Constantius is said explicitly to be a pillar of orthodoxy by Ephrem (*Against Julian* 1,12)! The dogmatic categories were created primarily for and by the Greek theologians, but east of Antioch theology was of a different kind.

One part of this different background was the remaining Jewish influence. In the Greek speaking church and still more in the Western part of the Empire the Jewish heritage in the church gradually disappeared, as did knowledge of Hebrew. Justin Martyr is still acutely aware of Christianity's Jewish roots, as is Origen, but later on the Jews mainly figure in the deplorable genre known as *Adversus Iudeos*. The Old Testament of course is read, preached over, and commented upon, but contemporary Judaism tends to fade away or is reduced to a mere target of Christian hostility.

East of Antioch this was not possible. The Jewish community was strong and the imperial decisions against the Jews were not always carried out with full efficiency. In Persia the Jews as a rule were favored over against the Christians. The majority view is that the Christian church in Syria has a Jewish background (only Bauer and a few others uphold the theory of a pagan background). If this were the case, surely we would have evidence of various groups, various Jewish-Christian groups, standing more or less between the two religious communities. And all the more since Antioch was one of the first places where the question of Jewish identity within the Christian community was brought to the fore.

If Jewish descent and a high degree of torah observance are seen as constitutive to Jewish Christianity, then there is only slight evidence that there were Jewish believers in Jesus in Syria. They are mainly to be found in groups which at an early period separated from mainstream Christianity, e.g., the Ebionites, and managed to survive in remote areas. The *Pseudo-Clementines* is probably a variant of this movement. The *Odes of Solomon* can perhaps be seen as a highly original development of the Jewish imagery known from Qumran with additions from the Fourth Gospel, but without any stress on the law.²⁷ The Thomas literature, particularly the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, also received a strong Jewish influence, but the gnostic coloring is stronger.

Aphrahat and Ephrem both reject Judaism. Their absorbing interest in the Old Testament and their extensive use of Jewish traditions, however, modify this verdict. Their anti-Judaism is exegetically founded: the Jews distort and misinterpret their own Bible. The Jews attacked by Aphrahat and Ephrem are undoubtedly "real" Jews: they do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

The *Didascalia* takes a middle position. Judaizing Christians are combated and the theory of deuterosis removes the foundation of any deeper torah

²⁷ See Antti Marjanen, "Thomas and Jewish Religious Practices," in *Thomas at the Crossroads*, 163–82.

observance. The Jews, however, are seen as brethren and the counter-exegesis of Aphrahat and Ephrem is not continued.

If, however, the ethnicity is stressed, then there no doubt were several Jewish Christians in the Syriac speaking area. In that sense, Jewish Christianity must have been a factor in Mesopotamia from a very early date. The origin of *Peshitta* is and probably will remain obscure in many ways, but it is highly probable that some of the translators were Jews converted to Christianity. Especially in the Pentateuch, Targumic traditions occasionally are found.²⁸

It must be noted that there was no term for “Jewish Christian” in the ancient church. This makes the drawing of a borderline often very difficult. The oldest texts from Christian Syriac-speaking circles are often very vague and contain hardly any statements regarding confession. Not until the fourth century did a full consciousness in this respect emerge and then often with a continuing vagueness. But so much seems clear: to Aphrahat and Ephrem, Judaism and Christianity are entirely distinct entities and are in no ways to be confused. The beginnings of Christianity in Syria to a modern scholar are still in many ways a matter of conjecture.

²⁸ See Van Rompay, “The Christian Syriac Interpretation,” 614–16.

*Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century
(excluding Justin)*

Lawrence Lahey

Already in the Acts of the Apostles, Jews and Christians are depicted debating from the Bible¹ over the Messiahship of Jesus. The Christians both defend the claim and promote it in missionary activity among Jews. These scenes do not disappear in Christian literature after Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* (circa 160), but become part of *contra Iudeos* literature. *Contra Iudeos* texts argue for the truth of Christianity over Judaism based primarily on Old Testament proof texts.² There are essentially three forms of *contra Iudeos* writings: (1) testimony

¹ Most Old Testament references are cited here according to the LXX. I am very grateful to Dr. James Aitken, Prof. David Chapman, Dr. Alan Lowe, Prof. Alexander MacGregor, Prof. Christopher Nissen, Prof. David Reisman, Dr. Simone Lotven Sofian, and Prof. John Vaio, who offered valuable suggestions, corrections, or translated material. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this chapter are my own.

² Introductions to this literature include: A. L. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologetics until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935); Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der jüdisch-christlichen Beziehungen in den ersten Jahrhunderten* (Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft 25; Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1946); Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Age sur les Juifs et le Judaïsme* (Études juives 4; Paris: Mouton & Co., 1963); Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135–425* (trans. H. McKeating; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.–11. Jh.)* (3d ed.; Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 23: Theologie 172.; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995); Samuel Krauss, *History* (ed. William Horbury; vol. 1 of *The Jewish-Christian Controversy: From the Earliest Times to 1789*; TSAJ 56; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996); Andreas Kübler, *Disputationes graecae contra Iudeos: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild*, (Byzantinisches Archiv 18; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999); Patrick Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée: Étude des Sources et du Context littéraire" (PhD diss., Université de Genève, 2001).

collections, i.e., biblical proof texts grouped by themselves, without additional argumentation, under different headings;³ (2)tractates, i.e., argued presentations based on biblical texts, including some sermons and letters by church Fathers; and (3) dialogues, i.e., discussion or debate portrayed as between a Christian and a Jew (or among several participants) in order to work through Christian proofs and Jewish objections.

The focus of the first part of this chapter will be the third category, dialogues, because they depict Christian-Jewish discussion over a long period of time. In this way they help to fill in what may otherwise appear to be gaps in the Christian mission to Jews after Justin. They assist in filling in these historical gaps because in those cases where the origin and purposes of *contra Iudeos* works can be learned with certainty, they are found to arise from actual Christian-Jewish theological interaction, including Christian mission to Jews, as will be shown especially in part two of this chapter.

In part one, each dialogue will be surveyed by treating the background, the scene of debate, the occasional Jewish Christian sources, and the material which points to genuine Christian-Jewish interaction. Although the accuracy of the dialogues' depictions has been a matter of scholarly debate, there is much to indicate that they reflect Christian-Jewish arguments and interaction. The main qualification is that since these are Christian writings, the Christian position almost always receives much greater space than the Jewish position. It is recognized that although some of the dialogues may well have been inspired by and reflect in part an actual debate and that most of them give some substance of genuine Christian-Jewish disputation, none of the dialogues is a complete transcript of a discussion.⁴

The lopsided design of the dialogues is due to the function of *contra Iudeos* literature. Some have argued that this design functioned internally for Christians as catechetical tools of the overwhelmingly Gentile church for Gentile instruction, or to fulfill an edifying theological *topos* which exalts Christianity over Judaism but often does not reflect Christian-Jewish interaction, or possibly to convert Gentiles who might otherwise consider Judaism. According to this view they were rarely, if ever, used to convert Jews or to meet actual Christian-Jewish theological controversies.⁵ Some of the best methods to understand the genre's

³For example, Isaiah 7:14 is quoted under the heading “That Christ Would Be Born of a Virgin.”

⁴However, in one case of preserved minutes of an ancient discussion, *The Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides*, the work consists overwhelmingly of Origen's exposition. See Henry Chadwick and J. E. L. Oulton, eds., *Alexandrian Christianity* (Library of Christian Classics [Philadelphia, 1953–]; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 430–55. Moreover, although Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* has the lopsided design of the *contra Iudeos* genre, at 80.3 it claims to be a good representation of their conversation. This passage will be looked at more closely in part two of this chapter.

⁵Cf. A. C. McGiffert, “Christian Polemics against the Jews,” *The Presbyterian Review* (1888): 468, 470–71; George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *HTR* 14 (1921): 198; David Rokéah, “The Church Fathers and the Jews in Writings Designed for Internal

background have been lacking or under-appreciated in a significant number of treatments of the genre. These four methods are a close comparison of these works (1) with Jewish sources, (2) with notices of Jewish conversions, (3) with accounts of Christian-Jewish interaction, and (4) with notices of the purposes of *contra Iudeos* literature.⁶

Moreover, the church had continuous *contra Gentiles* and apologetic literature intended for Gentiles sympathetic to Christianity and to address pagan opposition, as well as specifically titled or self-described catechetical works. It would therefore seem to have little need to use full *contra Iudeos* works primarily for instructing Gentiles. Although catechetical and apologetic works directed largely at Gentiles might include some *contra Iudeos* material,⁷ these catechetical works

and External Use," in *Antisemitism through the Ages* (ed. S. Almog; New York: Pergamon Press, 1988), 64–65. See Krauss, *History*, 13–14, and William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 20–25, for surveys of scholarship on *contra Iudeos* literature's relation to Christian-Jewish interaction.

⁶Most recently Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judeos-Texte*; Andreas Külzer, *Disputationes graecae contra Iudeos*; Andrist, "Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée." While all three are valuable studies, they treat Jewish sources only occasionally (Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judeos-Texte*, 157–69, lists many relevant citations in Jewish sources, but compares them little with Christian authors; Andrist is aware of some notices about the origin and purpose of *contra Iudeos* literature treated in part two of this article).

⁷There is a concise refutation of the Jews in Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (33–40), a work which is a continuation of his *Against the Gentiles* (ca. 320). Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 10 (ca. 350), says that catechism for his (Gentile) hearers will include preparation "against heresies, against Jews, and Samaritans, and Gentiles." Despite similar statements in Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Catechetical Homilies* 1.10–11 (ca. 390?), and Augustine's *On Catechizing the Beginners* 7 & 27 (ca. 400; PL 40:309–48), they, and John Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions* (ca. 390), contain no substantial *contra Iudeos* argument, and they lack many of the standard testimonies found in *contra Iudeos* works. Some *contra Iudeos*-like material makes up part of two sections (2.51–70; 10.59–105) of Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Therapy for Hellenic Illnesses* (ca. 425), and *The Consultations of Zachaeus the Christian and Apollonius the Philosopher* 2.4–10 (CZA; see 4. below). Thus *contra Iudeos* material might make up part of a work directed primarily at Gentiles, but it is unlikely to be the main topic.

A possible exception might be John Chrysostom's *Proof against the Jews and Pagans that Christ is God* (ca. 380; PG 48:813–38), in which much of the work is made up of *contra Iudeos* arguments explained as proofs for Gentiles. But the work appears to be incomplete, and there is an unfulfilled promise that Jews also would be addressed (17.7; cf. 1.4), so that rather like Eusebius's *Proof of the Gospel* (ca. 315), discussed in part two below, Chrysostom seems to have intended to address both Gentiles and Jews. Chrysostom's *Proof* further differs from almost all *contra Iudeos* works by noting an intended Gentile, non-Christian, audience (1.4; 17.8).

There also exist testimony collections not said to be directed towards Jews, which share many of the standard scriptural proofs in the *contra Iudeos* tradition. These testimony collections include Melito of Sardis, *Extracts* (before 170; lost, cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.12–14); Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (ca. 190); Clement of Alexandria, *Prophetic Extracts* (ca. 200; GCS 17:135–55); P. Rylands Gk. 460/Testimony Book Fragments (early fourth cent.; C. H. Roberts, ed. *Two Biblical Papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester*

usually contain substantial instruction in Christian morality, such as the treatment of idolatry. Such material is absent, or nearly so, in most *contra Iudeos* works, apparently indicating that they were not primarily catechetical and that they were directed towards an audience that did not need to be instructed in some essential elements of Christian morality.⁸ Although this assumed knowledge of Christian morality on the part of the readers might suggest a Christian audience, it could also indicate a Jewish audience that would already share a great amount of Christian morality.⁹

This is not to say that *contra Iudeos* literature, mostly written and preserved by a largely Gentile church, would not have been read by Gentiles inside or outside the church for a variety of purposes. In part two below it will be shown that occasionally this literature was intended for both Jews and Gentiles, or sometimes for Christians who encountered Jewish polemic or participated in debate with Jews, and that some works were circulated among Christians after a debate. However, much of this genre arose out of Christian-Jewish interaction and reflects it to various degrees. *Contra Iudeos* works should be likened to other long-lasting Christian genres, such as liturgical, anti-heretical, apocalyptic, and chronological literature, which follow the same basic method of composition: a large and constant core of traditional material that is continually revised to meet or to record actual new situations in the genre. In the case of *contra Iudeos* literature, the situations are likely to have been Christian mission to the Jews as well as defense against Jewish critique of Christianity.¹⁰ In both cases, the need would seem to be to have the Christian arguments made available in detail, while the Jewish arguments could be abridged or summarized—the basic pattern in this

[Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1936]); Eusebius, *Prophetic Extracts* (ca. 310); Ps.-Epiphanius *Testimonies* (ca. 400). Such collections probably served some instructional purposes with Gentiles, but whether they could also be used to instruct Jews is unclear. However, they contain few, if any, of the Jewish objections in *contra Iudeos* works.

⁸Although book three of Cyprian's *Testimonies against the Jews* (ca. 248) is devoted to moral teaching, this book almost certainly was added at a later time, as its preface shows. The preface for the first two books says that the *Testimonies* were written to Quirinus, a Christian, who had made a "very urgent" (*inpensissima*) request for the work. Since Cyprian composed it "just as" (*sicut*) he had been requested, and since he says that he did not fully treat the subject but provided material for others to treat it, it is quite possible that the work was composed originally so that Quirinus (and others) could answer Jewish objections, although it also was to profit Christian readers' faith. Cyprian, *Letter 592*, speaks of the threats to his community by Gentiles and Jews. Cf. Williams, *Adversus Iudeos*, 56–57.

⁹John Chrysostom, *Proof against the Jews and Pagans* 7.7, corroborates that Jews generally would not need to be instructed about idolatry and other matters. He says that after Christianity came and exceeded Judaism in honor, Jews became better, and "no Jew now sacrifices his children, no Jew rushes off to idols, no Jew worships a calf" (Harkins's translation: John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* [trans. and annot. Paul W. Harkins; ACW 31; New York: Newman Press, 1963]).

¹⁰Such defense could be for two purposes, either for lay Christians who might happen to encounter Jewish critique, or for a someone who sought more formal debate with Jews.

literature. Occasional evidence indicating both mission and defense will be presented in the survey of the dialogues, while the second part of this chapter will look further at the purposes for *contra Iudeos* literature generally in Christian-Jewish interaction.

1. Survey of the Dialogues

Most *contra Iudeos* dialogues¹¹ treat the following topics: the Trinity and Christ's divinity; Messianic promises from the patriarchs through the prophets which Jesus and the Christian dispensation fulfill, including the virgin birth, his suffering, resurrection, and exaltation; the passing away of aspects of the Old Testament Law, especially circumcision; the acceptance of Christ by the Gentiles, and his general rejection by the Jews; Christ as eternal judge; a final exhortation to baptism or a baptismal scene in which the Jew willingly undergoes conversion. If, as I have just argued, *contra Iudeos* works do not originate in Gentile catechesis, the baptismal material reinforces the theory that often these dialogues function at some level as missionary literature for Jews: there is little point to such outcomes unless the literature is aimed in some way at the unconverted.¹²

1.1. Aristo of Pella, The Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus (JP)

After Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, the next Christian-Jewish dialogue encountered is a third-century Latin translation of a Greek work earlier than Justin's dialogue, *The Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* (ca. 140).¹³ JP survives only in a few fragments and a few short ancient summaries. It was written by a Jewish

¹¹ For a brief survey of works not included among the dialogues below, see the appendix at the end of this chapter.

¹² The dialogues only occasionally (*The Acts of Sylvester* [AS], and perhaps *The Discussion concerning the Priesthood of Christ* [PC]) resemble the Christian apocrypha where exhortations and conversion scenes exist in stories enjoyed within the Christian community. See Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy*, 180–99 (esp. 191–99), on the genuine hope for Jewish conversions expressed through baptismal arguments in second and third-century Latin *contra Iudeos* works which reflect actual Christian-Jewish interaction, especially in Pseudo-Cyprian's *Against the Jews* (*Adversus Iudeos*).

¹³ Fragments and ancient descriptions in Johann Carl Theodor Otto, ed., *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum Saeculi Secundi* (9 vols.; Jena: Mauke, 1851; repr., Wiesbaden: Martin Sändig, 1969), 9:349–63, including the notice of the no longer extant Latin version in Celsus Africanus (Pseudo-Cyprian), *Letter to Vigilius Concerning Jewish Unbelief* 8 (third century; Cyprian of Carthage. S. Thasci, *Caecili Cypriani Opera Omnia* [ed. G. Hartel; CSEL; vol. 3 (in three parts); Vienna, 1868–71], 119–32). There is an apocryphal fragment attributed to Aristo in chapter 60 of the eighth-century *History of the Armenians*, which goes under the name of Moses Khorenats'i. Thomson, in his translation of Moses (15–16, 35), shows that the description of an Armenian king's funeral in the fragment is not from Aristo (Robert W. Thomson, Moses Korenats'i, *History of the Armenians* [Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 4; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978]).

believer, for in contrast to all known dialogues through the sixth century, the Christian participant (Jason), is said to be a Hebrew Christian; he may well be a depiction of Paul's convert of Acts 17:1–9.¹⁴ *JP*'s author, according to a sixth-century ascription which seems to depend upon Clement of Alexandria towards the end of the second century, was Aristo of Pella.¹⁵ The setting of the supposed debate is unknown, but the Jason of Acts 17 was a resident of Thessalonica, and one ancient reference says that Papiscus the Jew was from Alexandria.¹⁶ If *JP* had survived, it would be an important source of Jewish Christian theology and of its view of and arguments towards other non-believing Jews.¹⁷ Fortunately, however, *JP* probably serves as a source for some of the later dialogues.¹⁸

Jean Juster thought that *JP* “was used by almost all the later Christian authors who wrote against and on the Jews,”¹⁹ while others have proposed more

¹⁴ Jason is called *Hebraeus Christianus* by Celsus Africanus, *Letter to Vigilius Concerning Jewish Unbelief* 8. The ascription to Aristo of Pella (see next note) could also suggest a setting in the land of Israel and a connection to Jewish believers there (the Pella here is probably not the city in Macedonia). On Jason based on Acts 17, also see the next note, and note 30 below on a possible difficulty. (In some of the brief dialogic sections in the New Testament apocrypha, Jewish Christians from New Testament times debate with Jews; see the appendix at chapter's end.)

¹⁵ In the sixth century John of Scythopolis (PG 4:421, misascribed to Maximus the Confessor; cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Das Scholienwerk des Johannes von Scythopolis,” *Scholastik* 15 (1940): 16–38, esp. 27–28) attributes *JP* to Aristo of Pella:

And I have read this, “seven heavens,” in *The Dialogue of Papiscus and Jason* composed by Aristo the Pellaian (ἐν τῇ συγγεγραμμένῃ Ἀρίστῳ τῷ Πελλαιῷ διαλέξει Παπίσκου καὶ Ἰάσονος), which (ἥν) Clement the Alexandrian, in the sixth book of *The Hypotypes*, says that Saint Luke described (ἀναγράψατ).

Although the ascription of *JP* to Aristo has been challenged by, among others, Giorgio Otranto (“*La Disputa tra Giasone e Papisco sul Cristo* falsamente attribuita ad Aristone di Pella,” *VetChr* 33 [1996]: 341–45), I am still inclined to accept it, in part due to John's Palestinian locale. Furthermore, John may well have obtained the ascription to Aristo from Clement. For in the Greek of the above passage, the Aristo ascription occurs within the title of *JP* (attributive position), and this entire title is the referent to the relative pronoun ἥν, which is also part of Clement's thought. Some scholars claim that Clement says Luke wrote *JP*, but very probably Clement only connects *JP* in some way with Paul's Jewish convert Jason and the scene described in Acts 17:1–9. The different verbs συγγεγραμμένη (“composed”) and ἀναγράψαι (“described”) support that John, and apparently Clement, considered the literary work of Aristo and Luke here to be different. Thus the attribution of *JP* to Aristo seems to shift from the sixth century (John) to the end of the second (Clement).

¹⁶ Celsus Africanus, *Concerning Jewish Unbelief* 8.

¹⁷ Jewish Christian argument with Judaism, perhaps nearly contemporary with *JP*, set forth briefly in dialogue form, is found in *Clementine Recognitions* 1.44–70 (see the appendix at chapter's end).

¹⁸ Justin's *Dialogue*, although part of the same general *contra Iudeos* tradition as *JP*, may have left little mark on later dialogues. Justin's dialogue, however, does seem to have been used by Irenaeus and Tertullian.

¹⁹ Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire romain. Leur Condition juridique, économique et sociale* (2 vols; Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1914), 1:55.

modestly that *JP* lies behind at least one of the later dialogues.²⁰ Although not rare, such proposals did not convince everyone.²¹ Nevertheless, I think there is

²⁰ F. C. Conybeare, *Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila* (Anecdota Oxoniensia. Classical Series, Part 8. Oxford: Clarendon, 1898), li–lvii, argued that the Greek *AZ* and *TA*, and Evagrius's Latin *Disputation between Simon the Jew and Theophilus the Christian* (*STh*), used *JP* as a source. Lawrence L. Lahey, “The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: Critical Greek Text and English Translation of the Short Recension with an Introduction including a Source-Critical Study” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2000), 74–89, argues for a similar position. B. P. W. Stather Hunt, *Primitive Gospel Sources* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1951), 250–62, thought that *JP* was used by *STh* and the Latin *CZA*. He thought these four dialogues may have derived a considerable amount of material from *JP*, but ultimately behind *JP* there was an older, similar, testimony document upon which *AZ* and *TA* probably depend (282–84). B. R. Voss, *Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Studia et Testimonia Antiqua 9. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1970), 24 n. 10, thought that possibly Aristo had influenced later dialogues, especially *STh*.

Harnack throughout his edition of *STh* (Evagrius, *Die Alteratio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche* [ed. Adolf Harnack; TUGAL 1.3; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1883], esp. 128), argued that *STh* was a freely adapted reworking of *JP*. Harnack's proposal was refined by Peter Corssen, *Die Alteratio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani auf ihre Quellen geprüft*, (Berlin: C. L. Mettcker & Söhne, 1890), esp. 27–34, who considered *JP* to be a source for *STh* (along with Tertullian's *Against the Jews* and Cyprian's *Testimonies*). Theodor Zahn, “*Analecta zur Geschichte und Literatur der Kirche im zweiten Jahrhundert*: 3. Über die *Alteratio legis inter Simonem Judaeum et Theophilum Christianum* des Evagrius und deren ältere Grundlage,” in *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur* (4th part; ed. J. Haussleiter and Th. Zahn [cf. iii–iv]; Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1891), esp. 320–29, thought *STh* probably had used *JP*. A. Marmorstein, “Juden und Judentum in der *Alteratio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani*;” *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 49 (1915): 360–83, tested Harnack's original hypothesis (p. 360) by showing the Jewish background to much of *STh*'s argument, and concluded that *STh* dated from the fourth century (p. 381–82) and had reworked *JP* (*passim*, esp. 365, 382). Rendel Harris and Vacher Burch, *Testimonies* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916–1920), 1:94, considered *STh* connected, directly or indirectly, with *JP* (cf. Rendel Harris, “*The Diatessaron* and the Testimony Book,” *The Expositor* 9/2 (1924): 455, *STh* “descended from [JP]”).

²¹ Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 29–30, denies any certain use of *JP* in later writers. Simon, *Verus Israel*, 137, 458 n. 8, Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Age*, 27, and Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof From Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (NovTSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 234 n. 13, deny a connection between *JP* and *STh*.

All four (and Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire romain*, 1:54 n. 1) say something to the effect that Harnack was refuted by Corssen (some include Zahn also), sometimes adding that Harnack accepted their critique and abandoned his hypothesis. At best these statements are misleading. In the previous note it was seen that Corssen and Zahn (with probability) accepted Harnack's proposal of the use of *JP* by *STh*. They differed with him over the extent which *STh* had preserved *JP*. Adolf Harnack, *Die Überlieferung und der Bestand der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius* (vol. 1 of *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1893), 94–95, did accept modification of his theory based on the two critiques, but he also cites Corssen's and Zahn's work as basically vindicating his own position, and he strongly reaffirms the use of *JP* by *STh*.

evidence that a single dialogue, which is likely to be *JP*, was a source for a number of the dialogues below, and this evidence will be noted along the way. That some later works resorted to *JP* over a long period of time is not unlikely: it circulated widely, being noticed by writers in Alexandria, Palestine, North Africa, probably Sinai, and plausibly another location,²² up through the seventh century; it seems to have been known elsewhere in the eighth century.²³ If *JP* served as such a source, then there remained a Jewish Christian basis to part of the later *contra Iudeos* tradition.

JP was known approximately a quarter century after its composition to Celsus, a pagan opponent of Christianity, who perceived the work as an attempt to convert others, albeit a feeble one. In the mid-third century Origen noted Celsus's criticism and conceded that *JP* would be of less use to the more intelligent, but he also described the work as "able somewhat to contribute grace of faith to many, but the more simple."²⁴ These descriptions seem to point to *JP*'s function as missionary literature. Neither writer says to whom *JP* might be directed beyond "the more simple," but *JP*'s audience seems likely to have included Jews, either directly, or indirectly as a preparation for Christians for discussion with them. For Origen concludes his defense of *JP* by noting that the manner by which Papiscus "opposes the argument, however, indeed is neither vulgar nor unbefitting the role of a Jew."²⁵ *JP*'s Jewish Christian author also points strongly to concern for a Jewish audience.²⁶

Origen's last statement is especially valuable for confirming *JP*'s background in Christian-Jewish interaction, since he participated in Christian-Jewish debates of the type depicted in the dialogue tradition.²⁷ *JP*'s fragments support Origen's statement. Deut 21:23 (hanging and a curse) was discussed, and this verse is part of Jewish *contra Christianos* polemic.²⁸ Elsewhere the Son is shown to be God's

²²The provenance of the pagan Celsus's polemical work against Christianity, which discusses *JP*, is uncertain. Rome, Asia Minor, and Alexandria have been suggested. This pagan Celsus is not to be confused with Celsus Africanus, a Christian.

²³The eighth-century *Discussion of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (ed. A. C. McGiffert, "Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew, Entitled ΑΝΤΙΒΟΛΗ ΠΑΠΙΣΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΩΝΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΝ ΤΙΝΑ" [Doctoral diss., University of Marburg, 1889]) probably was composed by an author within the Byzantine empire. As late as the eleventh century, a work contemporary with *JP*, *The Apology of Aristides*, was reused almost entirely in the Greek translation of *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, ascribed to John of Damascus, to fill out a defense of Christianity in a scene before a king (see the *Loeb* edition).

²⁴Cels. 4.52.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Voss (*Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 24–25) thinks *JP* was developed for disputation with Jews.

²⁷Cels. 1.45 ("while many were judging": either the general public or a debate with appointed judges); cf. 1.55–56, 2.31. In Origen's *Letter to Africanus* 5, he apparently speaks of his debates with Jews as ongoing (διαλογιζόμενοι), although whether public or private is not indicated. Private conversations are also represented in the dialogue tradition.

²⁸T. *Sanhedrin* 9.7 (apparently); *Toledoth Jesu* 20.9–10 (Günter Schlichting, ed., *Ein jüdisches Leben Jesu: Die verschollene Toledot-Jeschu-Fassung Tam u-mu'ad: Einleitung*,

helper in creation, based on an interpretation of the Hebrew text of Gen 1:1; such a position is probably opposed in rabbinic *contra Christianos* material.²⁹ The seven heavens, a quintessential Jewish and Jewish Christian teaching, were also mentioned. Some description of the Bar Kokhba revolt and the banning of Jews from Jerusalem afterwards seem to belong to the work.³⁰ At its conclusion, Papiscus comes to believe and demands to receive the seal (baptism).³¹

Anastasius the Sinaite, a monk who lived during most of the seventh century, spent substantial time at Alexandria, and became abbot of the Sinai monastery, also likely quotes a Jewish reply from *JP* in his *Hodegos* 14 (ca. 685).³² This reply contains a lengthy series of objections to the claim of Christ's divinity. J. E. Bruns drew attention to this passage in which Anastasius quotes material which he attributes to a disputation between Mnason and the Jewish philosopher Philo.³³ Bruns pointed out the participants closely resemble those of *JP* in the name of the Christian ('Ιάσων/Mváσων) and in the Alexandrian background of his Jewish opponent.³⁴ Moreover Philo addresses Mnason as διχρῶτα ('two colored'),

Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar, Motivsynopse, Bibliographie [WUNT 24; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1982]) (without mentioning the curse); *Nestor the Priest* 104 (cf. 180) (D. J. Lasker and S. Stroumsa, eds., *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest: Introduction, Translations and Commentary* [2 vols.; Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 1996]).

²⁹ Y. Berakot 12d–13a; *Deut. Rab.* 2.13.

³⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.6.3, who says that Aristo of Pella is the source but does not mention *JP*. If the Jason of *JP* is a depiction of Paul's convert in Acts 17, the reference to the Bar Kokhba war would probably be anachronistic. It is possible that Jason was not identified in *JP* as Paul's convert, and later writers assumed the work to involve the latter.

Some scholars have understood *Hist. eccl.* 4.6.3 to be from a work by Aristo which is not *JP*, and *JP* to be by a different author. This seems unlikely. Cf. Rendel Harris, "Hadrian's Decree of Expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem," *HTR* 19 (1926): 199–206, who, if nothing else, demonstrates the biblical, exegetical background to *Hist. eccl.* 4.6.3, as one would expect in a work like *JP*, by a comparison with similar material in Justin's and Tertullian's *contra Iudeos* works. *The Paschal Chronicle* (seventh century) mentions an apology for the Christian religion delivered to Hadrian in 134 C.E. possibly by the same Aristo (PG 92:620). If so, this apology seems to be different than the above material in Eusebius since at this date it appears to have been too early to mention the Roman banning of Jews from Jerusalem; it may also be that this reference is to *JP*, but dated too early.

³¹ Celsus Africanus, *Concerning Jewish Unbelief* 8.

³² PG 89:244–48.

³³ J. Edgar Bruns, "The *Altercatio Jasonis et Papisci*, Philo, and Anastasius the Sinaite," *Theological Studies* 34 (1973): 287–94. Bruns translates PG 89:244–48 in full.

³⁴ Bruns, "The *Altercatio Jasonis et Papisci*, Philo, and Anastasius the Sinaite," 292, 294, accounts for differences between Anastasius and *JP* in the names of the participants by noting that Anastasius had to quote from memory when writing the *Hodegos*. A. DeNicola in "Anastasius the Sinaite," *EEC* 1:37 says of the *Hodegos*, "Written in the middle of the desert,...lacking books, some of A.'s patristic citations are inexact" (1.37).

Also contributing to a name change in Anastasius may have been a developing connection of Philo with Papiscus and apparently with *JP*. In the eighth century there is a Greek *Discussion of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, . . . with a Monk* (ed. McGiffert, "Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew"). As E. J. Goodspeed and R. M. Grant, *A History of Early*

which could well be a reference to the latter being a Jewish Christian, as Jason was.³⁵ Some further points not mentioned by Bruns seem to confirm that *JP* is quoted. First, the name “Mnason” is a variant of “Jason,” a variant which also occurs in biblical manuscripts in Egypt and plausibly at Sinai.³⁶ Next, Anastasius says that Mnason is a disciple of the apostles ($\alpha\pi\sigma\tau\omega\lambda\kappa\omega\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\eta\nu$), agreeing with ancient descriptions that probably connect Jason with the disciple of Paul and *JP* with a time contemporaneous with or near to the apostles.³⁷ Finally, Anastasius says that Philo’s objections occur in response to claims for Christ’s di-

Christian Literature (rev. and enl.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 100, think, it is natural (though not certain) to assume a connection between *JP* and the later dialogue. This is especially so since the name Papiscus is quite rare. Bruns, “The *Alteratio Jasonis et Papisci*, Philo, and Anastasius the Sinaite,” 293–94, points out that already ca. 500 in the Greek Prochorian *Acts of John* (see the appendix at the end of this article), a Jewish teacher named Philo debates with the apostle John on Patmos and then converts (ed. Theodor Zahn, *Acta Joannis* [Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1880], 110–12; cf. liv n. 2, he also compares Philo to Papiscus). Bruns does not mention another reason to associate this Philo with Papiscus and *JP*: after Philo is convinced, he asks John to overlook his previous opposition and adds, “Give also to me the seal in Christ.” Although this phrase occurs in other conversion scenes in *The Acts of John*, it is so similar to Papiscus’s demand for the seal in *JP*, as reported in Celsus Africanus’s *Concerning Jewish Unbelief* 8, that it seems to have been taken from *JP*.

³⁵ Bruns, “The *Alteratio Jasonis et Papisci*, Philo, and Anastasius the Sinaite,” 293. If this is the meaning, it would agree with Clement’s identification of *JP* with a Jewish Jason and with Celsus Africanus’s description of Jason as a Hebrew Christian.

³⁶ Mnason is the name of a Christian from Cyprus at Acts 21:16. Cobb in James Hastings et al., eds. *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* (2 vols. New York: Scribner’s, 1919), 2:43, notes 30 occurrences of Mnason in inscriptions (CIG); he also notes the similarity of variation in the name Jambres/Mambres (2 Tim 3:8). Kirsopp Lake and Henry Cadbury, *English Translation and Commentary* (vol. 4 of *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles*; ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan, 1933–1942), 270, say, “The name [Mnason] was current in the ancient Greek civilization. Jews oftener used Jason, Romans Nason. . . .” The manuscript tradition of Acts 21:16 shows that both names were used for Mnason: Nason in D, it^d; Jason in Ι (plausibly at Sinai ca. 640 or earlier; James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai*, [London: Orbis, 1985], 87), bo^{mss}, it^g, p, vg^a, w, sixt. For these variant readings, see Albert C. Clark, ed., *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), 138; Theodor Zahn, ed., *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur. IX. Teil: Die Urausgabe der Apostelgeschichte des Lucas* (Leipzig: A. Deicherische Verlagsbuchhandlung Werner Scholl, 1916), 111; Kurt Aland et al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (26th ed.; 4th printing; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1981), 386; Herman F. von Soden, ed., *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments: Text und Apparat* (Sonderausgabe des 2. Teil des Gesamtwerkes; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 581; Constantinus Tischendorf, ed., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (2 vols.; 8th ed., Lipsiae: J. C. Hinrichs, 1872), 2:191; James Hardy Ropes, ed., *The Text of Acts* (vol. 3. of *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles*; ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake [London: Macmillan, 1933–1942], 201–5, 369; Frederick H. Scrivener, ed., *Bezae Codex Cataribiensis* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1864), 409, 447).

³⁷ Clement of Alexandria very probably connects Jason with Paul’s Jewish convert of Acts 17:1–9 (see note 15 above). Celsus Africanus, *Concerning Jewish Unbelief* 8, mentions *JP* immediately after Jesus’ preaching and that of the apostles.

vinity, and this topic almost certainly occurred in *JP*, for one description says that Papiscus came to believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God.³⁸ The content of Anastasius's quotation will be treated further under *The Acts of Sylvester* (1.8. below), which has similar material.

1.2. *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 2070*

Among the Greek papyri found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt are the brief remains of what is probably a Christian-Jewish dialogue.³⁹ Its editor dated the papyrus to the late third century, and due to scribal changes in the manuscript, he considered it probably the autograph of a local author.⁴⁰ The Jew is identified only by the abbreviation ό φ.⁴¹ The Christian's name does not seem to be preserved.⁴² The preserved Christian arguments center on Ps 17:44–46 (LXX), “a foreign people who had not known God will serve him”; Isa 29:13, “this people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me”; and Ps 21:16–23, “they pierced my hands and feet, they cast lots for my garments.” The last testimony is common to *contra Iudeos* texts. A fragmentary Jewish response to the Christian's use of Isa 29:13 survives.

1.3. The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus (AZ)

*Athanasius and Zacchaeus*⁴³ seems to date ca. 385, not long after Athanasius's episcopate (328–373), and is the first largely intact Christian-Jewish dialogue

³⁸ Celsus Africanus, *Concerning Jewish Unbelief* 8.

³⁹ A. S. Hunt, ed., *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (Part 17; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1927), 9–14.

⁴⁰ Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 9–10), based this conclusion on a change (of a synonymous nature) and brief additions in the manuscript in the original scribe's hand. However, this could also be the result of deliberate changes to the dialogue and corrections to the manuscript. If so, the dialogue could be substantially older. The debate's location is not depicted in the fragments.

⁴¹ Hunt suggested “Pharisee” or “Philo.” Although this dialogue probably belongs to the *contra Iudeos* literature, it is possible that φ stands for “philosopher.” There exists a Latin dialogue with close connections to the *contra Iudeos* tradition featuring a philosopher, *CZA* (4. below).

⁴² At one point in the Christian material, there occur the words εἰτα φησίν ε. Possibly ε abbreviates or is the first letter of the Christian's name (half the next line is lost). In that case, the words may mean, “Then ε says.” But φησίν may be introducing a composite biblical quotation. Part of Jer 13:22 (“If you say in your heart why”) could fit in the mostly missing half line that runs into Ps 17:44–45.

⁴³ The only published Greek text is in Conybeare, *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila*, 1–63; new text by Andrist, “Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée,” 11–78 (whose text numeration I follow). Armenian text of AZ in H. Esayi Tayets'i., ed., *Athanasius, Discourses, Letters, and Pseudonymous Writings of Saint Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria* [Armenian] (Venice: S. Ghazar, 1899), 191–234. English translation of Armenian by F. C. Conybeare, “A New Second-Century Christian Dialogue,” *Expositor, Fifth Series* 5 (1897): 300–20; 443–63. The possibility of a Georgian version is

after Justin.⁴⁴ It is an anonymous Greek text depicting the bishop of Alexandria who debates with a teacher of the Law.⁴⁵ The work comes from Alexandria or elsewhere in Egypt, since Athanasius uses a significant number of biblical testimonies and argument which emphasize Egypt.⁴⁶ There is a late medieval reference to Jewish conversions, possibly at Alexandria, during Athanasius's episcopate,⁴⁷ but it is probably unreliable.⁴⁸ AZ's latest editor considers that the dialogue reflects

treated briefly by Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée," 22. There is an eighth-century Greek *Disputation of the Hebrews with the Christians, with Athanasius and Cyril, concerning the Cross and Icons*, in Paulo Eleuteri and Antonio Rigo, eds., *Eretici, Dissidenti, Musulmani ed Ebrei a Bisanzio* (Venice: il Cardo, 1993), 109–23 (cf. Patrick Andrist, "Les Objections des Hébreux: un Document du premier Iconclasme?" *Revue des études byzantines* 57 (1999): 99–140).

⁴⁴ AZ does not reflect any fifth-century Christology or events. Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée," 447–49, dates AZ to the early 380's. Conybeare, *Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacheus and of Timothy and Aquila*, x–xi, sets the Armenian version before the mid-fifth century, by which time it had already become attached to the Greek Athanasian corpus. But Valentina Calzolari, "La Version arménienne du *Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée* du Pseudo-Athanase d'Alexandrie: Analyse linguistique et comparaison avec l'original grec," *Le Muséon* 113 (2000): 138, followed by Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée," 20, dates the Armenian AZ to the end of the fifth century at the earliest.

⁴⁵ Armenian AZ preserves a fuller ending than the Greek, but the former may also be incomplete. Possibly the extant beginning has been shortened.

⁴⁶ 34.2 (Egyptians listed first), 35.4, 51–56, 89.2, 93–97, 125; cf. 63.4 (Athanasius bids Zacheus "Go to Jerusalem" to investigate matters). Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée," 149–53, argues for an Egyptian provenance.

⁴⁷ According to the fifteenth-century *History of the Copts and Their Church* by Taqi-ed-Din El-Maqrizi, section 4. The key passage occurs under the first decade of Athanasius's episcopate, and thus naturally would refer to his location. The passage follows a discussion of the opposition Athanasius encountered from Eusebius of Nicomedia, whom El-Maqrizi actually quotes, summarizing Arian doctrine immediately before the key passage, which says:

In his days a multitude of Jews became Christians, and many of them spake evil of the Law which was in the hands of the Jews. The converted Jews said the others had curtailed it, but that the true Law was that which the seventy had explained [translated]. Constantine then ordered to have it brought to him, pressing them hard, until they showed a place in Egypt where it was. He then ordered to have it brought to him; and then it was found that between it and the Law of the Jews, were one thousand three hundred and sixty-nine years' [difference]. They maintained that the Jews had curtailed it in the genealogies told therein, on account of the Messiah (translation according to S. C. Malan, *Taqi-ed-Din El-Maqrizi: A Short History of the Copts and of Their Church* [Original Documents of the Coptic Church 3; London: D. Nutt, 1873], 48).

The mention of Egypt as the book's location also may associate the scene of conversion in Egypt, even if the debate with Constantine is located elsewhere. El-Maqrizi's *History* is remarkable for a number of reasons. It is written in Arabic by a Muslim and remains informative, reasonably fair, and sometimes can be shown to reproduce older Christian writers accurately.

⁴⁸ If El-Maqrizi's notice were credible, it could more clearly show that AZ reflects a background of Alexandrian mission to Jews, which may have been based in the efforts of Athanasius himself. Although there is little in favor of the passage's veracity, the notice of

Apollinarian Christology, and that AZ was used for catechetical purposes directed at Gentiles.⁴⁹ While I would reserve judgement on the possibility of an Apollinarian background, for reasons given above in the introduction and as follows, I find it unlikely that AZ originated as a catechism for Gentiles.⁵⁰

AZ contains material that is better understood against a background of Christian-Jewish interaction. The Jewish charge of worshipping two gods (2.2; 20.1) and another power (12.1) is answered at length in the place of primacy (1–20).⁵¹ The authority of the book of Baruch is discussed (24–25), a genuine

Jewish conversions may be independent of the immediately following, probably legendary, Constantinian investigation of the Septuagint. That story also can be found, set in Jerusalem, in a much longer form, in bishop Agapius of Mabbug's *Universal History* (PO 5:645–60), a tenth-century Arabic work. But Agapius does not know El-Maqrizi's statement that it was converted Jews who brought the LXX differences to Constantine's attention. Has El-Maqrizi combined an independent notice of Jewish conversions with the Constantine story, or does El-Maqrizi know the story in a purer form, with Jewish converts whom Agapius leaves out? In favor perhaps of the former, Agapius elsewhere notes Jewish conversions. Nevertheless until better attestation of Jewish conversions in connection with Athanasius is found, El-Maqrizi's notice must remain suspect.

⁴⁹ Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée," 403–26, 477–86. One of his main reasons for rejecting a purpose based around genuine Jewish-Christian interaction is that AZ refutes "biblical" or "very traditional" Jewish arguments according to an imaginary Christian, and therefore there is no reason to explain it other than as catechetical (pp. 481–82). But by such criteria no dialogue, and really no *contra Iudeos* text, would find a purpose in Christian-Jewish interaction, since all these works rely very heavily on biblical refutation of Judaism with a strongly traditional basis which is then adapted from text to text. He also points to the mention of catechumens at AZ 68.2 who fulfill Isa 61:10–11 (pp. 482–83). But the catechumens are not explained any further, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, nor are they discussed in regard to the audience or purpose of AZ. The reference seems to mean that whoever enrolls to convert is of great value to the church, and this would be as fitting to mention to Jews as to Gentiles, if not more so. For we shall see below in (the Arabic version of) *On the Priesthood of Christ*, possibly contemporary with AZ, that a concern hindering Jewish conversion is a fear of secondary status for Jewish converts. But even if 68.2 were to refer to Gentile catechumens, it fits a common *contra Iudeos* topos of justifying the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's covenant, a point of great importance to a Jewish or Gentile audience.

⁵⁰ AZ says very little against idolatry (practically incidental mentions at 71, 97.3, 113.2, 120.2), unlike Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Lectures* 4.27–28 (on food offered to idols) and elsewhere where brief warnings against and disapprovals of idolatry are not uncommon, as is the case in John Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions*. Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Catechetical Homilies* 1.14–16 treats pagan polytheism, a subject untouched by AZ. AZ also lacks practically all the moral instruction in Cyril's *Lectures* and Chrysostom's *Instructions*. It also seems odd that a catechetical text would accept without correction Zacchaeus's statement that Jesus was born at Jerusalem itself (75.3; AZ only mentions Bethlehem in connection with the magi and Herod's slaughter of the children [76], and never cites Micah 5:2).

⁵¹ *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21, 100b (two Gods); *Deut. Rab.* 2.33, 104c (second God, two powers; Deut 6:4 quoted in Jewish defense as at AZ 1); cf. *y. Ber.* 12d–13a. See R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903), 255–66, 304–07.

point of Christian-Jewish controversy on the extent of the canon of Scripture, but seemingly an irrelevant point for a Gentile audience without a discussion of the canon or apocrypha, which *AZ* does not contain.⁵² Jerusalem is given much attention, including a lengthy exchange on the Jewish displacement from Jerusalem and its becoming a Christian city (63–79; cf. 54–56, 94–96).⁵³ Zacchaeus likens Jesus to a magician (72.1), a basic Jewish *contra Christianos* charge,⁵⁴ and is willing to consider the possibility of Christ as priest, in keeping with some Jewish messianic speculation (79.1).⁵⁵

The presence in *AZ* of some of the above material seems to be due to a lost *contra Iudeeos* dialogue that *AZ* shares as a source with Evagrius's Latin *Disputation of Simon and Theophilus* (*STh*) from the early fifth century (1.5. below) and with the Greek *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (*TA*) from the early sixth century (1.9. below). This lost dialogue seems to be *JP* for the following reasons: these later works share similarities with the fragments of *JP*; these similarities in the later dialogues are sometimes surrounded by Jewish and Jewish Christian material; the continuities and coincidences in placement and content between these three dialogues indicate they used the same source.⁵⁶ The Armenian version

⁵² Such a canon discussion is present in Cyril's *Lectures* 4.33–36. In part two below, it will be seen that the extent of the Old Testament canon was part of Christian-Jewish debate.

⁵³ See Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (New York: Avon, 1979), 220–28, on ancient Jewish views of messianic Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ Celsus's Jew (third quarter of the second century) in Origen, *Cels.* 1.28; *b. Sabb.* 104b; *b. Sanh.* 43a, 107b; *Toledoth Jeshu* (S. Baring-Gould, *The Lost and Hostile Gospels* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1874], 81); *Nestor the Priest* (Arabic; Lasker and Stroumsa, eds., *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*), 93–94. Cf. Walter Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909), 465; William Horbury, "A Critical Examination of the *Toledoth Jeshu*" (PhD diss. University of Cambridge, 1970), 424–26, 433–34.

⁵⁵ The Qumran and related texts describing an Aaronic messiah, whether one sees this person as separate from a Davidic messiah or not, are collected in S. Talmon, "The Concept of *Masiah* and Messianism in Early Judaism," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 104–5. Jacob Neusner, *Messiah in Context: Israel's History and Destiny in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 123, gives a passage from *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* indicating the priestly character of the end-time messiah. Neusner (*Messiah in Context*, 25, 54–55, 90, 137, 216, 222, 224) shows the term "messiah" was used with a priestly concept in some rabbinic texts. (This priestly concept, however, is not clearly indicated in most rabbinic passages dealing with an end-time messiah).

⁵⁶ F. C. Conybeare, "A New Second-Century Christian Dialogue," *Expositor*, Fifth Series 5 (1897): 300–301, and *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila*, li–lvii (more cautiously), proposed that *JP* was a source for these three dialogues. The critique of Conybeare's position by Williams, *Contra Iudeeos*, 117 n., 122–23, denies this proposal. But there are flaws in Williams's critique, and Conybeare's position is more plausible (Lahey, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila," 74–89). Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée," engages many of my arguments, and considers *AZ* and *TA* to have shared a source extensively, but it is not *JP* (177–84, 251–52, 274–79), nor does he think *STh* used *JP* directly (281–91). Andrist's criticism of my position as given in my thesis and

of AZ preserves more of the work's conclusion than the Greek: Zacchaeus is convinced and asks what he must do to be saved. It ends with Athanasius counseling baptism.

1.4. Consultations of Zacchaeus the Christian and Apollonius the Philosopher (CZA)

This anonymous Latin dialogue in three books is between a Christian and a pagan philosopher.⁵⁷ Zacchaeus here does not seem to be based on the Jewish participant in AZ. Earlier scholarship, along with some later scholarship, attributed CZA to Evagrius (of Gaul),⁵⁸ the author of *STh* in the early fifth century (1.5. below), while its next-to-last editor assigned it to Firmicus Maternus, who flourished at Syracuse on Sicily and at the court at Rome 330–350.⁵⁹ If, however, CZA's author knew the letters between Augustine and Volusian (ca. 411), his work could be connected with discussion in Africa near this time.⁶⁰ Feiertag, the latest editor, dates it ca. 410, from a monastic milieu most plausibly tied to Gaul.⁶¹

For a substantial part of book two the disputants treat Jewish objections to Christianity.⁶² Most of the main arguments and testimonies found in Christian-Jewish dialogues are well represented in brief. There is no baptismal scene, but baptism is mentioned a few times in Zacchaeus's replies, and Apollonius declares himself convinced at the end of book two, although he is not baptized anywhere

his considerable knowledge regarding *contra Iudeos* works have been valuable for refining my position here. I believe he has not given sufficient weight to continuities and coincidences between these three dialogues and their relation to what is known about JP.

⁵⁷ Latin text edited by J. L. Feiertag, ed., *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* (2 vols.; SC 401–2; Paris: Cerf, 1994). PL 20:1071–66 reproduces Gallandi's 1788 edition.

⁵⁸ Martène and Durand's edition (1717), De la Barre's edition (1723), Ceillier (1747), Gallandi (1788), and R. Smith in *DCB* 1:423. Harnack rejected Evagrius's authorship of CZA in his edition of *STh*. But Stokes in *DCB* 4:1206–7 and Hunt, *Primitive Gospel Sources*, 261–62, both familiar with Harnack's work, accepted Evagrius as CZA's author. I am indebted to Feiertag, *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*, SC 401:7–10, 63–66, for some of this information.

⁵⁹ Morin's edition, 129–34 (Firmicus Maternus, *Firmici Materni Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii* [ed. Germanus Morin; Florilegium patristicum 39. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1935]), and his "Ein zweites christliches Werk des Firmicus Maternus: *Die Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 37 (1916): 229–66). Pierre Batiffol, "Le Canon de la Messe romaine: A-t-il Firmicus Maternus pour Auteur?" *RevScRel* 2 (1922): 120, considers CZA ca. 384, but not by Firmicus. Caedmon Holmes and Adalbert de Vogué, trans., "The Discussions of Zacchaeus and Apollonius, III, 1–6," *Monastic Studies* 12 (1976): 1–6, 271 n. 1, discuss others who date CZA in the second half of the fourth century.

⁶⁰ Pierre Courcelle, "Date, Source et Genèse des *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*," *RHR* 146 (1954): 174–93. D'Achrey in his *editio princeps* (1671) thought CZA was African, although Gaul and Italy were possible provenances (PL 20:1067).

⁶¹ Feiertag, *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*, SC 401:16–31.

⁶² 2.4–10; 2.3, on the divinity of the Holy Spirit, also includes testimonies found in the *contra Iudeos* literature.

in the work. The author of *CZA* probably did not compose *STh*. However, there are some similarities between the two works which might suggest a shared *contra Iudeos* source (other than Cyprian's *Testimonies*), especially since both works may originate from Gallic monastic circles in the first quarter of the fifth century.⁶³ *CZA* is avowedly catechetical,⁶⁴ and it shows that *contra Iudeos* material could play a role in catechism to Gentiles, but Christian moral teaching also made up part of the catechism, and this is lacking to a great degree in most *contra Iudeos* works.

1.5. *Evagrius*, The Disputation between Simon the Jew and Theophilus the Christian (*STh*)

This is the oldest surviving Christian-Jewish dialogue in Latin.⁶⁵ Gennadius's appendix to Jerome's *On the Lives of Illustrious Men* (late fifth century) says, "Another Evagrius wrote *The Disputation of Simon and Theophilus*, which is known to almost all" (ch. 51). A reasonable conjecture identifies Evagrius with a Gallic priest, monk, and disciple of Martin of Tours.⁶⁶ The dialogue's wide circulation by Gennadius's time indicates a date at least back to the early-fifth century.⁶⁷ *STh* is addressed to Valerius, a Christian, whom Evagrius calls his master, adding.⁶⁸

May I bring to your attention a most pleasing inquiry which took place under our eyes, which you also will receive with thanks when you have become familiar with it. Now there was a disputation on the Law between a certain Simon, a Jew, and Theophilus, a Christian.

STh fits a pattern which will recur in other texts discussed here: the work is said to be based on an actual Christian-Jewish debate, while older *contra Iudeos*

⁶³ Gen. 1:1, *CZA* 2.3.4/*STh* in R. Demeulenaere, ed., *Foebadius, Victricius, Leporius, Vincentius Lerinensis, Euagrius, Ruricius* (CCSL 64; Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 260; Gen 1:26, 2.5.5/CCSL 64:260; 2.13.5/CCSL 64:261. *CZA/STh* share many passages found in Cyprian's *Testimonies*. Hunt, *Primitive Gospel Sources*, 250–62 (261–62), argues that *JP* was their source.

⁶⁴ 2.20.1, Apollonius speaks of the value of the first two books for faith; 3. preface, 1–3 says the third book speaks of Catholic conduct of life, both for laity and monks (fulfilled in 3.1–6).

⁶⁵ Demeulenaere edits the text in CCSL 64:233–302 (Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64). Harnack's edition of Evagrius is still valuable, especially his chapter divisions in the text. English translation by Lawrence Lahey: "A Translation of Evagrius's *Altercatio Legis inter Simonem Iudaeum et Theophilum Christianum* with a Preliminary Study on Its Relationship to Aristo of Pella's *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*" (Master's Thesis, Loyola University of Chicago, 1994).

⁶⁶ Remi Ceiller, *Histoire général des auteurs sacrés et ecclésiastiques*, 13:567–68 (1747), cited in Harnack's edition of Evagrius, 13 n.25; see Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue III* 1.4, 2.8.

⁶⁷ The *Chronicle* of Marcellinus Comes (ca. 535) copies Gennadius's notice about *STh* under the year 423. It retains the statement that the dialogue "is known to almost all" (PL 51:924).

⁶⁸ Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:255 (Evagrius, *Die Altercatio*, ed. Harnack, ch. 1).

sources have been used to help reconstruct the debate. Because of *STh*'s numerous connections with Jewish thought and *contra Christianos* argument,⁶⁹ and because *STh* clearly welcomes Jewish converts,⁷⁰ it may well have been used to prepare Christians for interaction with Jews.⁷¹

An otherwise unknown Baruch apocryphon, which resembles early and plausibly Jewish Christian material, is employed by Theophilus:⁷²

How then, near the end of his book, did he [Baruch] prophesy about his birth, and about the appearance of his clothing, and about his suffering, and about his resurrection, saying: "This one is called my anointed, my elect, who was delivered from an undefiled womb, who was born and who suffered?"

STh has used, or at least shares a common source with, a collection of 20 Latin sermons with substantial *contra Iudeos* content titled *Tracts of Origen*, but written by Gregory of Elvira in Spain possibly as late as the first decade of the fifth century.⁷³ *STh* also has agreements, a few quite unusual, with AZ and TA, which point to the use of the same dialogue by all three.⁷⁴ This source seems to be *JP*, which existed probably from the third century in a Latin translation. *JP*'s fragments twice closely resemble *STh*; once near the end when Simon is convinced and demands to receive the seal (of baptism).⁷⁵ Theophilus then baptizes him.

⁶⁹ See Marmorstein, "Juden und Judentum in der *Altercatio Simonis Judaei et Theophili Christiani*," which is quite extensive but still does not exhaust *STh*'s Jewish background.

⁷⁰ Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:272 (Evagrius, *Die Altercatio*, ed. Harnack, ch. 18[b]), Theophilus: "We prohibit circumcising the flesh; however, we gladly have the circumcised believe" (*Circumcidere carnem prohibemus, circumcisos autem credere libenter habemus*).

⁷¹ In part two below, reasons will be given why *STh*'s purpose also reflects defense against Jewish theological polemic arising out of debate.

⁷² Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:271 (Evagrius, *Die Altercatio*, ed. Harnack, 17[b]).

⁷³ Text in Hillgarth and Conti, eds, *Altercatio ecclesiae et synagogae*, CCSL 69:i–146. On the *Tracts* and Judaism, see Bernhard Blumenkranz, ed., "*Altercatio Aecclesie Contra Synagogum*, Texte inédit du X^e Siècle," *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* (1954): 41–44. Similarities between the *Tracts* and *STh* in Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:489–90. It is also possible that *STh* has used Cyprian's *Testimonies*.

⁷⁴ See Lahey, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila," 74–89.

⁷⁵ Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:300; Evagrius, *Die Altercatio*, ed. Harnack, 29(a). Two later dialogues (*Gregentius and Herban* and *PC*) have Jews receiving the seal, but only *JP* and *STh* have the Jew demanding it. The other resemblance is the concept that the Son is the Beginning of Gen 1:1, by whom God creates the world (Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:260; Evagrius, *Die Altercatio*, ed. Harnack, 8[b])). *STh*'s connections with ancient Judaism are brought out in Marmorstein's article ("Juden und Judentum").

The title of one manuscript identifies Theophilus as the bishop of Alexandria (385–412), Evagrius's contemporary. If this is a genuine part of the text (it is rejected by all editors), Theophilus might have been suggested by the mention of Alexandria in a source used by Evagrius. *JP* identified Papiscus as from Alexandria.

1.6. The Disputation of the Church and the Synagogue (CS-L)

This short Latin dialogue⁷⁶ differs from all the dialogues considered here, except for the following one (1.7. below), by clearly representing the disputants only as symbols (church and synagogue), not as persons. As a result there is no baptismal scene at the end, nor even an exhortation to baptism, although the synagogue concedes at the finish somewhat as in other dialogues. The only setting is a brief mention that the arguments are addressed to the Censors (of Rome). CS-L has been preserved under the name of Augustine, but its author is unknown. Its most recent editor thinks it may be North African, dating to between 438–476, and probably written by a lawyer. CS-L in part uses a testimony tradition known to Cyprian and STh, although somewhat often in a bland way.⁷⁷ The high degree of triumphalism permeating the arguments of the church might indicate CS-L's author was not overly concerned with a Jewish audience.⁷⁸

1.7. Jacob of Sarug, The Disputation of the Church and the Synagogue (CS-S)

Jacob is a major doctor of the Syrian church, who flourished in 470–520 in the area of Sarug (Batnae) near Edessa.⁷⁹ CS-S is numbered six in a series of seven of Jacob's *contra Iudeos* homilies. The first five homilies were delivered in the last decade of the fifth century, but the date of the sixth is unknown.⁸⁰ To the best of my knowledge, CS-S is the only Christian-Jewish dialogue of the first six centuries extant in Syriac.⁸¹ Whether it is related to the Latin work of the same name is un-

⁷⁶ Edited by Hillgarth in *Altercatio ecclesiae et synagoga*, CCSL 69:25–47. See Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 326–38 for a detailed summary. CS-L is not to be confused with a longer, tenth-century Latin work with the same title edited by Blumenkranz.

⁷⁷ Cyprian's *Testimonies* may well have been a source. But Pflaum thinks there was a Greek source shared by CS-L and CS-S (see 1.7. below). If so, Cyprian and CS-L may each use a similar Greek tradition. CS-L's use of *4 Ezra* three times is unique to early *contra Iudeos* works.

⁷⁸ Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 331 n. 10, (cf. 336), followed by Hillgarth, *Altercatio ecclesiae et synagogae*, CCSL 69A:7–8, accuses CS-L of noteworthy ignorance of Judaism. The basis for their charge is refuted by Horbury (in his review of J. N. Hillgarth and M. Conti, eds., *Corpus Christianorum: Series latina LXIXA* in *JTS NS* 52 [2001]: 909–15); also note Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 334 n. 1, for a Jewish tradition about Abraham in CS-L. Horbury considers it possible that CS-L's triumphal arguments could have constituted part of a Christian case for conversion. While it is true that triumphalism in terms of the success of Christianity formed a part of Christian apologetic from very early times, the large amount of it in CS-L perhaps remains suspicious.

⁷⁹ Syriac text with French translation edited by Albert: Jacob of Sarug, *Jacques de Saroug, Homélies contre les Juifs* (ed. Micheline Albert; PO 38.1. Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 160–81.

⁸⁰ Jacob of Sarug, *Jacques de Saroug: Homélie contre les Juifs*, ed. Albert, PO 38:23.

⁸¹ Perhaps one could view *Homily Two, Against the Jews* attributed to Isaac of Antioch, possibly a contemporary of Jacob, as another such dialogue. Aphrahat's *Demonstration 21: On Persecution* (ca. 344) 1–4 has an excerpt of an actual debate. (On both, see the appendix at chapter's end).

clear. There are some similarities, and it may be that both dialogues go back in some way to a lost Greek source.⁸² If so, each work has adapted their common source differently since their choice of Scripture testimonies differs fairly frequently.

Although CS-S apparently was delivered as a homily, it may have been delivered with Jews, or catechumens who included Jews, in attendance. It begins with an exhortation to listen to the Jewish and Christian parties to determine the truth, and since discord exists between both assemblies, “let us impose silence upon them so that without tumult now their debates are introduced.”⁸³ Near the end the church mentions the benefits of baptism to the synagogue, which could well indicate that Jacob was preaching to an audience which included Jews who were not already Christian.⁸⁴ The form of the work is similar to that of numerous dialogues here, and Jacob may have used a previous dialogue to outline his sermon. It is also quite possible that the work is based on discussions between Christians and Jews in the area, and Jacob presents them to his church for their edification, in case they were to encounter Jewish polemic.⁸⁵

The synagogue continually is proud of its biblical heritage and the church is quick to agree. The church continually contrasts that great heritage with its own poor background of Gentile idol worship. The main Jewish objection, found also in Jewish sources, is that God has no Son. This is answered with proof texts concerning incarnation and divine pre-existence. Generally, the church is quite positive in its approach to the synagogue.

1.8. The Acts of Sylvester (AS)

The difficulty in dating the composition of the *Acts of Sylvester*,⁸⁶ which is commonly thought to have been composed in Latin sometime in the fifth

⁸² Hiram Pflaum, “Der allegorische Streit zwischen Synagoge und Kirche in der europäischen Dichtung des Mittelalters,” *Archivum Romanicum* 18 (1934): 250–61, argues that this is the case. He collects the similarities in the two dialogues, and posits that CS-L is closer than CS-S to the lost Greek source, which he dates to the mid-fifth century.

⁸³ PO 38:160–61, lines 9–10.

⁸⁴ Baptism is mentioned only very briefly and outside the context of conversion in Jacob’s other *contra Iudeos* sermons, which do not have such an obvious form to link them to Christian-Jewish debate as CS-S.

⁸⁵ On the theological interaction between the main Syrian Fathers and Jews, see the lengthy overview in the series of articles by Stanley Kazan: “Isaac of Antioch’s Homily against the Jews,” *OrChr* 45 (1961): 30–53; 46 (1962): 87–98; 47 (1963): 89–97; 49 (1965): 57–78.

⁸⁶ Greek text in Franc Combefis, ed., *Sancti Silvestri Rom. Antistitis Acta Antiqua Probatoriæ* (Paris: A. Bertier, 1659), 253–336. An abridged Greek text is incorporated into George Cedrenus’s eleventh-century *Collection of Histories* (PG 121:515–42). George the Monk (Syncellus) has a short summary in his eighth-century *Chronicon* (PG 110:596–604). A Syriac abridgement is incorporated into the *Ecclesiastical History* (ca. 570) ascribed to Zacharias the Rhetor edited by Brooks: Zachariah of Mitylene, *Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori* (ed. E. W. Brooks; Part 1; CSCO Scriptores Syri 3.5; Paris: Gabalda, 1919–1924), 54–102. A longer Latin text Milan, ca. 1490 is found in Boninus Mombrutius,

century at Rome,⁸⁷ is complicated by the claim of the Latin *AS* to have been written in Greek.⁸⁸ Moreover, the main elements of the Sylvester legend may first appear in a Syriac sermon of Jacob of Sarug towards the end of the fifth century,⁸⁹ making it more likely that the legend began in Greek, not Latin. *AS* probably shares the same Greek *contra Iudeos* source as *TA*, again making it likely that at least *AS*'s lengthy concluding *contra Iudeos* dialogue was composed in Greek by an unknown eastern author⁹⁰ by the late fifth century. *The Acts of Sylvester*, or at least its *contra Iudeos* dialogue, would then have been translated into Latin (with expansions) soon afterwards.⁹¹

ed., *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctuarum* (repr., 2 vols., Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1910), 2:508–31, 736–37. The two *contra Iudeos* fragments ascribed to Sylvester in PL 8:814 both derive from *AS*: fragment 1 (Greek) is an abridged and adapted form of material found in Combefis, *Sancti Silvestri Rom.*, 317–20; fragment 2 (Latin) is similar to Combefis, *Sancti Silvestri Rom.*, 319, and Mombritius, *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctuarum*, 524, lines 34–38.

The printed editions do not reflect the complexity of the Greek and Latin recensions, which number eight or more. This fact hinders scholarship on *AS*. See Wilhelm Pohlkamp, "Textfassungen, literarische Formen und geschichtliche Funktionen der römischen Silvester-Akten," *Francia* 19 (1992): 115–96; he notes two Armenian recensions from the last quarter of the seventh century, 137 n. 100. A helpful summary of the recensions is in Patrick Andrist, "Les Objections des Hébreux," 116–22. James Barmby, in *DCB* 4:677, says that the extant Greek and Latin texts claim to be compilations from an earlier document, and that the original is mentioned in letters of Pope Hadrian cited in the *Acts of the Second Nicene council* (787).

⁸⁷ Cf. Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire Romain* 2:66–69; Arnold Ehrhardt, "Constantine, Rome, and the Rabbis," *BJRL* 42 (1959–1960): 289–91; surveys in R. J. Loerentz, "*Actus Silvestri*: Genèse d'une Légende," *RHE* 72 (1975): 426–39; A. Linder, "Ecclesia and Synagoga in the Medieval Myth of Constantine the Great," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 54 (1976): 1051–52; Pohlkamp, "Textfassungen, literarische Formen und geschichtliche Funktionen der römischen Silvester-Akten," 149 n. 160; and Andrist, "Les Objections des Hébreux," 117–18.

⁸⁸ Mombritius, ed., *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctuarum*, 2:508.

⁸⁹ Jacob of Sarug, "L'Omelia di Giacomo di Sarug sul Battesimo di Costantino Imperatore," (trans. and annot. A. L. Frothingham; AAL Serie Terza 8; Rome, 1883), 167–242. Jacob does not mention the debate with the Jews. *AS* is rejected as canonical in the *Decretum Gelasianum* (ca. 520), and the *Liber Pontificalis* (ca. 515) seems to depend upon *AS* for its description of Sylvester. The apparent knowledge of *AS* in these Latin works, especially the latter, perhaps indicates the existence already of *AS* in Latin. To the best of my knowledge, neither Latin work mentions the debate with the Jews. See Frothingham's introduction, 172–74, for the relevant Latin excerpts from these two works concerning *AS*.

⁹⁰ Cf. Peter A. Hayman, *The Disputation of Sergius the Styliste Against a Jew* (2 vols.; CSCO 338–39; Scriptores Syri 162–63; Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1973), 15–22; he argues for a Greek original which arose in the east but received additions in Latin. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 339–47, takes a similar view and gives a long summary of the Latin version edited by Mombritius. Hayman thinks the *contra Iudeos* dialogue was added later to *AS* in the early sixth century.

⁹¹ The Latin *AS* may well preserve original elements lost to the surviving Greek versions. Mombritius's Latin version adds an exchange, not in the Greek or Syriac, with the Jew Abiathar in which Sylvester says that Christ raised a synagogue ruler's daughter, a widow's son, and Lazarus, and that if he's not mistaken, Josephus relates these deeds (2:518).

AS contains and expands upon the legend that Sylvester the bishop of Rome (314–335) baptized the emperor Constantine, mainly by adding a dialogue which occupies the final half of the *Acts*. The debate is supposedly occasioned by the influence of Jewish teachers upon Helen, Constantine's mother. In order to counter this, Constantine held a debate at Rome, attended by himself and his mother, 24 bishops led by Sylvester, and 120 Jewish teachers,⁹² at the beginning of March of the fourth year of Constantine's and Licinius's rule (315). In spite of so specific a date, the dialogue's setting seems to be entirely legendary.⁹³

Sylvester argues the Christian position at length. He is opposed by twelve of the Jewish teachers, each of whom usually takes a brief turn debating. When Sileon, the next to last Jewish debater, is convinced, the last debater, Zambres, who is a magician, demonstrates the power of the secret divine name by whispering it in a bull's ear, which kills the animal. He does this to challenge the power of Jesus' name, but by his name Sylvester raises the bull back to life.⁹⁴ All the Jews fall down before Sylvester, and they and Helen are baptized on Easter.⁹⁵

But AS is probably based in part upon an older *contra Iudeos* source. Sylvester produces a long section of Bible testimonies near the beginning,⁹⁶ but much of the remaining dialogue proceeds without them. In this section of testimonies AS has three Old Testament agrapha, two ascribed to Jeremiah one to Ezra.⁹⁷

First Jeremiah agraphon: “With the thorns of their own faults, this people surrounded me.”

Ezra agraphon: “You bound me, not as a father who rescued you from the land of Egypt; crying out at the seat of judgement, you humiliated me. You handed me over, hung upon a tree” (also found with differences in a few Latin MSS of 4[5] Ezra at 1:32a–c).

Second Jeremiah agraphon: “By his burial, the dead will live.”

⁹²In Mombritius's Latin version, there are 75 bishops and the debate is judged by two pagans, Crato, a philosopher, and Zenophilus, a prefect. In the Greek and Syriac texts Constantine is referee.

⁹³The most that can be said, as Krauss notes, *History*, 44, is that the *Liber Pontificalis* (collected in the sixth century) says that Sylvester and 277 bishops held a “first synod against the Jews” from 314–324, which argued against Callistus and Arius. There is no reason to credit this account due to the number of bishops and its duration. However, it may show an early *contra Iudeos* Sylvester legend which helped suggest him as the focus of the dialogue in AS.

⁹⁴Sylvester ascribes Zambres' power to whispering the devil's name. Zambres' resemblance to the biblical magician Jambres (2 Tim 3:8) is probably intentional. The scene as a whole apparently is based on the second-century *Acts of Peter*, ch. 25. There, in a contest at the Forum of Rome before prefects and senators, Simon Magus whispers in a boy's ear and kills him, then Peter returns him to life.

⁹⁵In Mombritius's Latin version, over 3,000 Jews are baptized (cf. Acts 2:41) with Helen, her sons and daughters, her chamberlains, and Crato and Zenophilus. This again seems to show that the Latin version is not original, since it is difficult to see why the Greek would reduce the number of conversions.

⁹⁶Combefis, *Sancti Silvestri Rom*, 295–301. The section is in two parts.

⁹⁷Ibid., 300–301.

Peter Hayman considered the source to be a fifth-century Greek testimony book compiled out of very early material, some of it Jewish Christian.⁹⁸ The same source was probably used by *TA*, for it contains the very rare Ezra agraphon among testimonies which resemble those in the above section of *AS*.⁹⁹ But these overlapping sections in the dialogues contain a substantial, sometimes practically verbal, parallel with no testimony citations in an objection from the Jewish participant.¹⁰⁰ This shows that the source probably was a dialogue rather than a testimony book.

I have argued elsewhere that the source of this objection was *JP*.¹⁰¹ Support for this position probably comes from Anastasius the Sinaite, who reproduces

⁹⁸ Hayman, *The Disputation of Sergius the Styliste Against a Jew*, 9–32.

⁹⁹ Because *TA* has even greater overlap in some ways with *AZ* and *STh* in and around this section where *TA* resembles *AS*, it seems unlikely that *TA* is borrowing directly from *AS*. It also seems that *AS*'s dialogue cannot depend upon *TA*, since *AS* is likely a little older than the original *TA*. In the first two sections of *AS* containing 19 testimonies, *AS* shares 13 with *TA-LR* (= Long Recension) 4.12–11.5:

Deut 32:39, *AS* p. 295 (ed. Combefis)/*TA-LR* 5.10; Ps 32:6, 296/4.23, Ps 2:7, 296/6.10, 8.7; Gen 1:26, 296/4.12–14; Luke 2:52 (allusion), 298/5.12–13; Isa 7:14, 299/8.5; Bar 3:36–38, 299/6.5, 10.5; Zech 3:1–2, 299/11.5; Wis 2:12, 300/10.32–39; Ps 40:10, 300/10.13; Ps 21:19, 300/10.44; Ps 68:22, 300/10.43; Ezra agraphon 301/10.24, 10.27.

¹⁰⁰ *AS* 298: “Godolias said: We speak concerning that one who was born, and in the Gospels of his composing that *he* has grown both in stature and in wisdom, that he was tempted by the devil; after these things that he was sold by his own disciple, delivered over, seized, (*Cedrenus adds, ‘mocked’; Syriac & Latin add, ‘beaten’), scourged, (*Syriac adds, ‘and they mocked him’), made to drink gall with vinegar, crowned with thorns, stripped even of his garment which was given to lot, fixed upon a cross, died, and was buried.”

TA-LR 5:12–17: “(Aquila said:) For concerning this Jesus, just as his memoirs contain, in those you call Gospels, we find from where he is, and his parents with him, and how is this one God? But is God suckled or does he grow and become strong? And I will say that which Luke says concerning him. For the point now *is* concerning this one who also fled when John was beheaded by Herod, and then was handed over by his own disciple, and bound, and mocked, and scourged, and spat upon, and was crucified, and was buried, but even first also hungered, and thirsted, and was tempted by Satan. Does God submit to these things done by men? But who can see God? Let me not say that he was also handled, and suffered so many things which indeed it is impossible for God to suffer these things; but also sour wine was drunk, and he was fed gall, and was struck on his head with a rod, and was crowned with thorns, and finally was sentenced to death, and was crucified with thieves. I am astonished. How are you not ashamed saying that God himself entered a womb of a woman and was born? For if he was born, he did not then exist before eternity, but also presently where is he?”

¹⁰¹ Lawrence Lahey, “Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Genuine Jewish–Christian Debate in *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*,” *JJS* 51 (2000): 293–94 (based on a comparison of the same *TA* material with some of Celsus’s Jewish *contra Christianos* material), and Lahey, “The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila,” 80–85 (based on a comparison of *TA*, including 4.12–11.5, with *STh*). Cf. Vacher Burch, *Myth & Constantine the Great* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 166–71, who argues that *AS*’s source seems to be older than Lactantius (early fourth century), who used it in his *Divine Institutes*.

much the same Jewish objection as that from *AS* and *TA* in *Hodegos* 14 (ca. 685). He attributes this material to a disputation between Mnason and the Jewish philosopher Philo,¹⁰² an otherwise unknown work which is probably *JP*, as I have argued at 1.1. above.

1.9. The Dialogue of Timothy the Christian and Aquila the Jew (*TA*)

This dialogue (*TA*) probably does not survive in its original form, which seems to have been a Greek work produced at Alexandria near the beginning of the sixth century.¹⁰³ There are two Greek recensions, one long (LR) and one short (SR), both from approximately the last quarter of the sixth century also at Alexandria. When the recensions agree, they reflect the lost original, but each recension has material not in the other, some of which probably reflects the original. The extant recensions of *TA* share a good amount of material with *AZ*, and to a lesser extent with *STh*. The source for some, if not all, of this shared material in the three seems to be *JP*.¹⁰⁴ In addition, *TA* shares with Epiphanius's *On Weights*

¹⁰² PG 89:244–48. Most of the points in *TA-LR* 5.12–17 are present in Philo's objection, but although Anastasius seems to use the same source as *AS* and *TA*, he has probably expanded the Jewish objection beyond his written source. For not only is Philo's objection the longest of the three texts, but some material in his objection which is absent from *AS* and *TA* occurs in a new context at PG 89:250, where Anastasius briefly describes debating a Jewish Sophist named Akolouthus at Antinopolis in Upper Egypt. It seems Anastasius partially supplemented Philo's objection by Akolouthus's *contra Christianos* argument. This fits a pattern seen not uncommonly in *contra Iudeos* literature: recent Christian-Jewish debate occurs with older source material.

Philo's objections are italicized as they resemble *AS* and *TA*:

Whence (is there) proof that Christ is God? For even if . . . you speak of the seedlessness of his birth from a virgin, more honorable . . . is the begetting of Adam, . . . and it happened in purer fashion than the nine-month period of Jesus' dwelling in . . . a woman. . . . Greater than all your blasphemy is naming Jesus "heavenly God" . . . Our scripture witnesses that no one ever has seen God. . . . Does a fiery God hunger? Does a fiery God thirst? . . . All things expelled from his flesh . . . are cast off by growth. . . . What sort of God . . . can die? . . . What sort of God . . . flees as Jesus fled from Herod lest he be murdered in infancy? What sort of God is tempted by the devil for 40 days? . . . Is God bound and beaten and spit upon and slain?

¹⁰³ Long Recension: only published Greek text in Conybeare, *Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila*, 64–104 (from one MS); new edition in R. G. Robertson, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationships" (ThD diss., Harvard University, 1986. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1986) (mainly from five MSS), his text numeration is followed here. The Old Slavonic version, based on a text similar to LR, is unedited (see Moshé Taubé, "Une Source inconnue de la Chronographie russe: Le Dialogue de Timothée et Aquila," *Revue des études slaves* 63 [1991]: 113–22). Short Greek Recension: in Lahey, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila."

¹⁰⁴ Lahey, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila," 74–89.

and *Measures* some material about the LXX and Aquila the second-century translator, which is from a shared source, possibly a chronicle.¹⁰⁵

Because of the names Timothy (suggesting Saint Paul's companion) and Aquila (suggesting the second-century Jewish translator), *TA* has sometimes been classified among the New Testament apocrypha.¹⁰⁶ But nowhere is pseudepigraphy hinted at in *TA*, and Aquila the translator's life and work is discussed at one point, which shows that *TA*'s Aquila is a different person. LR and SR purport to record a debate between Timothy¹⁰⁷ and Aquila, an itinerant Jewish preacher, which took place at Alexandria during the episcopate of Cyril (412–444). The Christian's responses are nearly always much longer than the Jew's. Nevertheless, *TA* at times reflects genuine Christian-Jewish controversy, probably even that connected with Alexandria.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps *TA* was suggested by or based in part on debate in Cyril's time. For SR, quite unusually for *contra Iudaeos* literature, gives an exact day the debate is supposed to have occurred: January 25.¹⁰⁹ Although the year is not given, a possibility might be between 412–414, when, according to the *Universal History* of Agapius (ca. 940), bishop of Hieropolis (Mabbug) in northwest Mesopotamia (Osrhoene), a group of Jews at Alexandria were baptized.¹¹⁰ In both *TA* versions Aquila is persuaded and baptized.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Lahey, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila," 63–73, proposes Julius Africanus's *Chronographies* as a possibility.

¹⁰⁶ James H. Charlesworth and James R. Mueller, *The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Guide to Publications, with Excursuses on Apocalypses* (American Theological Library Association Bibliography Series 17; Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1987), 409–10.

¹⁰⁷ In LR Timothy becomes a cleric after the debate, in SR he is a cleric from the start.

¹⁰⁸ Lahey, "Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Genuine Jewish-Christian Debate."

¹⁰⁹ A day with no related hagiographical significance in the Coptic Church calendar; see S. C. Malan, *The Calendar of the Coptic Church* (Original Documents of the Coptic Church 2; London: D. Nutt, 1873). An exact date, including year, occurs in Severus of Minorca's early fifth-century *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, which records actual events. But AS gives a year, month and approximate date, and its debate seems to be fictitious.

¹¹⁰ PO 8:408: "In that time, there were many Jewish inhabitants in Alexandria. One day, a group of them were baptized. And (*fa-*) they took a statue (lit., "stone") and crucified it, saying: "This is the Messiah!" Then a great fight (or, "tribulation"; *bala'*) took place between them and the Christians, and many were killed."

Demougeot, "L'Empereur Honorius et la Politique antijuive," 289, interprets the passage as indicating forced baptism of Jews. But this almost certainly is not the meaning. The passage does not say anyone was constrained to baptism. The "they" who taunt and fight are probably the first-named Jewish inhabitants, the ones who were not baptized. This seems confirmed by *fa-*, which commonly indicates a change of subject (R. Blachère and M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Grammaire de l'Arabe Classique (Morphologie et Syntaxe)* [3d ed; Paris: Éditions G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1952], 476), in this case away from the group of baptized Jews and back to the Jewish inhabitants generally. It is likely that Agapius's events somewhat closely preceded the disturbances between Christians and Jews at Alexandria in 414, described in Socrates' *Church History* 7.13, which resulted in the (partial) expulsion of Jews from the city. My thanks to Prof. David Reisman for translating the Arabic and explaining *fa-*.

¹¹¹ In SR a multitude of Jews and pagans is baptized with him.

1.9.1. *The Long Recension (LR)*

LR is approximately twice the length of SR and contains many differences in presentation of shared material. For example, LR has a brief discussion of six Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible.¹¹² It resembles the same subject with reference to Origen in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*,¹¹³ except LR says that two anonymous translations were found hidden in jars in Jericho and Emmaus in Palestine in the time of the devastation under Vespasian. In SR this has been changed to a statement that the apocrypha translated by the 72 orators was found in jars at that time in these places.¹¹⁴ The similarity in location, time, and manner of storage to the Dead Sea scrolls gives the report a measure of credibility, and suggests a Jewish Christian origin to the report.¹¹⁵ Another possible connection to Jewish Christianity is the occasional use of Hebrew and Aramaic in the argumentation.¹¹⁶ There is also an expansion of Matthew 27:52–53 where the saints rise after the crucifixion and proclaim Jesus, which may have been taken from a Jewish Christian source.¹¹⁷ Only at the end of LR is it said that the debate takes place before an unnamed king (emperor) who is not mentioned elsewhere.

1.9.2. *The Short Recension (SR)*

SR survives nearly complete.¹¹⁸ Material unique to SR includes a very long section, spoken by Timothy, treating the seven heavens and the creation of the world.¹¹⁹ This section is very closely related to ancient and medieval Jewish thought on the subjects, including Hebrew/Aramaic *merkabah* texts such as *Vision of Ezekiel* and *Midrash Konen*. The material is also similar to 2 En., but a direct dependence on this writing is unclear. The only other known *contra Iudeos*

¹¹² LR 3.7–11a.

¹¹³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.16.1–3.

¹¹⁴ SR 6.1–3.

¹¹⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.5, records that the Jerusalem church at this time consisted entirely of Jewish believers.

¹¹⁶ Lawrence Lahey, "Hebrew and Aramaic in *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*," in *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (ed. William Horbury; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 106–21, where it is argued that some of the instances reflect a native speaker of Aramaic. SR lacks most of the Hebrew/Aramaic examples.

¹¹⁷ LR 53.9–15. Epiphanius also knows this material (*On the Twelve Stones* [Georgian version only], ed. Blake: Epiphanius of Salamis: *De Gemis (The Old Georgian Version and the Fragments of the Armenian Version)* [ed. and trans. Robert P. Blake]; *The Coptic-Sahidic Fragments* [ed. and trans. Henry de Vis]; StD 2; London: Christophers, 1934]), 75–77, 162–64; *Panarion* 64.71.15–24. TA is not dependent upon Epiphanius, for each contains elements of the story not in the other. The source could well be an apocryphal gospel which expanded Matthew's text such as Jewish Christians used. AS (301) includes Matt 27:52 without any expansion.

¹¹⁸ SR's text is based on two manuscripts which leave a lacuna corresponding approximately with LR 5.14–10.23.

¹¹⁹ SR 8.7–9.39.

text to mention the seven heavens was *JP*.¹²⁰ The section includes two sayings introduced by the Sibyl:

A void and nothing (Gen 1:2, from Aquila's recension). A void means emptiness (9.2).

Fiery arid soil from matter, five-fold raiment, four-element frame; a living being was formed by divine in-breathing (9.37).

SR has another Ezra agraphon:

Let us crown the synagogue in our bitterness, with thorns, and let us see it (11.22).

There is also a long section on Antichrist, which occupies a middle position in the development of the tradition in medieval Byzantine apocalyptic.¹²¹ Later in response to Aquila's application of Deut 21:23 to Christ, Timothy makes a strong affirmation of the Mosaic Law while reinterpreting Saint Paul's words in a positive and authoritative manner so that Christ is emphatically denied to be a curse.¹²² This is taken from a source older than the early third century,¹²³ and reacts to a Jewish position on the verse that the one hanged became a curse to God. Such a Jewish position also is found in *JP*, but, to the best of my knowledge, nowhere else in *contra Iudeos* literature of the first six centuries.¹²⁴ Timothy's (and his ancient source's) attitude to the Law and Paul seems to be the same as that of the Jewish Christian Nazoreans.¹²⁵

1.10. The Explanation of the Events in Persia (EP)

A Greek work, *EP*¹²⁶ is set in the time of a Persian king named Arrinatus, who, according to the last editor, is a literary fiction, and *EP* dates to the end of

¹²⁰If *TA* is based on *JP* here (as I think likely), *TA* probably has expanded the section from other sources (presently unknown).

¹²¹SR 16.1–16.

¹²²SR 19.3–8.

¹²³Hippolytus, *On the Blessings of Isaac and Jacob* 5 (PO 27:18–21); he has already edited out most of the distinctive Jewish Christian ideas; but LR 24.6–8 even more so. See Lahey, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila," 31–35.

¹²⁴Justin, *Dial.* 94–96, may, in a much vaguer way, touch a similar subject. *TA* does not have the exact words of *JP* (in Jerome's *Commentary on Galatians* at 3:13), but *TA* reacts to the same meaning Jerome ascribes to *JP*.

¹²⁵See Lahey, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila," 31–40.

¹²⁶Greek text in Eduard Bratke, ed., *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden* (TUGAL 4.3; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1899), 1–45. Older edition in A. Vassiliev, ed., *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina: Pars Prior* (Moscow: Universitatis Caesareae, 1893), 73–125, who prints two recensions in parallel columns. At least part of *EP* exists in Old Slavonic, and possibly in Armenian (Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden*, 128).

the fifth century.¹²⁷ It is ascribed in some manuscripts to Anastasius, bishop of Antioch (559–99).¹²⁸ It must be borne in mind that the names of the same ruler can be completely different in sources from different languages (and religions),¹²⁹ and thus the novelty of the king's name is not by itself sufficient reason to label this debate fictional.

As described in *EP*, the king calls for a debate because Christians and pagans are in an uproar over the histories of the late fourth-century Christian writer Philip of Side and the pagan Dionysarus. The king gathers all the bishops of his country and some rabbis for this debate. The first three parts present a dialogue conducted in the king's presence between the bishops and a pagan philosopher, Aphroditianus, with a rabbi as referee.¹³⁰ The bishops are victorious, which results in the baptism of some pagans.

In the fourth part, the Jews, led by Jacob and Pharas, approach the king to debate the bishops. Aphroditianus becomes the referee, and initially he interrogates the Jews.¹³¹ The polite exchanges are mostly balanced in length. The Jews call for the participation of the bishops, who argue from Bar 3:36–38 and Ps 109:1,¹³² as well as from Josephus the Jewish historian's testimony to Christ (*the Testimonium Flavianum*). The Jews say they crucified him because he was a man who claimed to be God. The bishops respond with Ps 21:19 and Deut 28:66. Jacob and Pharas admit that Christ was put to death wickedly. There is strong opposition from Jewish leaders who accuse the two of shamefully Christianizing. They approach the king's son to have the two removed. The king decrees that all sides must pledge to conduct themselves justly. The debate continues mainly between Jacob and Pharas and their Hellenistic-Jewish opponents.¹³³ These two and about 60 others convert and are baptized. As referee, Aphroditianus declares that the Christ has come, but he does not convert. The Jews who do not convert reconcile with those who do. They afterwards maintain good relations with Christians, and are called Χριστιανομερῖται.

There may well be some historical basis to this debate. Although *EP*'s Persian king may not be identifiable, there is evidence at least that intra-Christian disputation was occasionally held before Persian rulers, sometimes at court, with a

¹²⁷ Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden*. His dating is based in part on the plausible suggestion that *EP* is not far removed from Philip of Side's history, which is discussed in *EP*.

¹²⁸ Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudeos*, 112–13, rejects the ascription, dating *EP* in the reign of Justinian (527–565).

¹²⁹ Cf. the different names of king Dhu Nuwas in the discussion of *GH* (1.11. below).

¹³⁰ It contains a long treatment of Christ's birth, including the Persian magi.

¹³¹ He takes an interest in Mal 4:5–6; Dan 2:37–44, 7:14; Ps 117:22.

¹³² They then list some of the significant Jews in the New Testament who converted.

¹³³ The former recite testimonies fulfilled by "Christ the Nazarene": Ps 2:7 (Heb 1:5), 44:7–8 (Heb 1:8–9), 117:22; Dan 2:34–35; Isa 28:16, 7:14 (with νεᾶντις), 53:7; Dan 7:13–14. Most are common to the Christian *contra Iudeos* tradition; it is not said how they came by these.

pagan as a neutral referee, very much like Aphroditianus.¹³⁴ Moreover, intense Christian-Jewish disputation had taken place in Persia in the mid-fourth century, as will be shown in part two through the writings of Aphrahat. Other points seem plausible: regarding the original controversy over the two historians; one of the Persian bishops is identified as Irenaeus, bishop of Basirne, another as Hesiod. The Persian bishops are said to number about one hundred when the debate takes place. While some of the Jews convert, these conversions occur among great discord. The number of those baptized is somewhat small, and afterwards the name Χριστιανομερίται is given to the unconverted Jews.

1.11. The Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban a Jew (GH)

*The Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban a Jew*¹³⁵ is set in Threlletus in Arabia Felix (Yemen) before an unnamed king, who commands Jews to debate with Gregentius. This king, however, is identified in a separate but connected work, *The Laws of the Homerites* (Himyarites),¹³⁶ as Abraham, who came to power around 530.¹³⁷ The *Laws* essentially are a supposed collection of

¹³⁴ John of Ephesus (507–586), *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 10 (Simeon the Bishop, The Persian Debater), describes a debate between Simeon, a monophysite, and the Nestorian catholicus Babai before the Persian king's *marzban* (governor), who acts as referee (John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (1) [PO 17/1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923], 145–52). Later, about 524 C.E., the Nestorians make theological accusations against Simeon and the monophysites before the king, which Simeon answers at court before Magi judges (153–54). John claims actual acquaintance with and knowledge of those he wrote about (1–4). Origen, *Cels.* 1.45, says that a Christian-Jewish debate in which he participated was conducted “while many judged ($\pi\lambda\epsilon\iota\omega\nu\ \kappa\rho\iota\nu\omega\tau\omega$) what was said.” Whether this means a public crowd or an appointed group of judges is not clear. See Cameron, “New Themes and Styles in Greek Literature,” 98, for sixth-century public debates between Christian groups in Byzantium, some organized by the emperor Justinian. For the Christian-Jewish debate at Tomei in Egypt ca. 622, both the Jewish and Christian debaters choose witnesses (Robert Griveau, “Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs habitant la Ville de Tomei, en Égypte d’après d’anciens Manuscrits arabes,” *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien*, 2. series, 3/13 [1908]: 302).

¹³⁵ PG 86 (1):621–784. According to Andrist, “Le Dialogue d’Athanase et Zachée,” 531, a new edition is being prepared by A. Berger. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 141–50, gives a lengthy summary of GH’s contents, and notes that Taphar (Zaphar) is about 50 miles northwest of Aden.

¹³⁶ PG 86 (1):567–620.

¹³⁷ Also known as Abrahah. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present* (5th rev. ed.; New York: St. Martin’s, 1953), 64–66, dates his rule from 525, and notes a Moslem source that continues his reign as late as 571; *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, “Abrahah,” gives his reign as 535–558. GH (PG 86[1]:781) says he died after ruling 30 years. Juster, *Les Juifs dans L’Empire romain*, 1:72 n. 3 (approved by Vincent Deroche, ed. “La Polémique anti-judaïque au VI^e et au VII^e Siècle. Un Mémento inédit, les Képhalaia,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 [1991]: 277), mistakenly claims that this time is contradicted by Procopius, *Wars* 1.20. But this work (ca. 550) mentions no later Himyarite ruler, and there is no indication of Abraham’s death. The year of GH’s debate is not indi-

Himyarite legislation set within a narrative. In that text Abraham rules that his pagan subjects must be baptized or be put to death. After they are baptized, the king puts the same choice to the Jews. Through the counsel of Herban, a teacher of the Law, the Jews petition the king not to compel them to conversion. The king is angered, but Gregentius agrees with the Jews and proposes a debate between himself and them, which the king sets 40 days hence.¹³⁸

GH begins with a notice that the 40 days had passed and the Jews had gathered with Herban as their leader. The entire city turns out to hear the debate, which takes place over four days. The first three days Herban holds his own. But when encouraged by his fellows after the third day, he informs them that he has seen a vision of Moses worshipping Jesus. Moses tells Herban that he will be defeated tomorrow and will worship Jesus. On the fourth day, after debating, Herban challenges Gregentius to show him Jesus and he will be convinced; the other Jews agree. Gregentius goes away a little distance to pray, and there is an earthquake and thunderstorm. A bright cloud from heaven approaches them and the Lord Jesus appears to all walking among the clouds. The Jews are addressed by the Lord, that he is the one crucified by their fathers, and like Saint Paul, they are struck blind. When they are baptized, their sight is restored. Herban, too, asks to be baptized and receives the seal. The king decrees that all the Jews of his kingdom must be baptized,¹³⁹ and an innumerable number are. He also decrees that they should now marry Christians, which supposedly results in the disappearance of the Jewish nation.

In spite of *GH*'s legendary elements, the historical background favors such a debate. A Jew named Dhu Nuwas (also called Yusef and Masruq) seized the Himyarite throne, and ruled ca. 517–525. He was quite hostile to Christians and Byzantium, and attempted under threat of death to force his Christian subjects to convert to Judaism, except, it seems, some who collaborated with him.¹⁴⁰

cated anywhere, but it might best be supposed to belong to the earlier part of Abraham's reign, because, as will be seen ahead, there were efforts then to convert the Himyarite Jews.

¹³⁸ PG 86(1): 573–78.

¹³⁹ No mention is made of death for refusal as before.

¹⁴⁰ Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire romain*, 1:70–71 n. 2.; Reuben Ahroni, *Yemenite Jewry: Origins, Culture, and Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 44–46, disputes some of the source material for Jewish atrocities, but the evidence for Dhu Nuwas's mistreatment of Christians is plentiful and the sources are often contemporary or almost so. For surveys of the history and sources of this time, see J. Halévy, "Examen critique des Sources relatives à la Persécution des Chrétiens de Nedjran par le Roi juif des Himyarites," *Revue des études juives* 18 (1889): 16–42, 161–78 (also critical of Jewish involvement, but answered well by Axel Moberg, ed., *The Book of the Himyarites* [Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1924], lxix–lxx); Sidney Smith, "Events in Arabia in the Sixth Century A.D." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16 (1954): 425–68; Yuri M. Kobishchanov, *Axum* (ed. Joseph W. Michels; trans. Lorraine T. Kapitanoff; University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 90–108; Irfan Shahid, "Byzantium in South Arabia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979): 23–94; Shahid, ed. *The Martyrs of Najran: New Documents* (SHG 49; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1971).

Sometimes Jewish priests from Tiberias accompanied the king on his travels and acted as his messengers to the Christian cities which resisted his claim to the throne.¹⁴¹ Year after year these same priests caused tumults with the Christians,¹⁴² which at least seems to refer to their role as ambassadors in Dhu Nuwas's military campaigns. But the long duration of their activity could also indicate a role in converting Christians to Judaism according to the king's requirement. If so, Christian-Jewish disputations of some sort conceivably could have taken place.¹⁴³

An occurrence strikingly similar to this reconstruction is said to have taken place earlier, in about 467 under the Himyarite king Sharahb'il Yakkuf, who possibly was a Jew.¹⁴⁴ According to *The Martyrology of the Holy Azqir*,¹⁴⁵ after Azqir is

¹⁴¹ So the contemporary *Book of the Himyarites* (7a, ch. 7; Syriac text edited with English translation by Moberg. All references to the *Book*, and quotations of it, are from Moberg's work).

¹⁴² Simeon of Beth-Arsham's contemporary *Letter S*, Syriac text edited with Italian translation by Guidi: Simeon of Beth-Arsham, "La Lettera di Simeone vescovo di Beth-Arsam sopra i Martiri omeriti," (ed. Ign. Guidi; AAL Serie Terza, 7 (1881): 494, 514–15; Syriac text (in Hebrew letters) with French translation in Halévy, "Examen critique des sources relatives à la persécution des Chrétiens de Nedjran," 36–38. English translation by Arthur Jeffrey, "Three Documents on the History of Christianity in South Arabia," *ATHR* 27 (1945): 195–205.

¹⁴³ Cf. M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine: A Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), 252; he translates the key phrase about "tumults" in the same passage from Simeon of Beth-Arsham's *Letter S*: "Jews in Tiberias sent every year priests (rabbis?) and instigated disputes with Christians." But instead of "disputes," Guidi and Halévy translate with "tumults"; Jeffrey employs "commotion." It is worth noting in the context of possible disputation that according to Simeon's *Letter G*, these same priests at one point came out to guarantee their oath "bearing the Torah of Moses," by which they swore (Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran: New Documents*, 45; includes Syriac text and English translation of *Letter G*).

Shahid, "Byzantium in South Arabia," 32, points to *The Book of the Himyarites* 13a, ch. 13, as proof that king Dhu Nuwas held debates with Christians. This is a possible interpretation of the passage since there the king objects vehemently to Christianity. But perhaps "debate" is too strong a term for the situation, since they do not really argue over the Scripture as in the *contra Iudeos* tradition. The situation seems to be explained equally well as the king simply threatening some Christians to convert or die.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, "Events in Arabia," 462, says that Himyar had Jewish kings in the second half of the fifth century, but whether Sharahb'il Yakkuf was one is not said. However, an Ethiopic *Synaxarion* of *The Martyrology of the Holy Azqir* (ed. Carlo Conti Rossini, "Un Documento sul Cristianesimo nello Iemen ai Tempi del Re Sarahbil Yakkuf," *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, Series Quinta, 19 [1910]: 703–50, 750) calls Sharahb'il Yakkuf "the king of the Jews." The king's heritage is not mentioned in the full text of *The Martyrology* (on which, see next note).

¹⁴⁵ Also called *The Acts of Azqir*. Ethiopic text edited with an Italian translation by Rossini, "Un Documento sul Cristianesimo nello Iemen ai Tempi del Re Sarahbil Yakkuf." English translation by Jeffrey, "Three Documents on the History of Christianity in South Arabia," 192–95. According to Rossini, 725, the *Martyrology* was composed in Yemen in the last quarter of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century, and the Ethiopian version was made in the fourteenth century. Jeffrey's translation has been employed here.

apprehended in Najran for spreading Christianity, he is taken to the king's presence. There he encounters Jewish accusers (rabbis), one of whom successfully argues that Azqir should be executed for his missionary work in order to make his fellow Christians afraid. But before this petition is made, we are told that Azqir "began to discuss with the Jews, basing himself on the holy scriptures" (ch. 3).¹⁴⁶ GH also seems to bear witness to an earlier period of Christian-Jewish interaction in the area: Gregentius twice appeals to Herban by mentioning Jewish believers generally,¹⁴⁷ and Herban refers to a Christian friend with whom he often read the

J. W. Hirschberg, "Nestorian Sources of North-Arabian Traditions on the Establishment and Persecution of Christianity in Yemen," *Rocznik orientalistyczny* 15 (1939–1949): 321–38, esp. 324–30, examines the Azqir tradition. He argues it is related to two separate Muslim traditions (without Azqir) about the beginning of Himyarite Christianity found in the *Sirat an-Nabi* by Ibn Hisham (834; taken from the *Sirat Rasul Allah* of Ibn Ishaq, ca. 768), supplied by two Muslims of Jewish descent, Muhammad b. Ka'b and Wahb b. Munabbih. These two, it is argued, derived them from Nestorian sources no longer extant. Hirschberg, "Nestorian Sources," 326, notes that Rossini and H. Winkler previously found the *Martyrology* to be largely historical, except the miracles. But Hirschberg, "Nestorian Sources," 329, thinks that the supposed original Nestorian traditions behind the *Martyrology* and the Muslim accounts seem to have mentioned Jews little, if at all. However, he concedes that because both Muslims were of Jewish descent, each may have purposefully omitted all references to Jews, in which case the references to Jews in the Ethiopian *Martyrology* would be original also to the supposed Nestorian tradition. This latter suggestion for the omission of Jews in the Muslim accounts is plausible, whether or not they are ultimately related to the *Martyrology*. In any event, the *Martyrology* is likely to be more trustworthy than the Muslim accounts, for either it is a substantially older presentation of a source known also to the Muslims, or, if unrelated to the Muslim accounts, the *Martyrology* may well be derived from a source at least as old as the claimed Nestorian sources behind the Muslim accounts, but again the *Martyrology* was composed substantially earlier than the Muslim accounts. Hirschberg, "Nestorian Sources," 321–24, translates parts of the Muslim accounts, but full English translations of both accounts are found in Jeffrey, "Three Documents on the History of Christianity in South Arabia," 188–92.

¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately this discussion is not included or elaborated further. The text immediately continues with the king saying: "What does it profit you, O Azqir, to go into all this question?"

¹⁴⁷ "Not a few" Jewish men and women have already been baptized (PG 86 (1):685); Jewish believers are looked upon honorably by Gentile believers (700). This last point may be present because of Jewish worries over the contempt which Gentile Christians sometimes directed towards Jewish converts as in PC (1.12. below). These notices of Jewish believers may reflect in part Gregentius's experience in Alexandria. Gregentius, according to Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 142, lived as an anchorite near Alexandria before he was sent to be bishop of the Himyarites.

The Book of Himyarites may have described earlier conversions among Himyarite Jews, for the index to the *Book* (3b) says that (lost) ch. 2 told "of the Himyarites, who they are and whence they first received Judaism," and (lost) ch. 3 told "how Chris[tianity] began to be sown in the land of the [Himyarites]." Therefore, the narrative may have described Himyarite Christianity built upon a partial Jewish base. Such a base is probably implied in *The Martyrology of the Holy Azqir* 3, when the rabbis complain before the king about Christians converting people by a magic potion.

Gospels and discussed Christianity.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, about 90 years after Abraham came to power, Muhammad is said to have held a debate at Medina ca. 622 between Christians and Jewish rabbis from Najran.¹⁴⁹

GH and *The Laws*, therefore, depict a historically likely reversal of the events under Dhu Nuwas (and apparently under Sharahb'il Yakkuf): the Christians now hold sway at court and religious coercion of Jews, perhaps under threat of death, occurs with disputation.¹⁵⁰ Although *GH*'s miraculous scenes are legendary (they could be based on a very similar scene in *The Acts of Philip*¹⁵¹), legendary elements are present in bishop Severus of Minorca's *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (418 C.E.), a largely historical account of coerced conversions during which a debate takes place,¹⁵² and in the account of the Christian-Jewish debate at Tomei in Egypt (ca. 622), which is probably historical and resulted in uncoerced Jewish

¹⁴⁸ PG 86 (1):765. However, as Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, xlviii–li, points out, *The Book of Himyarites* witnesses to Christian-Jewish conflict a generation earlier than Dhu Nuwas: the martyr Habsa tells Dhu Nuwas that her father had burned synagogues in the realm (32b, ch. 21). Moberg reasons that this conflict may have taken place in response to Jewish persecution, based in part on the description of (otherwise lost) chapter 4 in the *Book*'s initial index of chapters (3b), which possibly refers to a period before Dhu Nuwas: "how Bishop Thomas went to the Abyssinians and informed them that the Himyarites were persecuting the Christians." Even if Smith, "Events in Arabia in the 6th Century," 453–56, is correct and ch. 4 dealt with events under Dhu Nuwas, *The Martyrology of the Holy Azqir* 3–4 indicates strong hostility at court and elsewhere of some Himyarite Jews towards Christians ca. 467.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Ishaq (ca. 768), *Sirat Rasul Allah* 380, 383–84 (Guillaume's translation: Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad, *The Life of Muhammad: Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* [trans. A. Guillaume; rev. ed.; Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967], 258, 260).

¹⁵⁰ Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire romain*, 1:71–73, Déroche, "La Polémique anti-judaïque au VI^e et au VII^e Siècle. Un Mémento inédit, les Képhalaia," 277, and Külzer, *Disputationes graecae contra Iudeos*, 128–29, deny a historical basis to *GH*. Williams, *Adversus Iudeos*, 141–42, Andrew Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, (New York: Schocken, 1971), 31–32, and A. Labate in EEC 1:361, support such a basis. Shahid, "Byzantium in South Arabia," 31–33, suspends final judgement, but he sees nothing intrinsically improbable about the scene depicted for the debate (cf. especially n. 22).

¹⁵¹ See the appendix at chapter's end for a description of *The Acts of Philip*.

¹⁵² Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Age*, 106–10, originally argued Severus's *Letter* was a seventh-century forgery. His dating is accepted by Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche, eds., "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e Siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 270–71, who compare *GH* to the *Letter* to support Déroche's position ("La Polémique anti-judaïque," 277) that *GH* is without historical basis. However, the general historicity of the *Letter* has been demonstrated by E. D. Hunt, "St. Stephen in Minorca: An Episode in Jewish-Christian Relations in the Early 5th Century A.D.," *JTS NS* 33 (1982): 106–23 and Bradbury's edition of Severus's *Letter*: Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (ed., trans., notes Scott Bradbury; OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). The latter, 10–15, refutes Blumenkranz in detail. According to Hillgarth, *Alteratio ecclesiae et synagogae*, CCSL 69A:4 n. 8, by 1989 Blumenkranz had come to accept Severus's authorship. Cf. Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire romain*, 1.72 n.1. Severus's *Letter* is treated further in part two below.

conversions.¹⁵³ It may be supposed that miracles were added to these historical accounts, including *GH*, to show further proof of God's hand in the conversions.

Of all the dialogues surveyed here, *GH* has the strongest claim to being a record, at least in part, of an actual debate.¹⁵⁴ For one thing, there is mention of a scribe for the debate: Palladius, whom Gregentius brought along as a scholar (*σχολαστικός*) from Alexandria, is noticed by Herban recording their words for the sake of others.¹⁵⁵ A point sometimes overlooked by scholars is the length of Herban's replies, which often are at least a paragraph, and in numerous places are longer than those of Gregentius; there is also lengthy back and forth discussion on individual issues.¹⁵⁶ These are what one would expect from a genuine debate, and they usually exist only in a more abbreviated form for the Jews of the other dialogues.

GH therefore seems to be based on a transcript of a debate, held to convert Jews and possibly others who chose Judaism under Dhu Nuwas, undertaken in the earlier years of Abraham's reign.¹⁵⁷ It may not have been held in Abraham's presence, but it appears to have been done with his authority in the form of an edict compelling attendance. Forced baptisms may well have been imposed later to accomplish, at least in part, what debate could not, somewhat like the situation in Carthage ca. 635 as depicted in *The Teaching of Jacob the Newly Baptized*.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, there seems to be independent confirmation for the conversion of a large

¹⁵³ The work remains unpublished except for French excerpts and summaries given by Griveau, "Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs." I have excluded this dialogue text from a separate, detailed treatment in this chapter for two reasons: (1) even though this Arabic text probably was based on an original record (in Greek or Coptic) of the debate and the events surrounding it, according to Griveau, 313, it dates from the early eighth century; and (2) the text remains mostly unavailable. Its contents will be treated in the next note, at the end of part two, and in the conclusion.

¹⁵⁴ Another example probably is the debate at Tomei in Egypt ca. 622. After two monks convince their Jewish opponent, they all go to the bishop, who requests that a complete record of the debate be made, which is done (Griveau, "Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs," 308).

¹⁵⁵ PG 86 (1):768. Palladius resembles Cosmas, another Alexandrian *σχολαστικός*, involved in writing *contra Iudeos* literature and in Christian-Jewish debate a half century or so later (see below at the beginning of part two).

¹⁵⁶ A. B. Hulen, "The 'Dialogues with the Jews' as Sources for the Early Jewish Argument against Christianity," *JBL* 51 (1932): 65–70, through numerous examples from *GH*, demonstrates the strength, excellence, and reality, if not of Herban, at least of his arguments.

¹⁵⁷ *GH* is no longer a transcript because the Christian argument, in spite of the points above, is given greater space. Similarly, a record of the debate at Tomei probably was used as a basis for the surviving Arabic account. Furthermore *GH* may have used another dialogue as a source, possibly *TA*. Cf. PG 86 (1):625B, 628A/TA-LR 25.1–3 (SR 20.1–3); 657A–B/19.3–10. But Gregentius may have used a dialogue such as *TA* to prepare for his debate with Herban.

¹⁵⁸ Edited with French translation in Dagron and Déroche, "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e Siècle." The question of forced conversions in Himyar will be taken up at the conclusion.

part of Himyar's Jews after the war with Dhu Nuwas in *The Chronicle of John*, Coptic bishop of Nikiu at the end of the seventh century.¹⁵⁹ However, it will be argued at the conclusion of this chapter that not all these conversions were coerced.

At the earliest, *GH* dates from not long before the Persian invasion ca. 575 (to which there is no reference). But it may be dated as late as the seventh century, for it has been joined to *The Laws* through a connected narrative; making a sort of "Life of Saint Gregentius."¹⁶⁰ *GH* may know of a legendary cycle, since it refers briefly at the end to many miracles Gregentius had wrought. It adds that he died not long after Abraham, on December 19. It also refers to the reign of the king's son, Serdidus, in the past tense, as if it were finished or at least had lasted a while. Gregentius's (and his scholar's) connection to Alexandria and his later place in the Byzantine calendar suggests that *GH* may have been put together among the Chalcedonians at Alexandria.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ John's *Chronicle* was written in Greek, but is extant in an Ethiopian version. At 90.71–78, it says that the Ethiopian victor over Dhu Nuwas sent to the Roman government requesting a bishop and clergy to baptize and instruct his inhabitants "and the survivors of the Jews." The episode ends with a notice that this is how the Ethiopians, apparently including the Himyarites, were converted. The index to John's *Chronicle* for ch. 89 (= 90) says: "And concerning the baptism of the kings of India [Himyar is called India in 90.71–78] and the Elmarits, that is the Nubians, and of what religion they had been formerly. And the Indians, that is the Elmakurids [= Elmarits?], were formerly Jews." This index description, which supplements 90.71–78, specifies that Himyar's Jews were converted during Justinian's reign (which overlaps that of Abraham). Quotations translated by Charles: John of Nikiu, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu* (trans. R. H. Charles; London: Williams & Norgate, 1916).

¹⁶⁰ So Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire romain*, 1:72. *GH* is not the only *contra Iudeos* work with content touching Himyar, Ethiopia, and probably the church of Alexandria. The Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast* (E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Queen of Sheba & Her Only Son Menyelek: A Complete Translation of the Kebra Nagast* [London: The Medici Society, 1922]), an epic of Ethiopian legends and history which includes the persecution of the Himyarite Christians, may have been largely composed in the sixth or seventh centuries, originally in Coptic (Irfan Shahid, "The *Kebra Nagast* in the Light of Recent Research," *Le Muséon* 89 [1976]: 143). Its second half contains a lengthy testimonies collection directed against Jewish unbelief.

¹⁶¹ The possible use of TA at such an early date could also point to an Alexandrian link for some of *GH*'s *contra Iudeos* material. December 19 is Gregentius's day in the Orthodox (Byzantine) calendar. The presence of this day in *GH* may reflect a time for *GH*'s composition after Gregentius had been entered in the calendar.

It might be objected that Gregentius's Orthodox (Melkite/Chalcedonian) background is untrue to the historic situation at the time *GH* depicts, that in reality a bishop dispatched from Alexandria to Himyar should have been Monophysite, or someone in Gregentius's high position should have come from Himyarite Monophysites. However, the Chalcedonians maintained a strong presence at Alexandria, with their own bishops at times taking prominent roles in the city's history after the Council of Chalcedon in 451. It also seems that when a Christian wrote an account of Himyarite Christianity, he tended to omit most, if not all, mention of Christian sects. The non-Greek sources generally could lead one to believe that Himyarite Christianity was Monophysite, while the Greek sources

1.12. Discussion concerning the Priesthood of Christ (PC)

In the tenth-century Greek lexicon known as the *Suda*,¹⁶² under the entry “Jesus, our Christ and God,” there is a lengthy legend about Jesus’ selection to serve as a priest in the Jerusalem temple,¹⁶³ in the form of a conversation between two friends, Theodosius, a Jewish leader (Arabic version: priest), and Philip, a

could support a Chalcedonian view. But often the sources are very vague on the affiliations of Himyarite Christians.

For example, the account of John Malalas’s Greek *Chronicle* 18.15 (written ca. 570, making him a contemporary, or nearly so, of the Himyarite persecution) says that after the defeat of Dhu Nuwas (whom John calls Dimnos), Himyarite officials from the victorious pagan ruler approached the Byzantine emperor Justinian through his Alexandrian prefect and requested a bishop and clergy to be sent to Himyar to teach Christianity and to baptize. Justinian grants their request, and allows them to choose whomever they want. They chose John, an official of the church of Saint John at Alexandria, who selected the clergy to accompany him to Himyar. The following reasons could indicate that bishop John was a Chalcedonian: (1) the Himyarite officials approached Justinian, who was a Chalcedonian, for their bishop; (2) their request also points to the same form of Christianity as Justinian’s because they did not turn to the Christians of Himyar, who already had some Monophysite bishops; and (3) Malalas, a Chalcedonian, describes bishop John as “devout.” However, *The Book of the Himyarites* does not mention bishop John. It describes the situation differently (55a–56a): a victorious Christian ruler, Caleb (king of Ethiopia), follows the advice of the Ethiopian bishop Euprepious, who was in office before Caleb fought Dhu Nuwas, and while in Himyar, Caleb appoints clergy from those with him in order to rebuild Himyarite Christianity. A wonderfully ambiguous scene occurs in *Kebra Nagast* 117 (trans. Budge), a Monophysite work of perhaps the sixth or seventh century, in which Caleb, the bishop of Alexandria, and the emperor Justin (Justinian’s predecessor, also a Chalcedonian) are depicted worshipping together in Jerusalem, establishing “the faith,” and “the men of Rome” are favorably called “orthodox.” More important is the presence of Chalcedonians, Monophysites, and Nestorians at a diplomatic conference treating Byzantine-Lachmid relations in north Arabia, which ended up dealing with the Himyarite persecution in south Arabia; see Irfan (Kawar) Shahid, “Byzantino-Arabica: The Conference of Ramla, A.D. 524,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 23 (1964): 115–31.

It seems likely that, as in other parts of the East (including the Persian Empire), the main Christian divisions existed in Himyar already by the time of Dhu Nuwas. Thus Chalcedonian Christianity already may have been allied in some way with the Himyarite government when Gregentius became bishop, apparently not long after John, in the time of king Abraham. Gregentius’s participation in the debate and the decision of Abraham to baptize all his subjects would seem to continue the plans of the Himyarite officials after Dhu Nuwas for Christianization mentioned by Malalas and in John of Nikiu’s *Chronicle*.

¹⁶² Greek text in Vassiliev, *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina*, 60–72 (two recensions). English translation of the Suda recension by P. Van der Horst, “Jesus and the Jews according to the Suda,” ZNW 84 (1993): 268–77; at 269–74. Arabic text with English translation incorporated into B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* (PO 1.2 and 1.4; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907), 120–34. Mediaeval Latin translations of both Greek recensions exist (Van der Horst, “Jesus and the Jews according to the Suda,” 269).

¹⁶³ Theodosius describes a secret Jewish book of genealogies of the priests who served in the temple, which includes Jesus. The priests of Jesus’ time had interrogated Mary about his genealogy and had been furnished proofs of the virgin birth, and thus had written in the book that Jesus was the son of Mary the virgin and the Son of God.

Christian silversmith.¹⁶⁴ A different recension of *PC*, in the Arabic *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, which was compiled and translated mainly in the tenth century by Severus the bishop of Al-Ushmunain in Egypt, shows that *PC* circulated independently probably long before the *Suda*.¹⁶⁵ The Greek *PC*'s setting in the time of Justinian (527–565) is likely to be the time, or nearly so, of its composition, while the *PC* underlying the Arabic version (probably originally in Greek) may well go back to approximately the end of the fourth century.¹⁶⁶ The latter text seems to have been reworked in the sixth century into the extant Greek recensions. *PC*'s provenance is unknown, although hints from the Arabic version suggest Syria or Egypt as possibilities.¹⁶⁷

Although in the bulk of *PC* Theodosius tells the legend about Jesus' priestly temple service, *PC*, especially the Arabic version, shares features with the other

¹⁶⁴ According to the Arabic recension, Philip claims authorship of *PC*. The Greek recension says only that it had learned of the discussion from Philip. This is one of numerous indications that the Arabic preserves an original *PC* more closely than the Greek.

¹⁶⁵ There are numerous Greek manuscripts of *PC* independent of the *Suda*, although Külzer, *Disputationes graecae contra Iudeos*, 129–30, lists none earlier than the eleventh century.

¹⁶⁶ In the Arabic *History of the Patriarchs* (ed. Evetts, PO 1:120), *PC* is set in the time of the emperor Julian (361–363). Theodosius's priestly legend reminds one of reports by Joseph of Tiberias, a Jewish convert of the fourth century, which are recorded by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 30.3.5–12.10). He claimed that a contemporary Jewish patriarch had been baptized on his deathbed, and owned secret copies in Hebrew of the Gospels of Matthew and John and Acts of the Apostles, and that Joseph himself had done miracles in Jesus' name, some while yet a Jew. The Greek recensions (only) of *PC* mention that the secret book of priestly genealogies which Theodosius speaks of was kept in Tiberias. Since Joseph also was from Tiberias and, like *PC*, he related stories of secret belief in Jesus among Jewish leaders there, this brief mention of Tiberias in Greek *PC* could fit a late-fourth-century milieu, which is near when the Arabic *PC* is set. (If so, the mention of Tiberias apparently was omitted from the Arabic recension.) The end of the fourth century also is around the time of two other Christian texts which contain elements of Christian-Jewish dialogue in apocryphal (legendary) settings, *The Acts of Philip* and *The Acts of Pilate* (see the appendix at end of this article).

In the passage of *PC* dealt with below (Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs*, PO 1:121–22), Theodosius fears loss of material wealth and abandonment by fellow Jews if he converts. These hardships are common enough not much later than the Julian setting of Arabic *PC* that they are dealt with in Roman law in the *Theodosian Code*, published in 439 (it contains legislation of the Christian emperors from Constantine [305–337] onwards). *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.28 (dated 426) orders that Jewish converts to Christianity may not lose their inheritance because of their conversion. A law of 335 (16.8.5) forbids Jews to disturb or assail Jewish converts.

¹⁶⁷ The Arabic *PC* says that Philip had a ship that he took to one of the harbor cities of Syria to sell his goods and the conversation took place there, details which possibly point to the work's region of origin. Although if this were so, the city might be expected to be identified. *PC* is known in Egypt in plausibly an earlier form than the surviving Greek recensions, suggesting that it may have originated there. (Could Philip have sailed from Egypt?) The Greek lacks any locality for the participants, although Tiberias is mentioned in the legend.

dialogues here. Philip meets Theodosius and asks him why he has not become a Christian, which begins the discussion. In the Arabic only, after Theodosius finishes the story of Jesus as priest, he mentions a brief series of testimonies which he considers Jesus has fulfilled as Messiah;¹⁶⁸ he then consents to baptism, receiving the seal, and later is followed in this by many other Jews.

It seems unlikely that *PC*, even in material outside of the priestly legend, reports actual events. Nevertheless, the work almost certainly arose out of Christian-Jewish interaction. While many *contra Iudeos* works can be described as theologically polemical, *PC* could be described as irenic. Theodosius is depicted as a long-time and beloved friend of Philip, Theodosius is the central character who does most of the talking, many Jews are said to believe secretly in Jesus, and even the priests in the legend who interrogate Mary are convinced of the virgin birth and Jesus' divine Sonship.¹⁶⁹ Although Theodosius is at first unwilling to give up his comfortable position for his belief in Jesus—a fault he recognizes—the Arabic version provides additional reasons for his hesitation, which must have arisen out of the real-life fears and difficulties of Jews considering conversion:

Not only my own people would abandon me, the Christians also, according to what I have witnessed with regard to the Jews when they are baptized, as to the position that they hold; and I have heard also that you [Christians] say, “When a Jew is baptized, it is as if one baptized an ass.” . . . Moreover I see Christians sinning and angering God and neglecting the law, instead of walking in the straight path of discipline and in the truth which has come to them. And I have witnessed others who have seen them living thus, and whose hearts and faith have grown weak, so that they have imitated those careless Christians.¹⁷⁰

PC is a Christian work, since this is a remarkably frank admission of Christian faults in their mission to the Jews. It was probably made in the hope of correcting future relations.

Two other points seem to be *apologia* directed specifically to Jews. A claim of Jesus' illegitimate birth is a major Jewish *contra Christianos* argument against the virgin birth, which is found at least from the second century on.¹⁷¹ *PC*'s legend of the Jewish vindication of Jesus' Christian genealogy indirectly answers the Jewish argument, which itself is quite legendary but different than in *PC*. Furthermore, Philip adds an editorial note that Jesus is found in the temple with the priests not

¹⁶⁸ Gen 49:10 (allusion); Ps 109:4; Ps 88:48. The first two are common to *contra Iudeos* literature.

¹⁶⁹ The worst that is said is that Jews would go to war and die rather than give up their genealogical book. There is no discussion of Jesus' death.

¹⁷⁰ Evetts's translation, *History of the Patriarchs*, PO 1:121–22.

¹⁷¹ See Celsus's Jewish opponent of Christianity in Origen, *Cels.* 1.32; rabbinic passages collected and commented on in Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 35–41. Cf. *Toledoth Jesu* (ed. Schlichting) 3.3–7. Treatment of the manifold complications of *Toledoth* recensions is found in Horbury, *A Critical Examination of the Toledoth Jesu*.

only in Gospel passages, but Josephus also speaks of him so.¹⁷² This is an appeal to the reader with a Jewish source to vindicate the secret genealogy. Due to its contents and tone, *PC* appears to be best explained originally as a missionary tool, which could be presented to Jewish lay people to ease their fears of conversion and address the constant Jewish charge of Jesus' illegitimacy. The author's sensitivities may well suggest that he was a convert from Judaism.¹⁷³

1.13. Anonymous Dialogue with the Jews (ADJ)

*Anonymous Dialogue with the Jews*¹⁷⁴ is a lengthy Greek dialogue, which, despite its title, is carried out between an anonymous Christian and a single Jew. Although there is no setting for the dialogue, there are reasons to think it was composed in Egypt in the mid-to-late sixth century,¹⁷⁵ the most notable of these being the inclusion of a legend of the holy family during the flight into Egypt, in which they stay in Hermopolis and all the idols of the city fall and shatter.¹⁷⁶

There is little reason to think that *ADJ* is based on one actual debate. However, once again there is reason to think that the work reflects a background of actual Christian-Jewish interaction.¹⁷⁷ The Jew is reluctant to engage in debate for a number of reasons:

He considers that the strength of the Christian argument lies in “a certain imprudence of words and not by divine teachings.” Also “there is no power for us who live as Jews (literally: Judaize) to speak against you who live as Christians (lit.: Christianize)—who is the one who binds?” The Christian asks if he really fears imprisonment and physical harm, and then gives New Testament examples of Jewish mistreatment of Jesus and disciples, but he points out that since they hope to be disciples of Jesus’ peaceful and gentle example of love of humanity, he should not fear debate with

¹⁷² *Suda* (Vassiliev, “Jesus and the Jews according to the *Suda*,” 71b, 72b): “Now we have found that Josephus clearly says in his work on the capture [of Jerusalem] that Jesus sacrificed with the priests in the temple” (Van der Horst’s translation). The Arabic is very similar. No such passage is found in the present Greek text of Josephus’s *Jewish War*. It may have belonged to the kind of additions found in the Old Slavonic text of the *War*.

¹⁷³ So Vassiliev, *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina*, xxv; cf. Van der Horst, “Jesus and the Jews according to the *Suda*,” 277.

¹⁷⁴ Greek text by José H. Declerck, ed. *Anonymous Dialogus cum Iudeis Saeculi ut Videtur Sexti* (CCSG 30; Turnhout: Brepols, 1994) (from one MS). Unpublished versions in Georgian (11th cent.) and Armenian (13th cent.; from the Georgian; attributed to John of Damascus); see Declerck, *Anonymous Dialogus*, xv–xvi.

¹⁷⁵ Declerck, *Anonymous Dialogus*, xxxi–li.

¹⁷⁶ Declerck, *Anonymous Dialogus*, CCSG 30:59 (277–90), fulfilling Isa 19:1. It is noted that they say that until their own day there is a symbol of this event. This still seems to show an Egyptian origin for *ADJ*, but apparently removed from Hermopolis.

¹⁷⁷ Perhaps in the vicinity of Hermopolis. Anastasius the Sinaite took part in a Christian-Jewish disputation in the second half of the seventh century at Antinopolis (PG 89:250), which is across the Nile from Hermopolis.

Christ's servants. To this the Jew replies, apparently with intentional irony, "Do not bring this up. I also know the kindness of the church of God."¹⁷⁸ He continues that some Christians debate with Jews on the basis of Platonic and Aristotelian syllogisms and absurdities, in which Jews are unlearned, not on the basis of Scripture. The Christian says that this is done only with Greeks and heretics, not with Jews, and proposes the debate on the basis of the Law and the Prophets.¹⁷⁹

This material, rather like (Arabic) *PC*, is quite frank in addressing Jewish fears and objections, and seems ill-fitting without a basis in actual Christian-Jewish disputation and mission.

In regard to mission, even though the Christian arguments are vastly longer than the Jewish ones, *ADJ* nevertheless often argues its points intelligently and with a higher level of theology and organization than most of the other dialogues mentioned here. Also much more than the others, it employs the Bible translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, as well as the *Jewish War* and the *Antiquities* of Josephus (including the *Testimonium Flavianum*).¹⁸⁰ These are some of the best Jewish-Greek authorities which could be used to persuade Jews.¹⁸¹ Thus *ADJ* indeed could have been suitable for Jews to read. It ends with a long and friendly exhortation to baptism,¹⁸² but there is no actual conversion scene.

The argument in *ADJ* employs many standard *contra Iudeos* proofs, though often developed in its own way. It shares a significant number of testimonies and some arguments with *STh* and *TA*, a point which argues for a common source.¹⁸³ Because I have argued that the source behind these parts of *STh* and *TA* is *JP*, I think it likely that *ADJ*'s source for these overlaps is also *JP*.

¹⁷⁸ Averil Cameron, in her *JTS* review (*JTS NS* 50 [1999]: 363–65) of Declerck's edition, 364, sees this last statement as straightforward praise for the church. But this seems to overlook the context, which contains the Jew's previous fears and his further reasons against debate.

¹⁷⁹ Declerck, *Anonymous Dialogus*, CCSG 30:4–6.

¹⁸⁰ See Declerck, *Anonymous Dialogus*, xxxi–xxxiv, xxxvi–xxxvii.

¹⁸¹ Symmachus and Theodotion, however, may well have been Ebionites. Origen, *Letter to Africanus* 9 (5), says that he compiled his *Hexapla*, which included the three translators' versions along with the Hebrew Bible and LXX, for debate with Jews. Eusebius made much use of the three and Josephus in his *Proof of the Gospel*, which is apologetic directed to Jews and Gentiles (1.1.11–19[1.8–11]).

¹⁸² Declerck, *Anonymous Dialogus*, CCSG 30:109–11. Often the first person plural ("Let us") is employed. Cameron, in her review, 364, describes *ADJ* as "irenic in tone."

¹⁸³ *STh*: Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:286–93 (Evagrius, *Die Alteratio*, ed. Harnack, 25[b]) and *TA-LR* 10.32–56 [SR 11.15–35] share a number of uncommonly grouped testimonies with *ADJ*, which spreads them out more. This is shown by a chart in Andrist, "Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée," 284–85 (he does not think their source was *JP*). *STh* 64.267–68 (12[b]–13[b]) and *ADJ* 30.40–46 also share a very rare (at least in the *contra Iudeos* literature) discussion of Isa 7:14 and 8:4 tied to the striking of the Assyrians (by Hezekiah); this may be reflected less clearly in *TA-LR* 8.5–10.3. *ADJ* 30.12 (18–30) is similar to *TA-LR* 1.6, 8 and 5.10 [SR 2.5–6].

2. The Role of *Contra Iudeos* Literature in Christian-Jewish Interaction

There were indications in the previous part of this chapter that some of the dialogues may have been based on actual disputations (*STh*, *EP*, *TA*, *GH*), while others could be classified as missionary literature to Jews (*JP*, *PC*, *ADJ*). Although we could wish for clearer indications of origin and purpose in the other dialogues, beyond genuine elements of Christian-Jewish argument and a baptismal scene or exhortation, further indications of their function may be gleaned from other *contra Iudeos* works from the same time period, to which will be added new material from or about our dialogues above.

2.1. *The Contra Iudeos Work of Cosmas, the Alexandrian Scholar*

It will be best to begin with a clear statement about the composition of missionary literature for the Jews. It is found in *The Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschos, and describes someone he knew at Alexandria in the first decade of the seventh century:

And concerning this master Cosmas the scholar (or, “lawyer”: σχολαστικοῦ), many indeed told us many things, but others other things, and most most things. But we are writing these things whose witnesses we are, to which we have accurately attended, for the benefit of those who happen on *this*. For he was a humble man, merciful, ascetic, a virgin, calm, without anger, friendly, kind to strangers, kind to the poor. Therefore this wondrous man produced great benefit in us, not only being seen and teaching, but also because he was possessing many books, beyond all who were in Alexandria, and would readily provide *them* to those who wished. But he also was without possessions. For in his entire house there was nothing other to be seen except books, and a bed, and a table. And it was possible for every person to enter, and to request what would benefit, and to read. And each day I used to go in to him, and so in truth I never entered and did not find him either reading or composing against the Jews (κατὰ Ἰουδαίων). For he had much zeal for converting Hebrews to the truth. Therefore he often used to send me to some Hebrews in order that I might debate (διαλεχθῶ) from Scripture with them, because he would not readily leave his house.¹⁸⁴

It is noteworthy above all that the phrase κατὰ Ἰουδαίων (“against the Jews”), the Greek equivalent of *contra Iudeos*, is used to describe works that were both read and written by a Christian as part of missionary work to convert Jews,

¹⁸⁴ Ch. 172 (PG 87:3040–41); Cosmas had lived as a solitary for 33 years, so his efforts to convert the Jews probably extended back into the last quarter of the sixth century. This would be confirmed if John had met Cosmas on the former’s brief visit to Alexandria ca. 580, for John says that he always found Cosmos treating *contra Iudeos* concerns. The events described in ch. 172 probably come mostly from John’s long stay at Alexandria beginning ca. 605.

and these writings were connected to Christian-Jewish debate. Based on the size of his library and the time he spent reading and writing to convert Jews, Cosmas presumably was conversant with a large number of earlier *contra Iudaeos* works, which he used to inform his missionary efforts including his composition of *contra Iudaeos* works. Thus it is reasonable to think that in Cosmas's example there is much insight into the development of other *contra Iudaeos* literature: it grew out of mission to the Jews, and the arguments therein were based in part on previous such literature. These arguments were modified through debate, and the old literature and the new debate were combined in a new writing.

In all likelihood, John Moschos brought Cosmas's writings with him to the Christian-Jewish debates or read these writings beforehand to prepare, both strong probabilities since Cosmas rarely left his house but his writings were intended to convert Jews. If so, then the form of *contra Iudaeos* literature, often short Jewish objections and lengthy Christian arguments from Scripture, apparently would be helpful since John "debate[d] from scripture with them." It is not said exactly if Cosmas's writings were given to Jews to read or if they were used to help John, and presumably others, with debate. But they must have been for one purpose or the other, if not both. There is no indication that Cosmas's *contra Iudaeos* writings were intended for instruction of Gentile catechumens.¹⁸⁵

There was another Alexandrian σχολαστικός a generation or so before Cosmas who may have had *contra Iudaeos* interests and may have functioned similarly to Cosmas. It was noted previously in the treatment of *GH* that Palladius, whom Gregentius brought along as a scholar from Alexandria, recorded Gregentius's debate with Herban in Himyar for the sake of others.¹⁸⁶ Thus Palladius and Cosmas may be part of a continuing mission to the Jews carried out by the Alexandrian church.¹⁸⁷

There is a scene in *TA-SR* 2.9–6.1 that looks remarkably similar to the way Moschos describes being sent out to debate with Jews by Cosmas. Although the scene depicts Cyril, the fifth-century bishop of Alexandria, it is probably an addition

¹⁸⁵ There is a good chance that *TA-SR* came from the same Alexandrian mission to the Jews to which Cosmas belonged. If so, it is directed to a Jewish and a Christian readership, and apparently Gentiles (see 2.2 below). But there is no mention of catechumens. These Gentiles could be viewed as those who might consider Judaism, since Timothy proposes a debate to Aquila when the latter is seated in the Jewish Sanhedrin attended by "a large crowd of Jews and Greeks and Christians" (4.3; SR only).

¹⁸⁶ PG 86(1):768.

¹⁸⁷ Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 31–32, says that *GH* shows an Alexandrian-directed assignment to encourage Christian Himyarites in the light of increasing Jewish influence in the realm. Possibly so, but the mission seems directed at Jews as well. If the original *TA* (now lost) contained the introduction of *TA-SR* indicating a Jewish readership (discussed at 2.2 below), it probably would show some level of Alexandrian mission to the Jews ca. 500, which would be near or within Palladius's generation. If the introduction belonged to the original *TA*, it was still relevant enough to include nearly a century later in *SR*. But the introduction seems to have originated with *TA-SR* (last quarter of the sixth century), and so belongs to the same mission to the Jews with which Cosmas was involved.

to the original (lost) TA composed for SR,¹⁸⁸ written at Alexandria contemporarily with Cosmas. Thus it may well be verisimilitude arising from Cosmas's mission.

But having extended the dire teaching unto Alexandria in the days of Cyril the most holy, he [Aquila] disturbed the city in no small way. But the Pope [Cyril], having summoned one of his clerics, Timothy in name, after expounding the divine scriptures, both old and new, states to him: "Go forth, child, and curb the mouth which speaks blasphemy against our savior Jesus Christ. And do not be anxious how and what you shall speak to him. For the Lord will give to you a word of power in that hour."¹⁸⁹ And Timothy went out, rejoicing with the word of the Pope, having signed his whole body *with the sign of the cross*. And having gone forth into the sanhedrin in which Aquila was sitting, he saw him sitting in a high place and wearing priestly garments with the ephod. And *there was* a large crowd from both Jews and Greeks and Christians. But Timothy, after drawing near him, said: "Do you wish that, once seated together in some place, we make an inquiry concerning the Christ from the divine scriptures?" But Aquila states: "If you wish that we do *so*." Timothy says: "When do you want *to do so?*" Aquila states: "Tomorrow." And it happened on the next day, "when a large crowd had gathered,"¹⁹⁰ that Aquila said: "Out of which scripture do you want that we should begin?"

If it is correct that TA-SR originates from Cosmas or his associates, there is good reason to think, as will be shown next, that sometimes he also included a Jewish readership for his works.

2.2. Jewish Readers

Contra Iudeeos literature at times does mention a Jewish readership.¹⁹¹ In the early fourth century, Eusebius's *Proof of the Gospel*, which goes through Bible testimonies at great length to argue for Christianity, says:

¹⁸⁸ Not only is practically all but the end of this scene absent from TA-LR, but in LR Timothy is not a cleric until he is made one after the debate is finished. In SR Timothy is a cleric from the start. The complete disappearance of Timothy's lay status in SR could be due to its author's desire to depict a background of Cosmas sending out clerics like Moschos to debate. Perhaps the figure of Cyril was also used to indicate episcopal authorization for Cosmas's mission (note again the previous association between the Alexandrian σχολαστικός Palladius and bishop Gregentius in Jewish mission).

¹⁸⁹ Matt 10:19 (with differences: cf. Heb 1:3).

¹⁹⁰ Mark 5:21 (with small differences).

¹⁹¹ The 12th Council of Toledo of 681 in canon 9 confirmed a corpus of 28 laws treating the Jews, many quite harsh, the last of which reads: "That all bishops convey (*tradtant*) to the Jews pertaining to them this notification (*libellum hunc*) put forth concerning their errors, and that they lay their professions or agreements (*conditiones*) in the archives (*scriniis*) of the church." The passage does not bear the meaning which Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs Chrétiens Latin*, 108 n. 10, gives, that bishops are to compose a treatise on Jewish errors for the Jews of their dioceses. It is the 28 laws that are to be given to the Jews. Blumenkranz seems correct elsewhere that canon 9 refers to recording Jewish conversions. For the Latin text, see Orlandis and Ramos-Lisson, *Die Synoden auf der iberischen Halbinsel*, 254–55 n. 42.

But for me the writing is to be taken seriously. Not, as someone may say, against the Jews (*κατὰ Ιουδαίον*); perish *the thought*, far from it! Rather, it happens to be on their side, if one would consider fairly. For it combines on one side the *positions* of Christians through the witness of prediction from the first, on the other the *positions* of those men through the complete fulfillment of the prophecies among them. But it should be suitable also to the Gentiles, if one would consider fairly, through the astounding foreknowledge of future events and the accomplishment of things according to the predictions (1.11–12 [1.8–9]).

Although Eusebius rejects the classification of his work, which includes a Jewish readership,¹⁹² as “against the Jews,” he says others would classify it so.

A mixed audience likewise is envisioned for the short recension of *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, which begins:

“Let the meek listen and let them be glad.”¹⁹³ Let Jews listen and let them be ashamed. Let priests and worshippers of the new covenant listen and be lifted up. Let those who deny Christ listen and let them believe; but if not, indeed let them be silent (1.1).

This is not spoken by a dialogue participant but simply comes after the title as the introduction. Jews are addressed directly, before Christians, as part of TA-SR’s readership. Then Jews are almost certainly included again among “those who deny Christ,”¹⁹⁴ who are urged to believe on the basis of what they will read (literally, “hear”). This dialogue indicates a missionary purpose to Jews, probably coming out of Alexandria around the last quarter of the sixth century, which, once again, is so similar to the description of Cosmas the scholar’s work that it is reasonable to think that TA-SR originates from him or his associates. Christians are mentioned for TA-SR’s readership, but catechumens do not seem to be included among the “priests and worshippers of the new covenant” nor among “those who deny Christ.”

Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* contains a statement indicating that an early recipient may well have been a Jew. It occurs in response to Trypho’s question whether Justin has included teaching agreeable with Jewish Messianic views about Jerusalem only to win the discussion. Justin says:

But that you *may* know that I do not speak this for you alone, as my ability *allows*, I will make an arrangement (*σύνταξιν*) of all discussions which were conducted by us, in which I will write that I also profess this which I also profess to you (80.3).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Cf. Kofsky, “Eusebius of Caesarea and the Christian-Jewish Polemic,” 63–70, for a survey of scholarship treating the audience. Kofsky, 70, thinks Eusebius answers Jews (and pagans) in the *Proof*.

¹⁹³ Ps 33:3.

¹⁹⁴ Pagans also could be included in this group, but they are not mentioned previously like Jews.

¹⁹⁵ Krauss, “The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers,” *JQR* 5 (1893): 125, drew my attention to this passage.

Justin does not claim that he will give a verbatim record, but that he will accurately represent their conversation, ca. 135.¹⁹⁶ Since this statement begins with a promise that Trypho will know the sincerity of Justin's argument because of a written account, a natural inference is that Justin first wrote up the debate to give to Trypho¹⁹⁷ not long after it occurred. This would be similar to Cosmas in the sixth century, who seems to have given copies of his *contra Iudeos* works at times to the Jews he sent others to debate. The surviving form of the *Dialogue* dates from about 25 years after the initial debate (when Justin had settled at Rome), perhaps using other sources to supplement the original conversation.¹⁹⁸ The later audience and function of the work are difficult to discern.¹⁹⁷ But if indeed it was originally given to a Jew, the possibility increases that its later form was intended for or used with Jews, especially since it concludes with Justin praying that Trypho and his companions may act and worship as followers of the Way.²⁰⁰

2.3. Works Used for Christian-Jewish Debate and Refutation of Jewish Claims

Cosmas's *contra Iudeos* writings were closely tied to debate. The following examples show or depict that Christians sometimes prepared and brought written works to aid them in debate with Jews. Christians also composed works to refute Jewish *contra Christianos* positions which they encountered through debate.

2.3.1. Bible Manuscripts at Christian-Jewish Debates

Nearly all the dialogues depict constant citation of testimonies from the Greek Bible, and thus seem to imply the presence of biblical manuscripts at the scene.²⁰¹ Origen indicates the use and apparently presence of the Greek Bible at

¹⁹⁶ Justin indicates the conversation took place near the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt (1.3, 16.2, 92.2).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Williams's translation of Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue with Trypho*, 170 n. 2.

¹⁹⁸ Harnack in his edition of Evagrius's *STh* (Evagrius, *Die Altercatio*, ed. Harnack), 114–15, thought that some, difficult-to-trace, literary relationship existed between Justin's *Dialogue* and *STh*'s ancient source (*JP*), with *JP* being earlier. Later, however, Harnack thought that Justin's use of *JP* was not certain; see Adolf Harnack, *Die Chronologie* (vol. 2 of *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1897), 269 n. 1. On the sources of Justin's *Dialogue*, see Skarsaune, *Proof From Prophecy*; he argues that Justin used *JP* (234–42).

¹⁹⁹ At 141.5 (cf. 8.3) Justin very briefly addresses a certain "Marcus Pompeius."

²⁰⁰ The original debate took place in Ephesus according to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.18.6. (Eusebius calls Justin's work "a dialogue with the Jews" "[διάλογον πρὸς Ἰουδαίους], a designation also used in the title of *ADJ*.) If Justin recycled the original debate for Jews or for use with them, it would show mission to Jews or Christian-Jewish interaction of some type at Rome ca. 160.

²⁰¹ TA-LR 2.2b–3 [SR 5.1–2], 3.1a–23 [6.1–5], 4.4, with its challenge to debate out of Scripture, discussion on the extent of the Old Testament and New Testament canon, apocrypha, versions of the Greek Bible, and an exhortation to start with the first book, seems to imply the presence of biblical manuscripts. Other dialogues more generally speak of debating from Scripture.

Christian-Jewish debates he attended,²⁰² especially in his *Letter to Africanus* (ca. 248). There he says that his *Hexapla* collation of the Greek translations of the Old Testament (with the Hebrew text) was to be used to aid Christians in debate with Jews:

But also I say this in no way due to a hesitation to investigate the scriptures according to the Jews, and to compare all ours with theirs, and to see the differences in them. Indeed we have done this to a large extent, struggling with their meaning in all the editions and their differences while striving so much more with the translation of the LXX. And we strive not to be ignorant of the *differences* among those men, in order that when debating (διαλογιζόμενοι) with Jews, we may not bring forward to them things not existing in their copies, and in order that we may make co-use of things found among those men, even if it does not exist in our books. For if such as this is our preparation towards them in our inquiries, they will not despise, nor, as is a custom to them, laugh at the believers from the Gentiles as ignorant of the true readings among them.²⁰³

It seems that some of the *contra Iudeos* works also used the *Hexapla* (or a similar scheme of the Greek translations) to convince Jews. For Eusebius's *Proof* and *ADJ*, the first a work addressed in part to Jews and the other bearing good credentials as intended for a Jewish audience, supplement their basic use of LXX by substantial use of the three non-LXX Greek translations in the *Hexapla*. *TA*, also addressed to Jews (SR), discusses these translations,²⁰⁴ and occasionally uses them.²⁰⁵ Furthermore *TA* contains the same Jewish objection about the true (Hebrew) text Origen encountered when debating. Timothy answers it, somewhat like Origen's efforts above, with an apology for the inspiration of the LXX and by generally deprecating christological omissions in the translator Aquila's Greek edition of the Hebrew Bible.²⁰⁶

The eighth-century *Discussion of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (ch. 7), says: "Then he [the Christian] brought them [the books of the Prophets], and they conveyed their books from their own synagogue in order that they might dispute from them." The Jewish books from the synagogue would naturally refer to Scripture, presumably in Hebrew; it might also refer to other Jewish writings useful for disputation.

²⁰²Cf. *Cels.* 1.45, 55–56, where Origen describes argument over specific passages of Scripture during Christian-Jewish debate.

²⁰³Origen, *Philocalie*, 1–20: *Sur les Écritures, et La Lettre à Africanus sur l'Histoire de Suzanne* (ed. Marguerite Harl [*Philocalie*] and Nicholas de Lange [*Lettre*]; SC 302; Paris: Cerf, 1983), ch. 9 (5 in former editions). Cf. de Lange's notes on the passage in SC 302. It should be noted that some scholars date this letter approximately a decade earlier.

²⁰⁴LR 3.9.

²⁰⁵SR 9.2; LR 34.14–15 [SR 17.4]. Cf. Robertson, *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, 326–27, who concludes from his lengthy study of LR's Old Testament citations that they occasionally show *Hexapla* influence.

²⁰⁶LR 39.1–2: "You Christians twisted the scriptures as you wished. For you quoted chapters from different books, which do not contain *them* in the Hebrew, but in the Greek only" [also SR 22.1–2]. LR 39.4–40.24 [SR 22.3–30] contains the apology for LXX (based on *The Letter of Aristeas*) and polemic against the translation of Aquila. On *TA* and

2.3.2. Contra Iudeos Works Present at Christian-Jewish Debates

Christians composed *contra Iudeos* writings to use for Christian-Jewish debates. As already seen above, Cosmas did so at Alexandria around the end of the sixth century. So did Severus, bishop of the Balearic island of Minorca off the coast of Spain, who, in his encyclical *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, describes events of 417–418:

. . . for love of [their] eternal salvation; in all the streets contentions over the Law against the Jews (*contra Iudeos*) were conducted, in all houses battles of faith were conducted (5.1–2). . . . Now the treatise (*commonitorium*) subjoined to this letter shows the sort of weapons (*arma*) we had prepared while the battle was in the balance. Indeed not because we wanted *it* to be published for anyone's instruction, but in order that it could be noticed that we had not a small concern, according to the little measure of our ability, for the contest undertaken (8.1–2). . . . [Severus later addressing Jewish leaders he met and wanted to debate:] "We brought books (*codices*) for teaching, you *brought* swords and clubs for killing" (12.9).

The phrase "against the Jews" (*contra Iudeos*) is used in a missionary context, also involving debate. The treatise which Severus had attached to his letter is said to have been used for the ongoing debates.²⁰⁷ It is reasonable to assume that Severus's treatise was among the "books (*codices*) for teaching" brought to the hoped for debate (12.9), which eventually took place (16.2–3). The books would be likely also to include Scripture. It is expressly said that Severus's treatise was not to be published for Christian instruction, therefore it was not intended for catechism. But the treatise was circulated widely with Severus's encyclical *Letter* to illustrate his deep concern for Jewish mission. Here may well be an insight into the reason for wide circulation of *contra Iudeos* literature among Christians: to inform surrounding communities of Christian-Jewish debate and mission. The opening statements of *STh* and Tertullian's *Against the Jews* (ca. 200) may well indicate this reason;²⁰⁸ possibly also the third-century Latin translation of *JP*, which was attached to a letter.²⁰⁹

Severus's *Letter* seems to indicate that the Christians of Minorca started out debating Jews without coercion. (In this chapter I define coercion as the threat or act of physical violence to achieve conversion.) But later a Christian mob led by Severus menaced the Jewish community so that numerous Jews converted in Feb-

Judaism, see also Lahey, "Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Genuine Jewish-Christian Debate in *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*," and "Hebrew and Aramaic in *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*."

²⁰⁷ Severus's *contra Iudeos* treatise apparently is lost, although a previous editor of his *Letter*, Segui Vidal, argued it was the Latin *Disputation of the Church and Synagogue* (1.6 above). See Bradbury's edition of Severus's *Letter*, 127 n. 8.

²⁰⁸ *STh* was quickly circulated so widely that in about 70 years, it was described by Gennadius, (appendix to Jerome's) *On the Lives of Illustrious Men* 51, as "known to almost all."

²⁰⁹ Celsus Africanus attached his Latin translation of *JP* to a letter, which is in large part a *contra Iudeos* tract titled *On Jewish Unbelief*. The letter is addressed to a bishop Vigilius.

ruary, 418. However, another Christian from Minorca, Consentius, indicates in a letter to Saint Augustine that after Severus had sent out his letter in March–April, 418 (with Consentius’s help), there were still debates (“battles”) with Jews, for which Consentius composed more writings (*arma*; “weapons”) for Severus’s use:

It happened that among us certain miracles . . . occurred. When . . . bishop Severus with others who were present reported these things to me, he interrupted my plan [to abstain from writing] . . . , and, so that he himself might compose a letter which contained the order of what occurred, he borrowed words alone from me. Out of this grew a greater violation of my stipulation [to abstain from writing] . . . so that . . . I might produce for our leader some weapons (*arma*) against the Jews (*contra Iudeos*), by whose battles we were being pressed. Nevertheless the *weapons* came with the stipulation that when used, my name might not be mentioned at all (13). . . . Now . . . I have dispatched [to you] twelve chapters against the Jews (*contra Iudeos*) and only one letter which I recently sent to . . . bishop Patroclus (15).²¹⁰

Once again *contra Iudeos* works were composed for use in debates with Jews, probably one of these works was dispatched to a distant Christian leader soon after the debates, and such works are styled as *contra Iudeos*. Moreover, the author was closely involved in Christian-Jewish interaction, but he only allowed his *contra Iudeos* works to circulate anonymously. This raises more seriously the possibility that other anonymous *contra Iudeos* works could have a background in Christian-Jewish interaction.

Since Christians did bring specially composed tracts to debates with Jews, it was natural for Evagrius, the author of *STh*, to depict Christian tracts appropriate to discussion with Jews at a debate with them:

Simon the Jew said: “What will you say about the fig tree or by which arguments, by which tracts of yours (*quibus argumentis, tractatibus tuis*), will you prove that the fig tree was not sin, since first-formed Adam, in his transgression, covered his private parts with a fig leaf? That it was the itch and bitterness of sin?”²¹¹

The tracts depicted here may have been inspired by a specific text designed in part to combat Jews who contested with Christians, which Evagrius apparently used as a source for *STh*, the so-called *Tracts of Origen*, by Gregory of Elvira.²¹² *STh*’s apparent use of the *Tracts* could well indicate that *STh* likewise was designed to refute Jewish polemic at or arising from debate. The above scene may even show that the *Tracts* were used by Evagrius at the Christian-Jewish debate which he says inspired *STh*.

²¹⁰Consentius’s letter is numbered Augustine, *Letter 12**, since it belongs to the more recently discovered corpus of Augustine correspondence edited by Divjak. It is dated to 419, or possibly 420. See Bradbury’s edition of Severus’s *Letter*, 69–72, on Consentius and later events in Minorca. Translation here based on that by Eno, but greatly revised.

²¹¹Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:281–82 (Evagrius, *Die Alteratio*, ed. Harnack, ch. 24[a]).

²¹²Cf. Demeulenaere, *Foebadius*, CCSL 64:281.

2.3.3. Contra Iudaeos Works, *Refutation of Jewish Claims, and Christian-Jewish Debate*

Contra Iudaeos works that were used as missionary tools or in actual debate would need to defend the Christian position as well as propagate it. But there also was need to defend the Christian position and strengthen Christians who encountered Jewish theological polemic,²¹³ and some *contra Iudaeos* works tied to Christian-Jewish interaction were designed for this purpose.

The clearest example of such works are found among the 23 Syriac *Demonstrations* of Aphrahat of Persia, who may have been a bishop. The last 13 *Demonstrations* were written around the years 343–344 and to a great degree treat the differences between Christianity and Judaism. Stanley Kazan drew attention to how many of the 13 have statements indicating their origin in Christian-Jewish interaction and their purpose in refuting Jewish theological polemic for Christians in the Persian empire, who were already hard pressed at the time by official persecution:²¹⁴

Demonstration 12, On the Paschal Lamb: “I have written you these few words of instruction as a justification against the Jews because they set the time of the festival of the paschal lamb in violation of the commandment, contrary to the manner of the commandment” (ch. 11).

Demonstration 13, On the Sabbath: “I have written this explanation because of the conflict which arose in our day” (13).

Demonstration 15, On the Distinction of Foods: ‘I have written you these brief thoughts, my friend, because the nation of the Jews, who declare food unclean and keep it away, are proud and boast and brag. With these three, then, do they boast, with circumcision, and with Sabbath observance, and with the distinction of foods, and still other things. On these three things I have written you and given some arguments as I have been able. For the rest, I will write you and will give you some arguments in proportion to what God will give me’ (9).²¹⁵

Demonstration 16, On the Nations Which Have Succeeded the Nation: “I have written this short thought concerning the nations because the Jews boast and say: ‘We are the nation of God and the Sons of Abraham’” (8).

Demonstration 17, On the Messiah: That He Is the Son of God: “I have written this short explanation, my friend, so that you will be able to justify yourself against the Jews, because they say that God has no son, while we call him God and the first born of all creatures” (12).

²¹³ Some Christian-Jewish interaction and debate may have come about because of Jewish missionary efforts. See L. H. Feldman, “Proselytism by Jews in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Centuries,” *JSJ* 24 (1993): 1–58.

²¹⁴ Kazan, “Isaac of Antioch’s Homily against the Jews,” *OrChr* 46 (1962): 90–91. The translations of Aphrahat are Kazan’s unless otherwise noted.

²¹⁵ I have translated the French of SC 359:715 for the last two sentences. (Aphrahat, *Les Exposés* [trans. Marie-Joseph Pierre; 2 vols; SC 349, 359. Paris: Cerf, 1988–1989]).

Demonstration 18, On Virginity and Chastity: “With this thing that I have written you, justify yourself against the Jews, who in their licentiousness, do not recognize the strength of virginity and chastity” (12).

*Demonstration 19, Against the Jews:*²¹⁶ “Therefore, I have written this short explanation so that you will be able to justify yourself when a situation requires you to make a reply, and so that you will strengthen the faith of the one who is listening, so that he does not consent to their quibbling argument” (12).

*Demonstration 21, On Persecution:*²¹⁷ “And even more does darkness befall me when also the Jews taunt us and behave insolently toward the children of our nation. It happened one day that a man who is called wise among the Jews, questioned me (1). All this argument I have written to you because the Jews pride themselves, *saying*, ‘It has been covenant to us that we shall be gathered’ (5). All this discourse I have written to you, because the Jew reproached the children of our nation” (8).

Dem. 19, a work titled *Against the Jews*, was intended to prepare its readers to reply to Jewish polemic which could occur in the hearing of other Christians, who thus might need to be strengthened in their faith. *Dem. 12, 17, and 18* also mention the purpose of preparing Christians to justify themselves against Jews. *Dem. 13* apparently mentions the same disputation (“conflict”), and the purpose of *Dem. 11 (On Circumcision)* and *13* seem to be linked to that of *15*. All these works indicate that spontaneous debates between Jews and Christians were fairly common. Although these works were closely tied to Christian-Jewish interaction, there seems little or no indication that they were used to convert Jews, but were used mainly for defensive purposes.

Dem. 21 is especially relevant for the possible function of *contra Iudeos* dialogues. Chapters 1–4 record an actual dialogue Aphrahat had with a Jewish sage which resembles the dialogues examined in the first part of this chapter in the back and forth disputation from Scripture and in some of the Scripture testimonies quoted.²¹⁸ Thus dialogue arising from Christian-Jewish interaction could circulate for defensive purposes, and some of the *contra Iudeos* dialogues may

²¹⁶I have translated the French of SC 359:786 for the last clause (*Aphrahat, Les Exposés*, SC 359).

²¹⁷Except for the first sentence, the translation is from Aphrahat, *Select Demonstrations 21 (NPNF¹ 13:392–95)*, with small changes.

²¹⁸See the description of the dialogue in *Dem. 21* in the appendix at the end of this article. On the manner Aphrahat conducted his refutation of Judaism, Jacob Neusner, “The Jewish-Christian Argument in Fourth-Century Iran: Aphrahat on Circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Dietary Laws,” *JES* 7 (1970): 283, says: “What is striking is the utter absence of anti-Semitism from Aphrahat’s thought. Though hard-pressed, he throughout maintains an attitude of respect. In the Iranian empire, the Jewish-Christian argument was carried on heatedly, but entirely within reasonable limits, along exegetical-historical lines, through generally rational and pointed discussion.”

If this is so, it speaks well in some ways also for the Christian-Jewish dialogues, for Aphrahat constantly employs arguments paralleled in them.

have been composed for this purpose.²¹⁹ Like *contra Iudeos* works mentioned in the last section, these works of Aphrahat were sent to others after actual Christian-Jewish interaction. I know of no indication that these works were intended for catechumens.

Another work with a large amount of *contra Iudeos* material mentions the purpose of refutation, or clarification, for Christians arising out of debate: the so-called *Tracts of Origen*, which are actually a collection of 20 Latin sermons written by Bishop Gregory of Elvira in southern Spain sometime towards the end of the fourth or very early in the fifth century. In the fourth sermon, Gregory addresses his congregation as follows:

Because we²²⁰ often have a dispute (*certamen*) against the Jews (*adversus Iudeos*) about circumcision, and the present reading [Gen 17:9–10] admonished *me* so that thus I ought to make a sermon, consequently there should be consideration why circumcision was commanded to the people of Israel (4.1).²²¹

Gregory, and apparently members of his congregation, often had theological confrontations with Jews.²²² This sermon was prepared so that his congregation could meet this ongoing situation. It is therefore very likely that some of the other sermons in the *Tracts*, which deal often with Judaism, were prepared with the same purpose. Jacob of Sarug's CS-S was also a sermon, and Gregory's example may be another reason indicating that CS-S was preached for defensive purposes when Jacob's congregation may have encountered Jewish *contra Christianos* polemic. If, as seems to be the case, STH used Gregory's *Tracts*, it would indicate that they are another example of works composed out of Christian-Jewish interaction which were circulated soon after such interaction. It would again show how one work (the *Tracts*) could be reused in part by another (STH) along with new material refined by further debate. Possibly even the Christians of Minorca composed their *contra Iudeos* works for debate a few decades after Gregory because of his example.

Finally, there is a text with traits which have been the focus of both parts of this chapter: the Arabic account of the debate at Tomei in Egypt ca. 622 between two monks from the nearby monastery of Saint Anthony, Satirikos and Andrew, and a Levite teacher named Amran, which resulted in 375 Jewish conversions.²²³

²¹⁹The eighth-century Greek *Discussion of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* 18 says: “We cited these few things, from many, from the holy prophets, on the one side, for our better assurance of Christians, on the other, for refutation (ἐλεγχον) of Jewish hard-heartedness and insanity.” (Possibly a later addition; it is absent from some Greek manuscripts and also apparently from the Latin version by Paschalis Romanus, edited by Gilbert Dahan.)

²²⁰Variant, “you.”

²²¹Hillgarth and Conti, eds., *Altercatio ecclesiae et synagogae*, CCSL 69:27.

²²²Another, less likely, possibility is that more formal debates were held on a regular basis.

²²³Cf. Griveau, “*Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs*,” which gives excerpts and summaries of the text. Tomei is not far from Bilbais, which is 110 miles southeast of Alexandria.

The work is largely a record of that debate reworked in the early eighth century. After Amran seeks baptism, the original record of the debate was made almost immediately afterwards by the monks at the request of Anba, their bishop. With Amran's permission, Anba had the debate read in church before the mostly Gentile audience. When Anba went to participate in the election of a new patriarch of Alexandria ca. 623, he took the record with him, and brought it to the attention of Benjamin, the new patriarch, who had it read to the assembled bishops. They were greatly pleased by the conversions, and the patriarch ordered that a copy of the debate be made for every bishop, and each one was to have it read to their congregations on three specified days in the year. Here we see that another *contra Iudeos* work, a dialogue of an actual debate, was circulated widely among Gentile Christians soon after the event, and there was no connection with catechism. The reading of the debate is reminiscent of how Jacob of Sarug's CS-S was delivered as a homily, and of the *contra Iudeos* homilies of Gregory of Elvira. The circulation and reception of the debate shows again the widespread interest which the Christian hierarchy took in Christian-Jewish debate and mission to the Jews.

3. Conclusion

The great scholar of *contra Iudeos* literature,²²⁴ Bernhard Blumenkranz, surveyed the historical background to numerous Latin works of the genre from the earliest period to the latter part of the middle ages, and concluded:

If this hypothesis [about the background to some *contra Iudeos* works in France 1338–1343] appears to be justified, it can finally be stated that our assertion regarding the early and so the High Middle Ages also holds good for the 14th century: every anti-Jewish writing presupposes the existence of an active and energetic Jewish group the fight against which is the purpose of the [Christian] polemical writings.²²⁵

Blumenkranz's judgement is strongly supported by the texts examined in part two of this chapter, which, to the best of my knowledge, include virtually all the evidence that directly addresses the purposes of Christian *contra Iudeos* works in the first six centuries. In every notice Jews are directly involved: either provoking defense against *contra Christianos* polemic, as Blumenkranz seems to highlight, or they are the focus of Christian mission in debate and occasionally they are the readership addressed. Indeed, *contra Iudeos* and *adversus Iudeos* are constantly occurring terms which can indicate Christian mission, missionary literature, and defense in regard to Jews. On the other hand, although a Gentile Christian or a pagan audience is also sometimes involved, there is no direct

²²⁴ References given in earlier parts of this chapter will not be repeated in the conclusion.

²²⁵ Bernhard Blumenkranz, "Anti-Jewish Polemics and Legislation in the Middle Ages: Literary Fiction or Reality?" *JJS* 15 (1964): 140.

evidence that these works were intended for catechumens. The evidence for the background and purposes of the dialogues surveyed in the first part often points to the same conclusions. Therefore one can expect, with reasonable certainty, Christian-Jewish theological encounters where many of these works appeared.

What then can be learned through these dialogues about Christian mission to the Jews and Jewish converts? While there is good reason to believe that most of the dialogues arose because of Christian-Jewish encounters, and some served as aids in Christian mission to Jews, *EP*, *GH*, and the account of the Tomei debate are different than the others since, with qualifications, they seem to represent specific, historical debates with Jewish conversions as the outcome. *EP* seems to bear witness to 60 Jewish converts in fifth-century Persia. These conversions apparently were genuine since Christians there were in no position to use coercive tactics on Jews.

Because of the historical background, the situation is more complicated with regard to coercion when considering the large number of Jewish converts claimed in *GH*. Fifth-century Himyarite Christianity probably was made up partially of Jewish converts, and Gregentius refers to Jewish converts who apparently were his sixth-century contemporaries, some of whom may well have been from Himyar. Each religion had persecuted the other: Around 467, Jews seem to have initiated government persecution because of Christian missionary efforts, and a little later Christians burned synagogues; in ca. 520, the Jewish ruler Dhu Nuwas carried out a severe persecution of Christians lasting several years and used the threat of death to coerce them to convert to Judaism. Furthermore, debate and theological discussion occurred in this region: Saint Azqir apparently debated the Scriptures with rabbis before a Himyarite king ca. 467; Herban often discussed the Gospels with a Christian friend; possibly debate was part of Dhu Nuwas's efforts to convert Christians; and later, Jews and Christians from Najran debated for Mohammed ca. 622. *GH* says that after the debate between Gregentius and Herban, by imperial decree the Jews of Himyar were given no choice but conversion. However, in *The Laws of the Homerites* (Himyarites), which presents a continuous narrative with *GH*, it is said that the pagans of Himyar a little earlier were decreed by king Abraham to convert or face death—a penalty not mentioned for the Jews in *GH*. Nor were the pagans offered a debate. Moreover, after the defeat of Dhu Nuwas, a mission to Jews and pagans was undertaken by the new rulers of Himyar in conjunction with the Byzantine government and the church at Alexandria. It is as part of this mission, set against the just-reviewed background and the sometimes legendary character of *The Laws* and *GH*, that the claims of unanimous conversions of Himyar's pagans and Jews should be considered, including those forced by decree.

In spite of the claim of *GH*, Judaism did not disappear in Himyar, as can be seen when the Jewish delegation from Najran debated before Mohammed ca. 622. Nevertheless, apparent confirmation of the conversion of a large number of Himyar's Jews after the war with Dhu Nuwas occurs in *The Chronicle of John*, Coptic bishop of Nikiu at the end of the seventh century. Did Christian coercion

play a role in these conversions? Although the notices in *The Laws* and *GH* of unanimous conversions in Himyar completed by force cannot be entirely accurate, Abraham may well have judged forced conversions of Jews appropriate after the recent forced conversion of Christians under Dhu Nuwas. *GH*'s debate apparently did not take place at the beginning of the Byzantine-Alexandrian mission, and perhaps the debate did serve as a reprieve from conversion by decree, as it is depicted in *The Laws*. However, attendance of Jews was also to be mandatory.²²⁶ It is difficult to determine how many of the apparently large number of Himyarite Jews converted, either due to coercion or without it. But the mission probably was conducted in part without coercion since it had been authorized through Byzantium, which at this time considered Judaism a lawful religion, and through the church of Alexandria which, as will be considered next, seems to have conducted its missionary work to the Jews without coercion.

It is noteworthy that of the fifteen Christian-Jewish dialogues known from the first six and a quarter centuries,²²⁷ more than half are closely connected with Alexandria or Egypt. Seven probably were composed there: *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 2070*, *AZ*, *TA* (LR & SR), *GH*, *ADJ*, and the record of the *Tomei* debate, while *JP* makes Papiscus an Alexandrian Jew; it is also possible that *PC* originated in Egypt.²²⁸ Since *contra Iudeos* works are often tied to Christian-Jewish interaction, and the dialogues seem especially related to mission due in part to their conversion exhortations and scenes,²²⁹ these eight or nine Egypt-oriented dialogues

²²⁶ The example of Severus may once again shed light on Himyar. A century earlier on Minorca, the Christian mission began with debate, turned later to coercion, then seems to have returned to debate without coercion. Were Himyar's Jews left free to choose after attending a debate or being exposed to Christian mission?

²²⁷ *CZA* is omitted from this count since the Christian's opponent is not a Jew, while Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* and both recensions of *TA* are included.

²²⁸ Even *STh*'s choice of Theophilus may be based on the early fifth-century bishop of Alexandria.

²²⁹ Another plausible indicator of a dialogue's background in Christian-Jewish interaction and mission is the Christian use of the first-century Jewish writer Josephus as an authority. Isidorus of Pelusium in Egypt (first third of the fifth century), *Letter 3.19* (PG 78:745), advised a presbyter who held discussions with a Jew to appeal to Philo and Josephus, whom Jews ought to respect (cf. David T. Runia, "Where, Tell Me, Is the Jew?: Basil, Philo and Isidore of Pelusium," *VC* 46 (1992): 172–89, esp. 185). An appeal to Josephus occurs in four of the dialogues in this chapter: *EP* and *ADJ* quote the *Testimonium Flavianum*, while the Latin version of *AS* ascribes Gospel tradition about Jesus to Josephus and *PC* does so with apocryphal Jesus tradition. Two later dialogues do the same: the Greek *Teaching of Jacob the Newly Baptized* 1.22 (ca. 635; in Dagron and Deroche, "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e Siècle") mixes a Gospel incident together with Josephus's *Jewish War*; and the eighth-century Syriac *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew* (ed. Hayman) makes considerable use of *The Jewish War*. Other *contra Iudeos* works employ Josephus: Eusebius (ca. 315) in *Proof of the Gospel* extensively utilizes *The Antiquities of the Jews*, including the *Testimonium Flavianum*, and *The Jewish War*; Basil of Seleucia (ca. 450), *Proofs against the Jews concerning the Coming of the Savior* (*Homily 38*), refers to book 11 of the *Antiquities* (PG 85:417); and the Greek

point to a somewhat continuous mission to the Jews on the part of the Alexandrian (and Egyptian) church from the third century, or possibly even the second, through the early seventh century.

There is little additional evidence before the fifth century for such an Alexandrian mission,²³⁰ but there is later support. In the first half of the fifth century, bishop Cyril of Alexandria and his friend, the Alexandrian-educated monk Isidorus of Pelusium,²³¹ bear witness to Christian-Jewish interaction in Egypt, and Isidorus shows that debate was fairly common.²³² As was mentioned in the first part in the treatment of *TA*, the tenth-century historian Agapius says that a group of Jews were baptized at Alexandria ca. 413, which seems to corroborate Cyril's interest in mission to Jews.²³³ Towards the end of the fifth or early in the sixth century, Eusebius of Alexandria complains about a great number of Christians who observed many Jewish festivals and practices (but not circumcision),²³⁴ which shows how closely Christians and Jews associated there, and it suggests that some of these Christians once had been closely attached to Judaism.²³⁵ At this time Gregentius, who was later to take part in the mission to Himyar's Jews, seems to have dwelt at Alexandria, and his later mention of "not a few" Jewish converts may include recollection of conversions from his time in Alexandria. A little later (ca. 530) the church of Alexandria helped organize the mission to Himyar's Jews, which could claim a large number of converts. The two later recensions of *TA*, especially SR, seem tied to the mission to Jews organized by Cosmas of Alexandria in the latter part of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries. Nothing is said about how many converts Cosmas made, only the intensity and duration of his efforts.²³⁶

As we have seen above, about two decades later, the debate at Tomei between two monks and the Levite Amran resulted in 375 Jewish conversions. Events sur-

Anonymi Auctoris Theognosiae (Saec. IX/X): Dissertatio contra Iudeos (ed. Hostens, CCGS 14) quotes the *Testimonium Flavianum*.

²³⁰ It was seen above that Origen's *Hexapla* was meant to aid debate with Jews. Since Origen had done substantial work on the *Hexapla* before he left Alexandria ca. 230, there seem to have been Christian-Jewish debates there in the third decade of the third century. It would be likely that earlier debates had exposed the need for such a work. If the *PC* behind the Arabic version originated in Egypt, it mentions Jewish converts in the middle of the fourth century.

²³¹ Pelusium is about 150 miles east of Alexandria.

²³² See the detailed treatment of Isidorus, in Lahey, "Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Genuine Jewish-Christian Debate in *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*," 282–84, which also treats Cyril and Eusebius of Alexandria.

²³³ Possibly these conversions indicate a similar interest in mission by Cyril's predecessor, Theophilus, since they are said to have happened at the beginning of Cyril's episcopate.

²³⁴ *Sermon 7* (PG 86:353–56).

²³⁵ Cf. *TA-SR* 4.1–3 which depicts Aquila attended in the Jewish sanhedrin of Alexandria by "a large crowd of Jews and Greeks and Christians."

²³⁶ Perhaps the depiction at the end of *TA-SR* of the conversion of Aquila along with a multitude of Jews and pagans who listened to the debate is based on real conversions from Cosmas's mission. (The only convert in *TA-LR* is Aquila.)

rounding the debate may well illuminate the Alexandrian mission further. Bishop Anba quickly brought the record of the debate to Alexandria along with the Levite Amran, now known as Paul, ca. 623. Paul was interviewed by the Monophysite patriarch Benjamin, and the record of the debate was read to the bishops who had already been assembled for Benjamin's election. Benjamin ordered a copy of the debate for the bishops, each of whom was also instructed to read it on three specified days in the year. Although Cosmas probably was a Chalcedonian, it seems that like him, the Alexandrian Monophysites were deeply interested in Jewish mission and used a *contra Iudeos* work to make the whole Monophysite Egyptian church aware of Jewish conversions,²³⁷ perhaps to encourage large scale mission to Jews through debate, and to foster good will towards Jewish converts.

What is noteworthy about the Alexandrian (Egyptian) mission to the Jews is that there is suggestive evidence that it seems to have avoided coercion. The possible exception is Himyar after 530, where its king may have imposed forced conversions on Himyar's Jews and pagans soon after Christians had been coerced into converting to Judaism. Nevertheless, even here it is purportedly the Alexandrian-associated bishop Gregentius who acts to relieve Jews from some measure of the king's coercion by arranging a debate. In the fifth century Isidorus of Pelusium gives advice in numerous letters on how to answer theologically "the Jew who debates with you," but he never suggests using coercion. Nor is it depicted in the dialogues set in Egypt (AZ, TA-LR, TA-SR, ADJ, Tomei account).²³⁸ Towards the end of the sixth century, the Jewish participant of ADJ is concerned about debating because Christians have the power of the government behind them. But the Christian debater assures him that conversion by force is not his method. This attitude seems confirmed by the efforts of Cosmas of Alexandria at the same time and into the early seventh century. He used writing and debate in his efforts to persuade Jews rather than brute force. The account of the Tomei debate is similar. The town was predominantly Jewish, and it was Amran the Levite who, after some initial theological discussion, suggested the debate.²³⁹ Moreover, when Amran and 22 prominent Jews accompanied the Christian debaters to bishop Anba asking for baptism, Anba put them off until they should consult with their wives and

²³⁷ Benjamin says that the contest at Tomei would indicate the path of truth to pagans, heretics, and Christians poorly instructed in their religion (Griveau, "Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs," 311). This last group may be the non-Monophysite catholic sects, including the Chalcedonians. If so, Benjamin's statement may be a reaction to Cosmas's missionary efforts, and both Alexandrian Monophysites and Chalcedonians viewed Jewish conversions as proof of God's favor, which could be demonstrated to their rivals. This would set Jewish converts in high regard, which is certainly the view of those from Tomei. Gregentius also tells Herban that Jewish believers are honored more than Gentile believers (PG 86 (1):700). It may be worth noting that Tomei's debate and Cosmas's mission involve monks as evangelists.

²³⁸ JP and *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 2070* are too fragmentary to include, but they are unlikely to have depicted coercion since they were composed before the rise of the Christian state. PC, which possibly is Egyptian, also lacks any depiction of coercion.

²³⁹ Griveau, "Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs," 301–2.

families: those Jews who wanted to become Christians could return with Amran in a week for baptism.²⁴⁰ Although 375 Jews were baptized, they almost certainly were not the entire Jewish population of Tomei, which also indicates that these were not forced conversions.²⁴¹ Furthermore, because it is the bishop Anba who disavows coercion so strongly, and because he brings his actions to the attention of the Alexandrian patriarch who approves them and sends out an account of the debate (and presumably the conversions) to all the Monophysite Egyptian churches, the disavowal of coercion in mission to the Jews may well have been an officially established ecclesiastical policy in Egypt before the Tomei debate.²⁴²

Finally, the Christian-Jewish dialogues and *contra Iudeos* works of the first six or so centuries provide important insights into early Christian attitudes towards Judaism. Far from supporting the idea that the church gave up trying to

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 308–9.

²⁴¹ Amran became a Christian priest and took the name of Paul soon after he was baptized (Griveau, “*Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs*,” 310). Five years later, following two short-termed successors of Anba, Paul was appointed bishop by the patriarch Benjamin over the see which included Tomei. There he was said to have preserved his charge from Jewish (theological) attack (Griveau, “*Histoire de la Conversion des Juifs*,” 312), which shows that there were still significant numbers of unconverted Jews in the region. Furthermore, in the excerpts and summaries of the text given by Griveau, it is not said that all the Jews of Tomei converted or that the Christians now outnumbered the Jews there.

The apparent attitude against coercion of Jews in Egyptian Christianity is noteworthy since some forced conversion of Jews occurred in the Byzantine empire in the sixth and seventh centuries. Possibly an unspecified form of coercion lies behind the conversion of the Jews of Boreium in Cyrenaica (Libya) which Justinian effected (Procopius, *Buildings*, 6.2.21–23). At least Justinian’s anti-Judaic laws, which did not ban Judaism but set further constraints on Jews, had some effect on conversions. Romanus Melodus (ca. 500–560), although a sincere convert from Judaism, says that Jews, “often approached because of fear of the laws of those now ruling” (Alfredo M. Rabello, ed. *Giustiniano, Ebrei e Samaritani alla Luce delle Fonti Storico-Letterarie, Ecclesiastiche e Giuridiche* [Monografie del Vocabolario di Giustiniano 2; 2 vols.; Milano: Dott. A Giuffrè Editore, 1987–88], 1:477 n. 34). However, there were forced conversions of Jews by the bishop of Melitene in Armenia in the time of the emperor Maurice (582–602; cf. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, 254). Coerced baptisms are said to have occurred in Jerusalem in the fourth or fifth year of the reign of the emperor Phocas (602–610): according to his decree, all the Jews in his empire were to be baptized. See Andrew Palmer, Sebastian Brock, and Robert Hoyland, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Translated Texts for Historians 15; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 55. According to a different chronicle, these baptisms in Jerusalem seem to have taken place under the emperor Heraclius (610–641) in 617 (Palmer, Brock and Hoyland, *The Seventh Century*, 68), apparently after Jewish mistreatment of Christians during the Persian occupation of the city 614–617. But those Jews who did not convert may only have been banished from Jerusalem (Palmer, Brock and Hoyland, *The Seventh Century*, 128, 161). In 634, Heraclius decreed that all Jews of the empire should be baptized (Palmer, Brock and Hoyland, *The Seventh Century*, 147 n. 347). This decree resulted in forced baptisms in Carthage ca. 635.

²⁴² I am grateful to my colleague, Prof. David Reisman, for this last suggestion. TA-SR has a resemblance to the nearly contemporary Tomei debate, which may point to a similar policy towards Jewish converts: near the conclusion of the debate, once Aquila has decided to be baptized, first he is led to the bishop so that arrangements can be made.

convert Jews after the first half of the second century, these works show that Christians never fully gave up missions to Jews, largely welcomed Jewish converts, and could even treat them with special honor. They sometimes admit Christian failings towards Jews, apparently with some view to correct these faults. This is not to gloss over the serious difficulties at times in the relations between the two faiths over the first six or so centuries. However, within an increasingly hostile political environment to Judaism after the rise of the Christian emperors in the fourth century,²⁴³ *contra Iudeos* works bear witness to theological debate and Christian mission to the Jews generally conducted without coercion. The works are rather formulaic since classic arguments are reused in new generations, but most develop something reflective of their individual dealings with Jews. Furthermore, by reusing ancient biblical proof testimonies and Jewish Christian material, these works preserved arguments which Jewish Christians had used to persuade Jews about Christianity.

4. Appendix

The following works either are dialogic in ways that differ from the dialogues surveyed in this chapter, usually for the lack of Scripture testimonies, or, in the case of the first text below, it has been considered a dialogue but probably is not one:

(1) Hippolytus (early third century), *Demonstration Against the Jews* (fragment; PG 10:787–94). Külzer argues that Hippolytus's use of the vocative, “O Jew,” and other clues, show that the work was a dialogue.²⁴⁴ But direct address to Jews is not uncommon in non-dialogic *contra Iudeos* texts. For example, Tertullian's *Against the Jews* (ca. 200) and Maximinus of Hippo's *Against the Jews* (ca. 430) continually address Jews directly, although not with the vocative, while some of Jacob of Sarug's *contra Iudeos* homilies (late fifth century) address a particular Jew in the vocative. Furthermore, the title of Hippolytus's work does not suggest a dialogue.

(2) Aphrahat of Persia, *21st Demonstration: On Persecution* (ca. 344).²⁴⁵ The first eight chapters answer Jewish polemic against Christianity which Aphrahat had encountered. Chapters 1–4 record part of an actual conversation (dialogue) he had with a Jewish sage. There can be little doubt it is genuine since Aphrahat also records the Jewish side, which is quite well-reasoned. Their disputation closely resembles the *contra Iudeos* dialogues in some ways including: generally they argue over one Scripture after another, and the Jew attacks material in the Gospels (Matt 17:20 & 21:21). More specifically, Aphrahat uses Deut 32:32 and

²⁴³ While Jews clearly had to practice their religion under an increasingly hostile imperial legal code, the relatively strong political position of Jews at times in the early Byzantine empire is shown by Robert L. Wilken, “The Jews and Christian Apologetics after Theodosius I *Cunctos Populos*,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 451–71. Moreover, Jewish missionary efforts were carried out in this environment; see Feldman, “Proselytism by Jews in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Centuries.”

²⁴⁴ *Disputationes Graecae Contra Iudeos*, 103–5.

²⁴⁵ French translation SC 359:808–40, English translation *NPNF²* 13:392–402.

Isa 1:10 as proofs of Sodom and Gomorrah as a figure for later Judaism; the former passage is used similarly in *STh*, the latter in *TA*. The remainder of the *21st Demonstration* treats the theme of endurance in the time of persecution.

(3) *Clementine Recognitions* (second half of the fourth century; Greek text lost; Latin and Syriac versions) 1.44–70 (cf. 3.75). The twelve apostles debate with Jewish leaders and a Samaritan in the temple with a crowd of hearers. Truly dialogic, but contains practically no use of scriptural testimonies. There is material which agrees with *contra Christianos* objections found in Jewish sources. The apostles win the debate and convince the crowd and leaders to accept baptism, but violence breaks out. The debate may be part of a source from the second half of the second century.²⁴⁶ The material is almost certainly Jewish Christian.

(4) *The Acts of Philip* 11(6)–29(24) (late fourth century).²⁴⁷ The apostle Philip is in Athens and the philosophers there send to Ananias, the Jewish high priest in Jerusalem, to come and report about Jesus. Ananias comes with 500 men to kill Philip, but first confronts him in the philosophers' presence. There is little dialogue resembling the *contra Iudeos* tradition, except at 15(10) where Ananias gives a substantial paragraph of *contra Christianos* objections. Soon he and his men are struck blind. Philip prays, and Jesus appears. When Jesus ascends back to heaven there is an earthquake and a voice from heaven. The 500 men believe and receive back their sight. *The Syriac History of Philip* (fifth century)²⁴⁸ is mostly made up of discussions between Philip and Hananya, a Jew from Carthage who converts along with the Jews of Carthage, 1500 of whom receive the seal (of baptism). None of this is found in Lipsius's Greek text. No traditional testimonies, are present but occasional Jewish *contra Christianos* material appears.

(5) *The Gospel of Nicodemus: The Acts of Pilate* (ca. 425).²⁴⁹ The work contains a series of short discussions from the time of Jesus' trial until shortly after the ascension between various Jewish leaders and Jesus, Pilate, and those who bear witness to Jesus' miraculous deeds (as found mostly in the canonical Gospels). The Jewish leaders bring up occasional *contra Christianos* arguments known from Jewish sources, but there is little argument over the testimonies in the *contra Iudeos* tradition, nor a disputation arguing for conversion.

(6) Theodoret of Cyrrhus (first half of the fifth century), *Questions and Answers Against the Jews*.²⁵⁰ This work is similar to a dialogue, but there is no Jewish

²⁴⁶ Cf. Robert E. van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (SBLDS 112; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); and also section 5 of chapter 11 of this book.

²⁴⁷ R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet (eds.), *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Hermann Mendelsohn, 1891–1903; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1919).

²⁴⁸ W. Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1871), 1.73–99, 2.69–92.

²⁴⁹ Greek A recension translated in Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols.; trans. R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963–1965), 1:449–70.

²⁵⁰ Greek text: Martin Brok, "Un soi-disant fragment du traité contre les Juifs de Théodore de Cyr," *RHE* 45 (1950): 487–507; older edition in Joseph Schulte, *Theodoret*

participant. Canivet, *Histoire d'une Entreprise apologétique au Ve Siècle*, 51–62, argues against Theodoret's authorship.

(7) Isaac of Antioch (between the first half of the fifth century and the first half of the sixth century, depending upon which of the three Isaacs in the corpus the work may belong to), *Homily Two, Against the Jews* (Syriac; *OrChr* 45, 30–53). Truly dialogic in a few places: a Jew makes a few very brief comments and questions, and a few Jewish objections are proposed by Isaac. In both respects it resembles Tertullian's *Against the Jews*, which has many more dialogic elements, but is in form a tractate.

(8) *The Acts of John Composed by Prochorus* (ca. 500).²⁵¹ On Patmos at Phora, Karos, a Jew, holds discourse from the books of Moses with the apostle John, who in turn exegetes the Scriptures, “especially the prophets,” to him. John removes Karos’s ability to speak when the latter blasphemes. After John restores his speech, Karos asks to receive the seal and John baptizes him (pages 87–89). Later in the same city, John meets a Jew named Philo, who rouses John from the Law and Prophets. After John performs two healings, Philo repents of his opposition and asks for the seal. John quickly instructs him, then baptizes him (110–12). Neither story contains Old Testament testimonies.

(9) Leontius, Presbyter of Constantinople (mid-sixth century), regularly features dialogic elements in his *Homilies* (CCSG 17). Most references to Jews are brief, but there are two longer sections with Jewish participants (*Hom.* 10.147–209, 11.378–429). They seem unrelated to the general *contra Iudeos* tradition.

(10) Pseudo-Athanasius (ca. second half of the sixth century), *Questions to Antiochus*.²⁵² As with Theodoret, there is no Jewish participant. However, questions 37–39 and 87 treat general *contra Iudeos* issues at length; a few more questions do so in a minor way.²⁵³

von Cyrus als Apologet (Theologische Studien der Leo-Gesellschaft 10; Vienna: Mayer & Co., 1904), 8–15.

²⁵¹ Theodor Zahn (ed.), *Acta Joannis* (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1880).

²⁵² PG 28.597–700.

²⁵³ After the completion of my manuscript, the following relevant studies have come to my attention: Vassilios Christides, “The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 A.D.),” *Annales d’Éthiopie* 9 (1972): 115–46; Michel van Esbroeck, “Le manuscrit hébreu Paris 755 et l’histoire des martyrs de Nedjran,” in *La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam: VIIe–VIIIe Siècles* (ed. Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais; Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1992): 20–25; Moisés Orfali, “El ‘Dialogoş pro Ecclesia contra Synagogam’: Un Tratado Anónimo de Polémico Antijudíos,” *Hispania* 54 (1994): 679–732; Martin C. Albl, *Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa: Testimonies against the Jews* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 8; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004); William Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues: Athanasius and Zacchaeus, Simon and Theophilus, Timothy and Aquila* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 58; Lewiston, New York: Mellen, 2004); Patrick Andrist, “Un témoin oublié du *Dialogue de Timothée et Aquila et des Anastasiana anti iudaica* (Sinaiticus gr. 399),” *Byzantion* 75 (2005): 9–24.

Evidence for Jewish Believers in “Church Orders” and Liturgical Texts

Anders Ekenberg

The sources treated in this essay have not been studied in the past so much in the interest of describing general historical and social circumstances in early Christianity as for purposes of delineating the history of church ministries and liturgy; and they have been used comparatively little in discussions on doctrinal and theological developments.

The texts in question raise a number of both historical and hermeneutical problems. Many of them are of a kind that could be termed *Traditionsliteratur*, the word then taken in a very wide sense: texts which have developed over a certain span of time (in some cases, over centuries), and which reflect several different historical phases, environments, and situations at a time. The questions regarding date, provenance, and authorship in some cases have not yet been answered in a satisfactory manner. Many of them—not least liturgical texts such as prayers and hymns—undoubtedly will remain anonymous and of uncertain date indefinitely.

1. The Sources

A certain number of early Christian texts are usually called “church orders.” These texts, which are mostly from the eastern Mediterranean countries, contain rules or advices on community life and church organization, liturgical prescriptions, moral admonitions, and communal concerns. The three oldest preserved examples are the *Didache* or “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” (most probably Syria, ca. 100 C.E.), *The Apostolic Tradition* (probably Hippolytus of Rome, beginning of the 3d cent.), and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Syria, 3d cent.). Another, somewhat later, example is *The Apostolic Constitutions* (Antioch, ca. 380). A trait uniting many of the writings in this

category, though not all of them, is the fictional ascription of their contents to the twelve apostles.¹

The question of literary genre, as it relates to these writings, has not been studied thoroughly enough.² The documents resemble each other in many ways, and a certain number of them are literarily interrelated. However, they do not only, and in some cases not even primarily (as the term “church orders” might suggest), contain prescriptions on institutional matters, forms of worship, etc., nor do they usually contain admonitions and rules regarding Christian life and Christian manners in general, elements of theological discussion about heresies, etc. They are not, or at least not in all cases, as dominated by (apodictic or casuistic) prescriptions as the term “church orders” might make one believe; rather, they seem to contain large portions of hortatory speech and polemical or didactic argumentation.

The writings under discussion are far more of a prescriptive than of a descriptive nature. They depict ideals, stating how Christian life should be lived and how worship and church institutions should be. But precisely because of this, they have very much to tell us about the views of their authors and about real—or by their authors assumed—circumstances in the communities where they developed and/or for which they were primarily composed. Historical reconstructions on the basis of such sources must of course be made with care, but they are in no way a priori impossible.

Something similar might, *mutatis mutandis*, be said about the second category of sources that has been scanned in preparation for this essay, namely liturgical texts. The difficulties when it comes to getting the texts to “speak” about historical and social realities are, however, even greater here than with regard to the “church orders.” What is meant here by “liturgical texts” is no single literary genre, but simply refers to texts on worship and for worship other than the ones contained in the “church orders”: texts that either describe or contain

¹For basic information on the “church orders,” with bibliography, see Paul F. Bradshaw, “Kirchenordnungen,” *TRE* 18:662–70; Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), 80–110. On the authorship of *The Apostolic Tradition*, see further below.

²Cf. Georg Schöllgen, “Die literarische Gattung der syrischen Didaskalie,” in *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature* (ed. H. J. W. Drijvers; OrChrAn 229; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 149–59; Kurt Niedermann, *Die Didache* (KEK Ergänzungreihe = Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 13–15; B. Steimer, *Vertex traditionis: Die Gattung der altchristlichen Kirchenordnungen* (BZNW 63; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), esp. 149–363; Georg Schöllgen, “The Didache as a Church Order: An Examination of the Purpose for the Composition of the Didache and Its Consequences for Interpretation,” in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 43–71; and Georg Schöllgen, “Der Abfassungszweck der frühen Kirchenordnungen: Anmerkungen zu den Thesen Bruno Steiners,” in *JAC* 40 (ed. Ernst Dassman; Munster: Aschendorff, 1997), 55–77.

prescriptions for worship, or are themselves meant for use in worship. Quotations from texts of these kinds can be found in a number of different genres. They can be found in didactic, paraenetic, and narrative texts primarily dealing with other things, in letters, in collections of hymns and/or prayers, etc.³

The documentation on Christian worship from the very first centuries C.E. is not particularly rich. Oral traditions regulating how one worshipped—which was done in different ways in different environments and different places—existed from the very beginnings of Christianity and from the very establishment of Christian communities in different places and regions in the Mediterranean. A certain, but rather restricted, number of written-down prayers and hymns have been preserved from the first centuries, as have also a number of often-used formulas and formulations. It was not, however, before the fourth century that Christians started, on a larger scale, to write down orders of worship or texts for worship use. And while liturgical documentation from the fourth and fifth centuries is richer than from the preceding centuries, it cannot be said to be overwhelmingly so. Later sources of course often inform us about liturgical practices reaching back to earlier centuries. There is, however, nothing in later sources that is of any help in answering the questions discussed in this volume. And even earlier liturgical texts, apart from the “church orders,” do not seem to have anything to contribute to the reconstruction of early Jewish Christian traditions.

When discussing Jewish and Jewish Christian elements in early Christian worship, we obviously have to exclude those elements that, while undoubtedly inherited from Judaism, soon became common to most or all early Christian communities, as for example immersion in baptism, the general habit of reading the Scriptures, preaching and praying in worship, the use of bread and wine at eucharistic meals and laying-on of hands for blessing or ordination, as well as

³Larger collections of early Christian texts on worship and for worship include Anton Hänggi et al., eds, *Prex eucharistica: Textus e variis liturgiis antiquioribus selecti* (Spicilegium Friburgense 12; 2d ed.; Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions Universitaires, 1978); R. C. D. Jaspers and G. J. Cuming, eds., *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed: Texts Translated and Edited with Commentary* (3d ed.; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1987); Enzo Lodi, ed., *Enchiridion euchologicum fontium liturgicorum* (Bibliotheca Ephemerides liturgicae, Subsidia 15; Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 1979); and A. Hamman, *Prières des premiers chrétiens* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1952). For a convenient survey of early sources, as well for penetrating discussions on methodological questions, see Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*. Historical surveys are given in, e.g., Josef A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959); C. Vogel, “Liturgie,” *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du christianisme ancien* 2:1450–77. On the relationship between early Jewish and Christian worship, see, e.g., P. F. Bradshaw and L. A. Hoffman, eds., *The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship* (Two Liturgical Traditions 1; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), and Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*. Cf. also G. Kretschmar, “Die Bedeutung der Liturgiegeschichte für die Frage nach der Kontinuität des Judenchristentums in nachapostolischer Zeit,” in *Aspects du Judéo-Christianisme* (Colloque de Strasbourg 23–25 avril 1964; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 113–36.

certain prayer patterns and certain often-used wordings when praying or singing. That such things—with or without modifications—had been taken over from Judaism is obvious, but they very soon became so widespread that they tell us virtually nothing about the existence of Jewish believers in Jesus in the specific historical situations mirrored through the texts and habits in question.

2. *Didache*

The Jewish background of very much, perhaps indeed most, of what is contained in the *Didache* is obvious. In the particular form of Christianity represented by the document, a high degree of continuity with the mother religion is preserved. This continuity is expressed by such elements as the teaching on the Two Ways in chs. 1–6; the prescriptions on fasting and praying in ch. 8, which (despite the polemics against “the hypocrites”; cf. below) are clearly rooted in Jewish forms of piety; the meal prayers in chs. 9–10; much of what is said about itinerant prophets as well as local ministers in chs. 11–15; as well as the apocalyptically colored admonition to watchfulness in ch. 16.⁴

While stressing continuity with older Jewish tradition, the *Didache* also mirrors a form of Christianity that dissociates itself either from Judaism at large or (more probably) from a particular form of Judaism. The clearest expression of this is the polemic against the “hypocrites” in *Did.* 8.1–2 (cf. 2.6; 4.12; 5.1):

Let your fastings not [coincide] with [those of] the hypocrites. They fast on Monday and Thursday; you, though, should fast on Wednesday and Friday. And do not pray as the hypocrites [do]; pray instead this way, as the Lord directed in his gospel: “Our Father in heaven [etc.]”⁵

The use of the word ὑποκριτῆς (plur. ὑποκριταί) here has its closest correspondence in the gospel of Matthew, where it denotes Jesus’ and his followers’ Pharisaic opponents (Matt 6:2, 5, 16; 22:18; 23:13, 14, 15; 24:51); *Did.* 8.2 comes especially close to Matt 6:5, 16. The sayings about “the hypocrites” in Matthew

⁴Cf. now esp. Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (CRINT 3.5; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). Apart from the studies on the *Didache* mentioned by Bradshaw (in his “Kirchenordnungen” and *The Search for the Origins*), cf. esp. Clayton N. Jefford, ed., *The Didache in Context: Essay on its Text, History and Transmission* (NovTSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 1995); Jonathan A. Draper, ed., *The Didache in Modern Research* (AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996). The recent editions and commentaries consulted here are Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier, eds., *La doctrine des douze apôtres: Didachè* (SC 248; Paris: Cerf, 1978); Klaus Wengst, *Didache (Apostellehre)*, *Barnabasbrief*, *Zweiter Clemensbrief*, *Schrift an Diognet* (Schriften des Urchristentums 2; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984); Niederwimmer, *Die Didache*.

⁵The translation used is that by A. Cody, “The Didache: An English Translation,” in Jefford, *The Didache in Context*, 3–14.

without any possible doubt reflect inner-Jewish debates.⁶ Whether *Did.* 8.1–2 is also to be regarded a feature of inner-Jewish debate is perhaps not immediately obvious, but seems very likely. Both the fact that the expressions used by the Didachist here are so close to the vocabulary used in Matthew, and the fact that the custom of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays can most plausibly be connected with the Pharisees, makes this the preferable interpretation.⁷

If that is the case, then the traditions, beliefs and values spelled out in the *Didache* are, at least to a great extent, Jewish Christian traditions, beliefs and values. Unfortunately, it is hard to reach any great degree of precision when trying to describe the Jewish element in the communities speaking through and addressed in the *Didache*.⁸ But to judge from how the text is written, an important Jewish element is indeed found as well in the source as in the target communities of the *Didache*.

Against this background, it is not at all surprising that Jewish tradition is reflected to as high a degree as can be found in the *Didache*. The meal prayers in chs. 9–10 can be taken as an example.⁹ These prayers have often been compared to *kiddush* (ch. 9) and to the great blessing after meals, the *birkat ha-mazon* (ch. 10). If the assumption above is correct, these prayers not only have a Jewish background but are also prayers which demonstrate how certain Jesus-believing Jews in Syria around the year 100 C.E., as well as both earlier and later than that, used to pray at eucharistic meals. The form and contents of these Jewish Christian prayers coincide very well with the fact, established above all by Joseph Heinemann, that ancient Jewish prayer traditions developed not from uniform

⁶ See esp. Jonathan A. Draper, “Christian Self-definition against the ‘Hypocrites’ in *Didache* 8,” in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 223–43, esp. 231ff; M. Weinfeld, “The Charge of Hypocrisy in Matthew 23 and in Jewish Sources,” *Imm* 24–25 (1990): 52–58.

⁷ Pace Niederwimmer, *Didache*, ad loc.; Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 291–93.

⁸ Although it cannot be proved, it seems at least possible that these communities are to be placed in the city of Antioch and in the countryside around it. Such is the surmise of John P. Meier, “Antioch,” in R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 83–84 (11–86); also Jonathan A. Draper, “Torah and Troublesome Apostles in the *Didache* Community,” in Draper, *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 341–72; and David Flusser, “Paul’s Jewish-Christian Opponents in the *Didache*,” in *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions* (ed. S. Shaked et. al.; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 71–90. Cf. Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 48–52.

⁹ The meal for which the prayers in *Did.* 9–10 are meant is, though this has been denied by several scholars, a eucharistic meal. See, e.g., Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 298–304; also J. Betz, “The Eucharist in the *Didache*,” in Draper, *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 244–75. Important studies on the prayers in *Did.* 9–10 include, apart from the recent commentaries, Willy Rordorf, “L’eucharistie des premiers chrétiens: la *Didachè*,” in *L’eucharistie des premiers chrétiens* (Le point théologique 17; ed. W. Rordorf; 2d ed., Paris: Beauchesne 1988), 187–208; J. Betz, “The Eucharist in the *Didache*.” Cf. also Willy Rordorf, “Die Mahlgebete in *Didache* Kap. 9–10: Ein neuer Status quaestionis,” *VC* 51 (1997): 229–46.

beginnings to later diversity but rather in the opposite direction.¹⁰ The prayers in the *Didache* are valuable sources for the study of Jewish prayer in the first centuries C.E.¹¹ The fact that very similar purely Jewish prayer texts in Hebrew have been preserved, although only in fragments (in Dura Europos), further underscores this fact.¹²

At this point, we might highlight certain characteristics of the kind of Judaism that we encounter in the *Didache*. These Jesus-believing Jews were loyal to the Ten Commandments and to the moral laws found in the Pentateuch and considered these a minimum standard for Christian behavior. Obedience to the whole of Torah was an ideal to be aimed at, though such obedience was not absolutely compulsory (6.2–3):¹³ “If you can bear the entire yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect, but if you cannot, do what you can. As for food, bear what you can, but be very much on your guard against food offered to idols, for it is [related to] worship of dead gods.”

The fact that some characteristically “Hellenistic” modes of expression, above all “immortality” ($\alpha\theta\alpha\nu\sigma\alpha$, 4.8; 10.2), occur in the *Didache*, does not at all run counter to what has been said so far about the Jewish character of the document.¹⁴ As is by now well known, Judaism at the beginning of the Common Era was Hellenised to a far greater extent than was formerly thought. Many Hellenistic modes of expression had become the property not only of culturally open-minded Jews of the Diaspora, but even of important circles in Palestine.¹⁵ The triad “life–knowledge–immortality” occurring in 10.2 points in the same direction.

Since the communities under discussion regard obedience to the whole of torah an ideal, it is only reasonable to assume that they, for instance, kept the Sabbath commandment. But they also gathered for worship on every Sunday, “the Lord’s day” (14.1; cf. below on the *Didascalia* and *The Apostolic Constitutions*).

Their Christology can hardly be reconstructed on the basis of *Didache* alone, but they evidently regarded Jesus Christ as the “servant/child” (Gr. $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$; 9.2–3; 10.2–3) of God, as the Son of God the Father (7.1, 3) and as “the Lord” (8.2; 10.5,

¹⁰ Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (SJ 9; Berlin: de Gruyter 1977). See also Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, 4–13, and the literature mentioned there, not least James H. Charlesworth, “A Prolegomenon to a New Study of the Jewish Background of the Hymns and Prayers in the New Testament,” *JJS* 33 (1982): 269–70.

¹¹ Oddly enough, the prayers in *Did.* 9–10 do not appear in James H. Charlesworth’s valuable summary, “Jewish Hymns, Odes, and Prayers (ca. 167 B.C.E.–135 C.E.),” in *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* (ed. R. A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 411–36.

¹² Cf. J. Teicher, “Ancient Eucharistic Prayers in Hebrew (Dura-Europos parchment D Pg 25),” *JQR* 54 (1963): 99–109. Teicher tries to show that the prayers in question are Christian eucharistic prayers, but this seems very unlikely.

¹³ See esp. Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 230–70.

¹⁴ On $\alpha\theta\alpha\nu\sigma\alpha$, see R. Bultmann, “ $\theta\alpha\bar{\nu}\alpha\tau\omega\varsigma$ [etc.],” *TDNT* 3:7–25, esp. 22–25.

¹⁵ See esp. the classic work of Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1974; reprint: XPress Reprints, 1996).

etc.). The organic unity between Christ and the church is underlined by the metaphor “the holy vine of your servant David” (9.1). The church was perceived as a kind of global or universal Christian fellowship: “gather [your church] from the four winds, into the kingdom which you have prepared for it” (10.5; cf. 9.4). In the prayers for the eucharistic meal in chs. 9 and 10, considerable stress is put on giving thanks for the experienced bestowal of revelation, life and knowledge, and on the fact that “spiritual food and drink and eternal life” have been granted through Jesus. This is most probably to be seen in the light of the fact that these prayers were meant for a eucharistic meal celebrated immediately after baptism,¹⁶ and there seems to be no compelling reason to put this in opposition to the way in which the Eucharist is regarded in 14.1–3: as an offering of thanksgiving which is to be held pure (through confession of mutual sins).

As for church structure and ministries, the *Didache* witnesses to a kind of transitory stage. There are “prophets and teachers” in the communities, but there are also (or at least, according to the Didachist, should be) “bishops and deacons” in them.¹⁷ The eschatological outlook of the *Didache* (see esp. ch. 16) on the whole seems similar to the one in the gospel of Matthew.¹⁸

3. *The Odes of Solomon and The Apostolic Tradition*

The witness to Jewish Christian traditions of *The Odes of Solomon*¹⁹ and of *The Apostolic Tradition*²⁰ is often discussed and yet remains ambiguous. The

¹⁶ See esp. Jonathan A. Draper, “Ritual Process and Ritual Symbol in the *Didache*,” VC 54 (2000): 121–58. On the baptismal Eucharist in early Christianity generally, cf. G. Wainwright, “Baptismal Eucharist before Nicaea: An Essay in Liturgical History,” *Studia Liturgica* 4 (1965): 9–36.

¹⁷ See esp. Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 330–64. On itinerant preachers and local ministers in the *Didache*, cf., e.g., Rordorf and Tuilier, *La doctrine des douze apôtres*, 72–78; A. de Halleux, “Ministers in the *Didache*,” in Draper, *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 300–320; K. Niederwimmer, “An Examination of the Development of Itinerant Radicalism in the Environment and Tradition of the *Didache*,” in Draper, *The Didache in Modern Research*, 321–39.

¹⁸ See, e.g., H.-R. Seeliger, “Considerations on the Background and Purpose of the Apocalyptic Conclusion of the *Didache*,” in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 373–82; Rordorf and Tuilier, *La doctrine des douze apôtres*, 89–91; Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 247–56.

¹⁹ Michael Lattke, ed., *Oden Salomos* (Fontes christiani 19; Freiburg: Herder, 1995). Cf. also James H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (SBLTT 13; Missoula, Mont.: 1977); Michael Lattke, *Die Oden Salomos in ihrer Bedeutung für Neues Testament und Gnosis* (OBO 25; 3 vols.; Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions Universitaires, 1979–1986); Charlesworth, “Jewish Hymns, Odes, and Prayers,” 417–18; Han J. W. Drijvers, “Salomo/Salomoschriften, III,” TRE 29:730–32.

²⁰ Bernhard Botte, *La Tradition apostolique de saint Hippolyte* (ed. A. Gerhards and S. Felbecker; Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 39; 5th ed. Münster: Aschendorff, 1989). For modern English translations, see M. Cotone, “The Apostolic

Odes, which are of Syrian provenance and probably date from ca. 125 C.E.,²¹ are often counted as Jewish Christian, although often not with a very precise meaning given to the notion. The *Odes* were most probably written for use in worship, as is indicated by the “Alleluias” that conclude many of them. The far-reaching similarities between the *Odes* and not only the Johannine writings in the New Testament but also ancient Jewish hymns (e.g., *Hodayoth*; *The Psalms of Solomon*) have been emphasized more than once.²² James H. Charlesworth even goes so far as to summarize previous research by stating that “who composed them [= the *Odes*] was probably influenced by the images and thoughts contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the *Hodayoth*.²³ The author of the *Odes* may well have been of Jewish origin, but that cannot be argued with any certainty.

When it comes to *The Apostolic Tradition*, already Dom Gregory Dix in his 1937 edition stressed the existence of a number of “Jewish” traits in the document (as he also did later in his monograph *The Shape of the Liturgy*).²⁴ Unfortunately, Dix never published the commentary on the *Tradition* he was planning; it would undoubtedly have been devoted not least to these “Jewish” elements. Most of them, nevertheless, contain no specific pointers to Jewish Christian traditions but are rather to be regarded as parts of the common Jewish heritage of early

Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome,” *American Benedictine Review* 19 (1968): 495–520; and Geoffrey J. Cuming, *Hippolytus: A Text for Students, with Introduction, Translation, Commentary and Notes* (2d ed.; Bramcote Nottingham: Grove, 1987). The translation used below is that by Cuming. Cf. also Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *Hippolytus, On the Apostolic Tradition: An English Version with Introduction and Commentary* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001). According to the standard opinion in 20th century research, the document was composed, at the beginning of the third century, by Hippolytus of Rome. This opinion has been repeatedly questioned, but with insufficient arguments. The early third century is the best conceivable historical period for the composition of a text with this content, and a number of traits in the document decisively point toward an origin in the West or, more precisely, in Rome. Despite the relative lack of popularity that the standard opinion (founded by, above all, Richard Hugh Connolly and Edouard Schwartz) has encountered lately, it will here be taken as correct. See further A.-G. Martimort, “Tradition apostolique,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 15:1133–46.

²¹On the date (ca. 125 C.E.), see Lattke, *Oden Salomos* (Fontes christiani), 20–35.

²²See, e.g., Charlesworth, “Jewish Hymns, Odes, and Prayers,” 417. Cf. also A. A. R. Bastiaensen, “*Psalmi, Hymni and Cantica in Early Jewish-Christian Tradition*,” in *Second Century, Tertullian to Nicaea in the West, Clement of Alexandria and Origin, Athanasius* (Vol. 3 of *Papers Presented to the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1987*; ed. E. A. Livingstone; StPatr 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 15–26.

²³Charlesworth, “Jewish Hymns, Odes and Prayers,” 417.

²⁴Gregory Dix, ed., *Apostolike Paradosis: The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome* (London: SPCK, 1937); Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (2d ed. London: Black, 1945). Parallels between halakic texts and *The Apostolic Tradition* were emphasized by F. S. B. Gavin, “Rabbinic Parallels in Early Church Orders,” *HUCA* 6 (1929): 57–67; cf. also P. Sigal, “Early Christian and Rabbinic Liturgical Affinities: Exploring Liturgical Acculturation,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 63–90.

Christianity. There may be a number of exceptions, one of them being the rule that the baptism of menstruant women must be postponed (if this rule is really influenced by Jewish halakah) and the—rather opposite—implicit criticism against Jewish legislation concerning impurity caused by sexual intercourse in the instructions concerning prayer:²⁵

(Ch. 20) Those who are to be baptized should be instructed to bathe and wash themselves on the Thursday. If a woman is in her period, let her be put aside, and receive baptism another day. [...]

(Ch. 41) Pray before your body rests on the bed. Rise about midnight, wash your hands with water, and pray. If your wife is present also, pray both together; if she is not yet among the faithful, go apart into another room and pray, and go back to bed again. Do not be lazy about praying. He who is bound in the marriage-bond is not defiled. Those who have washed have no need to wash again, for they are clean. [...]²⁶

It seems indeed probable that at least the second of these elements somehow stems from (reactions to) Jewish Christian traditions. Other examples might be mentioned, as for instance the detailed rules concerning which fruits and vegetables can and cannot be offered (ch. 31), which seem to reflect contemporary Jewish interpretations of Numbers 11:5,²⁷ and the direction that female baptismal candidates must loose their hair and lay aside their jewellery before descending into the water.²⁸ However, no satisfactory reconstructions of the sources used by the author of the *Tradition* have been made so far, and it does not—or at least not yet—seem possible to assemble the different “Jewish” or “Jewish Christian” traits found here and there in the document into any meaningful pattern. At the present state of knowledge it cannot therefore be decided how the presence of these elements in the *Tradition* is to be counted for. The *Tradition* evidently in-

²⁵ On Jewish legislation concerning purity in general, cf., e.g., Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (SJLA 1; Leiden: Brill, 1973); Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis: Biblical Foundations* (SBLDS 143; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993); cf. also Gerard Rouwhorst, “Leviticus 12–15 in early Christianity,” in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (ed. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 181–93. On the rabbis and menstrual impurity, see esp. Charlotte E. Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstruction of Biblical Gender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). It does not, however, seem absolutely necessary to suppose a Jewish background to the prescription in ch. 20. And a similar rule, now regarding the participation of women in the Eucharist during their menstrual period, is given by the non-Jewish bishop Dionysius of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Basilidem episcopum* (PG 10:1281ff. [1271–90]).

²⁶ Translation from Cuming, *Hippolytus*.

²⁷ This despite the fact that the prescriptions in the *Tradition* do not correspond exactly to rabbinic tradition. Cf. J. B. Bauer, “Die Früchtesegnung in Hippolyts Kirchenordnung,” ZKT 74 (1952): 71–75.

²⁸ See W. C. van Unnik, “Les chevaux défaits des femmes baptisés: Un rite de baptême dans l’Ordre ecclésiastique d’Hippolyte,” VC 1 (1947): 77–100.

corporates traditions not only stemming from Rome, but also from the East (Asia Minor and possibly elsewhere), and the possibility is not excluded—while it has never been proved—that Hippolytus himself was an Eastern immigrant.²⁹ Under these circumstances, it is hardly possible to use these details in the *Tradition* in a purposeful way when discussing the role of Jewish believers in early Christianity.

4. *Didascalia Apostolorum*

The Didascalia Apostolorum, originally written in Greek although now only fragmentarily preserved in its original language,³⁰ presupposes a situation somewhere in Syria during the third century where a certain number of the Christians are of Jewish origin. Among them, there is a certain tendency toward adopting observance of the whole torah, a tendency that is heavily criticized by the author. The *Didascalia* insists—under the pretension that it has been written by the apostles in connection with the meeting described in Acts 15—that only “the Law,” the Prophets and the Gospel are to be followed by believers in Jesus. One has to avoid loyalty to “the second legislation” (*δευτέρωσις*), i.e., that part of the torah which concerns ceremonies, purity and food. The author tries, among other things, to convince Jewish Christian female readers not to observe the prescriptions concerning menstrual purity and not to abstain from prayer, Scripture and Eucharist during their periods of menstruation.³¹ The moral law (“the first law,” “the simple, pure and holy law”) has been affirmed and brought to completion by Jesus Christ, who, however, came into the world in order to abolish the *δευτέρωσις* and to free Jews from its “heavy load.”

Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert has claimed recently that the *Didascalia* is to be read as a “counter-Mishnah for the disciples of Jesus”: it is a Jewish text opposing other Jews, who tend to influence some of the (Jewish) Christians in the target

²⁹ On the life and work of Hippolytus, see esp. M. Richard, “Hippolyte de Rome,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 7:531–61; M. Marcovich, “Hippolyt von Rom,” in *TRE* 15:381–87. Both articles include representative bibliographies of the vivid modern discussions on “the Hippolytus problem.”

³⁰ The most important edition is Arthur Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac, I–II* (CSCO 401–2, 407–8; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1979); still useful, however, is the earlier edition by R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and Accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), especially the introduction. For the Latin version, Edmund Hauler’s edition, *Didascaliae apostolorum fragmenta ueronensia Latina: Accedunt canonum que dicuntur apostolorum et Aegyptiorum reliquies* (Leipzig: Teubneri, 1900–) is now replaced by E. Tidner, ed., *Didascaliae Apostolorum fragmenta Veronensia Latina. Accedunt canonum qui dicuntur apostolorum et Aegyptiorum reliqua* (TU 75; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963). To my knowledge, only one monograph on the *Didascalia* has been published: Georg Schöllgen, *Die Anfänge der Professionalisierung des Klerus und das kirchliche Amt in der syrischen Didaskalie* (JAC Ergänzungsband 26; Münster: Aschendorff, 1998).

³¹ On this particular aspect of the *Didascalia*, see Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 166–209.

communities. To let oneself be influenced by these opponents, i.e., the rabbis, would lead to a form of Christianity which would be different from that found desirable by the author, but he to a large extent shares the language and presuppositions (biblical hermeneutics) of the opponents. That the author of the *Didascalia* is himself a Jew, is, according to Fonrobert, especially apparent in one passage in which the author uses Jesus and his Jewish audience as an argument:

(Ch. 26) What else did he signify [by not offering sacrifices himself] but the abrogation of the second legislation? As also (loosening) from the bonds, (where) he said: "Come unto me, all you that toil and are laden with heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11.28). Now we know, however, that our Saviour did not say (this) to the Gentiles, but he said it to us his disciples from among the Jews, and brought us out from burdens and the heavy load.³²

As Fonrobert convincingly shows, the discussions on the law and on the interpretation of Scripture in the *Didascalia* are deeply embedded in contemporary Jewish discussions. The terminology used by the author presupposes close acquaintance with rabbinic terminology. The word δευτέρωσις is consciously used, as a means of polemic, in a sense which differs from the normal meaning of the corresponding Semitic, rabbinic term. Against this background, it is reasonable to consider the passage from ch. 26 quoted above as an indication of the Jewish origin of the author himself; under other circumstances it could perhaps be dismissed simply as part of the pseudo-apostolic fiction ("us [= the apostles] his disciples from among the Jews") with no direct reference to the situation in which the text is written.³³

While it is indeed fruitful to approach the *Didascalia* in the manner argued by Fonrobert, it is, however, also important, when asking the questions presented in this volume, to realize that the *Didascalia* hardly witnesses to a situation where the Christian communities are dominated by believers of Jewish provenance. Scanning through the *Didascalia*, one easily finds that five groups are spoken of: "we" (i.e., the author, as spokesman of the fictitious apostles in Jerusalem, and the author's co-believers), "you" (i.e., the addressees, Christians or Christian communities), "the people" (i.e., the Jewish people), "the Gentiles" and "the heretics." In several instances, a clear distinction is made between "the (former) people" and "the church" or "us," a distinction which must be born in mind when discussing the Jewish element in the communities represented by the *Didascalia*.

The converts to Christianity expected by the author are, furthermore, first and foremost Gentiles. When coming to speak of instruction before baptism, he almost automatically seems to assume this:

³²The translation used is that by A. Vööbus in CSCO 408.

³³Charlotte E. Fonrobert, "The Didascalia Apostolorum: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," JECS 9 (2001): 483–509.

(Ch. 15) When the Gentiles who are being instructed hear the word of God not fittingly spoken, as it ought to be, unto edification and eternal life [. . .] they will mock and scoff, instead of applauding the word of doctrine [. . .]

(Ch. 20) Sins are forgiven by baptism also to those who from the Gentiles draw near and enter the holy church of God.

The *Didascalia*, in other words, is not written in a historical situation in which the author really expects many Jews to convert to Christianity.

On the other hand, there are certainly—and this is important for our subject—believers of Jewish origin among the addressees:

(Ch. 26) You who have been converted from the people to believe in God our Saviour Jesus Christ, do not hereafter continue in your former way of living, brothers, keeping vain obligations, purifications and sprinklings and baptisms and distinction of meats [. . .] For you know that he gave a simple and pure and holy law, [a law] of life [. . .]

The author, as fictitious spokesman of the apostles, is anxious to warn them against adopting the secondary laws in the torah, the δευτέρωσις. Since these commandments were given later than the moral law and only because of the people's rebellion against the Lord, adhering to them would make one an apostate. The polemic against adopting the δευτέρωσις is found in the very first part of the *Didascalia* (ch. 2; briefly in chs. 4 and 9) and returns, at a far greater length, in the concluding part (ch. 26). Both the position and the length of these passages on the necessary distinctions between different laws or different parts of the Torah confirm that while the author (as spokesman of the apostles) is speaking fictitiously about contemporaries of theirs, he really has in view Christians contemporary to himself.³⁴ The problem the author is discussing here is obviously, in his eyes, an essential contemporary issue, which in turn shows that the communities to which the writing is addressed must, to a considerable degree, consist of believers of Jewish origin.

Unfortunately, it cannot be determined more precisely where in Syria the *Didascalia* came into existence or where the target communities were found. And since only a few of the specific problems among the Jewish believers in Jesus in the communities to which the *Didascalia* is addressed are taken up, we are not in the position of painting the theological or spiritual profile of the communities in question, apart from saying that there were Jewish-born individuals or groups in these communities who were prepared as Christians to show obedience to Jewish

³⁴ As Connolly already observed, there is very little rhetorical adroitness in the *Didascalia*. The author uses repetitions and lengthier discussions in order to emphasize certain themes. “The object of his main attack is found, I have no doubt, in the last chapter of his book [= ch. 26]” (Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxxiii). The position of the main passages on “the second legislation” in the outline of the *Didascalia* further confirms this point.

ritual and purity laws. As for the author, also a Jewish believer, he only comments on a limited number of themes in his writing. He obviously shares the beliefs of the “great church” when it comes to general teachings on God, on Jesus Christ, on the resurrection and on the Holy Spirit. He considers the church the new covenant people of God, and he stresses the obligations of the bishops and the need for real care for the poor and for those in need. But his doctrines have so far not been analyzed closely enough in comparison to other contemporary Christian writings, which makes it difficult to decide more exactly where to place him—and the co-believers he represents—in relation to other third century forms of Christianity. There is no hint in the *Didascalia*, however, of an awareness of any conflict with other believers in Jesus—apart from the groups addressed directly in the polemics against the “second legislation,” and apart from “the heretics” (above all gnostics).³⁵

It is rather obvious that the author and the communities he represents do not keep the Sabbath commandment. The part of ch. 26 where this issue is explicitly discussed may seem a bit confused, which under other circumstances might lead to hypotheses about later rewriting of the original text. But it contains outspoken polemics against Sabbath observance and argues that Christians should regard the first day of the week as their holy day. (Cf. the prescription in ch. 11 that the bishop should engage in conflicts between believers, of which he is informed, already on Mondays, so that they can be reconciled on the following Sunday.)

The author and the communities he represents celebrate Easter according to “Quartodeciman” tradition, on the date of the Jewish Passover, as shown by ch. 21:

Whenever, then, the fourteenth of the Pascha falls, so keep it; for neither the month nor the day squares with the same season every year, but is variable. When therefore the people [= the Jews] keeps the Passover, then fast; and be careful to celebrate your vigil within their [feast of] unleavened bread.

As Gerard Rouwhorst has stressed, “there are strong indications that the Syriac churches till the Council of Nicea were Quartodecimans and that they celebrated Easter on the Jewish date.”³⁶ However, one perhaps should not argue

³⁵ As already noted by Connolly, *Didascalia*, xxxiii, the list of heresies in ch. 23 (reappearing *en passant* in ch. 26) does not seem to build on firsthand knowledge. “It strikes one rather as being of an antiquarian character, the fruit of the author’s reading rather than of his own experience.”

³⁶ G. Rouwhorst, “Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity,” VC 51 (1997): 82 (72–93), referring to Rouwhorst, *Les hymnes pascales d’Ephrem de Nisibe: Analyse théologique et recherche sur l’évolution de la fête pascale chrétienne à Nisibe et à Edesse et dans quelques Eglises voisines au quatrième siècle* (Supplements to VC 7:1–2; Leiden: Brill, 1989); Rouwhorst, “The Date of Easter in the Twelfth Demonstration of Aphraates,” in *Papers of the 1979 International Conference on Patristic Studies* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; 3 vols.; StPatr 17; Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 1374–80; Rouwhorst, “L’évocation du

this as Rouwhorst does on the basis of alleged differences in theological content between Quartodecimans and Christians celebrating Easter on a Sunday: Quartodeciman Easter as primarily a celebration of the passion of Christ, Sunday celebration as a celebration of the resurrection.³⁷ The reasons for the “Quartodeciman” hypothesis are strong enough even without that assumption.

5. *The Apostolic Constitutions*

As shown by parts of *The Apostolic Constitutions*,³⁸ not only Jewish-Christian communities of the kind that come to expression through the author of the *Didascalia* but also more torah-obedient Jewish Christian communities continued to exist in Syria, even toward the end of the fourth century. An interesting indication of this, stressed by Rouwhorst, is the fact that the compiler who brought together the *Constitutions* as a whole, pleads for an acceptance of the Sabbath, alongside Sunday, as a day for rest and for worship. It is

striking that those parts of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (books 1–6), which notoriously constitute an adapted version of the Syriac *Didascalia*, have left out the passages of the latter source that contain polemics against the observance of the

mois de Nisan dans les hymnes sur la résurrection d’Ephrem de Nisibe,” in *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature* (ed. H. J. W. Drijvers; OrChrAn 229; Rome: Pontificium institutum itudiorum orientalium, 1987), 101–10. On Quartodeciman Passover in early Christianity at large, cf. Bernhard Lohse, *Das Passafest der Quartodecimaner* (BFCT 2.54; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1953); but also (somewhat modifying the conclusions of, e.g., Lohse) G. Visonà, “Ostern/Osterfest/Osterpredigt, I,” *TRE* 25:517–30, esp. 517–24.

³⁷ See Wolfgang Huber, *Passa und Ostern: Untersuchungen zur Osterfeier der alten Kirche* (BZNW 35; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969); H. Auf der Maur, *Die Osterhomilien des Asterios Sophisten als Quelle für die Geschichte der Osterfeier* (Trierer theologische Studien 19; Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1967). “Dieses Verständnis, das seinen Ansatzpunkt bei der Passion nimmt, doch Tod und Auferstehung in enger Einheit innerhalb des Rahmens einer umfassenden Erlösungslehre reflektiert, muß als gemeinsames Gut des Osterfestes der ersten Jahrhunderte jenseits unterschiedlicher Akzentsetzungen in einzelnen Traditionslinien gelten. Diese Auffassung stellt sich der von Carl Schmidt und Anton Baumstark zu breiterer Geltung gebrachten Vorstellung entgegen, daß einem kleinasiatischen [und syrischen!], dem Gedächtnis des Todes Christi gewidmeten Passafest ein römisches Osterfest gegenübergetreten sei, das die Auferstehung gefeiert habe” (Visonà, “Ostern,” 520–21).

³⁸ Earlier editions of the *Constitutions* are superseded by the edition of Marcel Metzger, ed., *Les Constitutions apostoliques, I–III* (SC 320, 329, 336; Paris: Cerf, 1985–1987), including his exuberant introduction, split into three parts of unequal length at the beginning of each of the three volumes. On the provenance and date of the *Constitutions* (Antioch, ca. 380), see introduction, § 40–49 (1:54–62). A valuable discussion on general questions regarding the *Constitutions* is also found in David A. Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to be Jewish: An Examination of the Constitutiones Apostolorum* (BJS 65; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 19–41.

Sabbath. Moreover, Christians are even explicitly called on to observe not only the Sunday, but also the Saturday [. . .] On both days they are supposed to assemble together for a liturgical service [. . .] and, what must seem more surprising, to rest, viz. to abstain from work.³⁹

Rouwhorst plausibly argues that the plea for both Sabbath and Sunday might represent an attempt to find a compromise between Jewish Christian and other Christian practices.⁴⁰

The seventh book of the *Constitutions* consists of a reworking of the *Didache* (chs. 1–32) and, immediately after that, a number of prayers, many of which are similar to well known traditional synagogue prayers (chs. 33–49). As for these prayers (often called “Hellenistic synagogal prayers”), it has long been assumed, since the works of Kohler, Bossuet and Goodenough in the early 20th century, that they, or at least a number of them, are slightly reworked and Christianized Jewish prayers.⁴¹

In his doctoral thesis, David A. Fiensy has shown that the criteria used when earlier scholars argued this and when they reconstructed the original Jewish prayers cannot prove that the assumption is in all these cases correct. For his own part, Fiensy only accepts the hypothesis when it comes to the prayers in chs. 33–38, which he considers to be a set of Jewish prayers, reworked by the compiler of the *Constitutions*.⁴² He shows that the *Vorlage* to chs. 33–38 was a set of prayers composed not earlier than ca. 200. This Jewish set of prayers would then have been taken over by Christians and, eventually, incorporated into the *Constitutions*, with a number of modifications by its compiler.⁴³

The correctness of the detailed analysis in Fiensy’s book cannot be examined here; that would require too technical a discussion. But assuming without such a discussion that Fiensy and earlier scholars are basically correct in speaking of adapted Jewish prayers here—leaving sufficient space for disagreement with him in details—the most reasonable hypothesis, acknowledged by both Fiensy and Rouwhorst, seems to be that the prayers in question were not taken up directly from purely Jewish worship by the compiler of *Constitutions*, but that they were rather transmitted to him through Jewish Christian community traditions.⁴⁴ At the basis of these traditions one can very well imagine a situation in which Jewish converts to Christianity brought with them their traditional manner of praying—

³⁹ Rouwhorst, “Jewish Liturgical Tradition,” 81.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 86.

⁴¹ See Fiensy, *Prayers*, 1–17 (previous research) and 43–127 (text and translation).

⁴² In the translation and comments in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:671–98 (D. R. Darnell and D. A. Fiensy), Fiensy seems to recur to the older views of Goodenough and others when editing and commenting upon the English translation of the prayers. The discussion in his thesis is more convincing than this edition and these comments.

⁴³ Fiensy, *Prayers*, 129–242.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 215–20; Rouwhorst, “Jewish Liturgical Tradition,” 85–86.

no absolutely fixed prayer formulas, but inherited prayer structures, themes and certain wordings—and as Christians continued to pray largely according to their inherited tradition.

Assuming this, it would not be unreasonable to think that not only chs. 33–38 but also further material in book VII in the *Constitutions* in reality may be the result of the compiler’s reworking of material coming from one and the same largely Jewish Christian milieu or tradition, somewhere in Syria. We would then be obliged to assume the survival, somewhere in Syria, of a kind of Christianity similar to the one that once had produced the *Didache* itself. Instead of working with the model of a Jewish *Vorlage* and a Christian adaptation, one would then have to work with the model of a Jewish Christian *Vorlage* and a final reworking by the *Constitution’s* compiler. This is at least as probable a scenario as the one earlier scholars assumed for the “Hellenistic synagogal prayers.”

The prayers in question follow immediately upon the material that the compiler of the *Constitutions* draws from the *Didache*, sometimes modifying it himself, sometimes probably taking over already made alterations of the *Didache* text. (A possible example is the Jewish Christian adaptation of the prayers from *Did.* 9–10 in *Constitutions* 7.25–26.) It would even be tempting to conjecture that not only the *Didache*, in a somewhat elaborated and adapted version, but also the prayer material elaborated from ch. 33 onwards, were once part of one and the same Jewish Christian community tradition, somewhere in Syria: for while expressing further on, in book 8, his own ideals for the celebration of the Eucharist and for praying in worship (see esp. the voluminous Eucharistic prayer in 8.12), the compiler seems to treat the “*Didache*” material that he takes over and adapts, with considerable respect. (This coincides well with the above-mentioned hypothesis that he works, *inter alia*, in the interest of finding compromises between differently colored Christian groups and traditions in his country.)

The general assumption that there existed such church traditions, in which the prayer material now contained in the seventh book of the *Constitutions* could have been handed on until it finally reached the compiler of the *Constitutions*, i.e., church traditions where Christian believers of Jewish provenance played an at least not unimportant role, is confirmed by the *Didascalia*’s witness to precisely such Christian groupings somewhere in Syria during the third century. The Eucharistic prayers in book 7.25–26 of the *Constitutions* give us an impression of what eucharistic praying could look like in these communities, and how they conceived the Eucharist:

(7.25) Always be thankful, as faithful and well-disposed servants, about the thanksgiving saying thus:

We give thanks to you, our Father, for the life which you made known to us through your child Jesus, through whom also you made everything and take thought for everything. You sent him to become man for our salvation, you granted him to suffer and to die; you also raised him from the dead, you were pleased to glorify him and set him at your right hand, through him you promised us the resurrection of the dead.

Almighty Master, eternal God, as this bread was scattered and when brought together became one, so bring your church from the ends of the world into your kingdom.

Again we give thanks to you, our Father, for the precious blood of Jesus Christ which was poured out for us, and the precious body of which also we perform these symbols (*οὐ καὶ ἀντίτυπα ταῦτα ἐπιτελοῦμεν*); for he commanded us to proclaim his death. Through him be glory to you for evermore. Amen.

(7.26) And after partaking, give thanks thus:

We give thanks to you, God and Father of our Saviour Jesus, for your holy name which you have enshrined in us, and for the knowledge and faith and love and immortality which you gave us through your child Jesus. You, almighty Master, the God of all, created the world and the things in it through him, and planted the law in our souls, and made ready beforehand the things for men's partaking; God of our holy and blameless Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, your faithful servants, mighty God, faithful and true and not deceitful in your promises, you sent Jesus the Christ to dwell among men as man, being God the Word and man, and to destroy error utterly. Remember now through him your holy Church which you redeemed with the precious blood of your Christ, and deliver it from all evil, and perfect it in your love and your truth, and bring us all into your kingdom, which you prepared for it.

[. . .] For yours is the glory and the power for evermore. Amen.⁴⁵

These two adaptations of the meal prayers in *Didache* chs. 9–10, now used as an anaphora before the eucharistic communion (7.25) and as a thanksgiving prayer after it (7.26), lend expression to the profound continuity between the *Didache* communities and these third/fourth century Jewish Christian communities in Syria. Certain liturgical and theological developments have left their traces in the texts. The perspective is, nevertheless, still unmistakably Jewish Christian. God is praised as the almighty Creator, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one who has given his law (i.e., the torah), but who has also saved human beings by sending his child/Son into the world, for the sake of revelation of immortality and knowledge, and in order to redeem human beings. The Eucharist is celebrated as a sacrificial remembrance act, in memory of the saving death of Jesus Christ (*οὐ καὶ ἀντίτυπα ταῦτα ἐπιτελοῦμεν*), in the expectation of the coming of his kingdom.

The compiler of the *Constitutions* now and then works as a real author, writing longer passages out of his own initiative. But as for all the liturgical material contained in book 7, it seems that the compiler copies rather extensively from his

⁴⁵ The translation is taken from Jaspers and Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist*, 101–2. (The punctuation has been slightly revised.) On this prayer, cf. esp. M. Metzger, “Les deux prières eucharistiques des Constitutions apostoliques,” *RevScRel* 45 (1971): 52–77; A. Verheul, “Les prières eucharistiques dans les ‘Constitutiones Apostolorum,’” *Questions liturgiques* 61 (1980): 129–43; and of course the comments by Metzger in *Les Constitutions apostoliques*. Less satisfactory, but detailed, is the discussion on the prayer in Enrico Mazza, *The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1995), 42–65.

source, making alterations only here and there. On the other hand, it is evident that the copious eucharistic prayer in 8.12, the so-called “Clementine Liturgy,” has been composed more freely. The compiler has here acted more as a real author—of course on the basis of liturgical patterns from his own traditions, and possibly using one or two sources. The similarities to inherited Jewish prayer forms are here, characteristically enough, far less important.⁴⁶

6. Conclusion

In his important book *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, Paul F. Bradshaw devotes the first chapter to a valuable discussion of “The Jewish Background of Christian Worship,” which also has great relevance for the discussion on early Christian beliefs, institutions and non-liturgical practices and their possible Jewish background, as well as for the discussion of the Jewish Christian traditions in early Christianity. Bradshaw rightly stresses the need “to be much more cautious [than were earlier generations of exegetical and liturgical scholars] about affirming what would have been the liturgical practices with which Jesus and his followers were familiar.”⁴⁷ He underscores the fact that the Jewish liturgical sources that have earlier been used in order to reconstruct early Jewish worship are of a late date. He emphasizes the importance of renewed Jewish liturgical research, in the vein of Joseph Heinemann,⁴⁸ and the absolute necessity for patristic and liturgical scholars to be aware of the profound transformation which Judaism underwent after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E., a point stressed in newer rabbinic scholarship.⁴⁹ But he also writes:⁵⁰

It is true that contact between Jews and Christians did not end after 70 C.E., and there is evidence for some continuing links down to at least the fourth century: some of the early Fathers were clearly influenced by Jewish sources, and John Chrysostom tells us that some ordinary Christians were attending both synagogue and church, though it is not clear how widespread, geographically or chronologically, this practice was. On the other hand, after the close of the first century, liturgical influence from Judaism to a now predominantly Gentile Church is likely to have been only marginal, and any significant effects must be sought in the earlier formative period.

⁴⁶ See Fiensy, *Prayers*, 25–26. Metzger, *Les Constitutions apostoliques*, 3:179, notes: “Cette longue anaphore constitue, à tous les points de vue, la pièce la plus importante de la compilation.”

⁴⁷ Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, 1.

⁴⁸ Apart from Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, cf., e.g., Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Studies in Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity 4; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Jacob Neusner, “The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Methodological Issues and Substantive Theses,” in *Formative Judaism: Religious, Historical and Literary Studies* (ed. J. Neusner; vol. 3; BJS 46; Chico Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 99–146.

⁵⁰ Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, 13.

As a general rule, this will without doubt suffice. But in a number of cases, the sources discussed in this essay have shown that not all similarities between Jewish and Christian liturgical or institutional forms, ways of expression, and ways of living can be explained as inherited from "the earlier formative period." Only by a very careful weighing of probabilities can the judgment be made as to whether close similarities—in matters which cannot be said to constitute the more or less common Jewish heritage in early Christianity—are to be explained as inherited from the very beginnings of Christianity in a specific region, or whether later influences are at hand, which were, most probably, the channels through which in these cases Jewish thought, modes of expression, or practices came to be part of a particular early church tradition.

The sources studied in this essay do not testify to Jewish Christian traditions as a widespread phenomenon in early Christianity. They do, however, point to the ongoing and living import of such traditions in certain eastern parts of the Mediterranean area, especially in Syria.

Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries)

Philip S. Alexander

1. Problems of Method

The evidence for the history of early Jewish Christianity provided by classic rabbinic literature,¹ though of crucial importance, is extremely hard to assess. It raises four very basic questions.

¹The most comprehensive survey of this evidence remains R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903; repr., New York: Ktav, 1975). Almost every section of this pioneering study has now been thoroughly reworked by later scholars, but it is still the place to begin. Since Travers Herford the most important general monograph is Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire* (135–425) (trans. H. McKeating; Littman Library of Jewish Civilization; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). See further: Adolph Büchler, “The Minim of Sepphoris and Tiberias in the second and Third Centuries,” in his *Studies in Jewish History* (ed. I. Brodie and J. Rabbinowitz; London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 245–74; Lawrence H. Schiffman, “At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism,” in *Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period* (vol. 2 of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*; ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 115–56, 338–52; Steven T. Katz, “Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 C.E.: A Reconsideration,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 43–76; Wolfram Kinzig, “Non-separation”: Closeness and Co-operation between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century,” *VC* 45 (1991): 27–53; Albert I. Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence for Jewish Christianity in the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 39–50; Claudia Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christianity: History and Polemics, 30–150 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Samuel Krauss, *History* (vol. 1 of *The Jewish-Christian Controversy: From the Earliest Times to 1789*; ed. William Horbury; TSAJ 56.1; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995); Martin Goodman, “The Function of Minim in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Geschichte–Tradition–Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*

(1) The first is how to identify references to Jewish Christians in the rabbinic texts. There is, in fact, little explicit mention of them. Indeed, a fundamental question arises as to what the rabbis called the Jewish Christians. The clear designation *Noṣeri/ Noṣerim*, “Nazarene/Nazarenes,” occurs only a handful of times in the whole of the vast rabbinic corpus (see further below). This may be due in part to the activity of Christian censors in the early modern period, but even if we maximize all the potential allusions, Talmudic literature still says very little directly about Christianity. This is puzzling. The “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity is surely one of the most momentous splits in religious history. Early Christian sources are very conscious of it: they are full of references to Judaism, and of debates with real or imaginary Jewish opponents.² But on the face of it, this interest is not reciprocated on the Jewish side. The evidence is startlingly asymmetrical.

There are two ways of interpreting this fact. One is to take it at face value. The rabbis were really not interested in Christianity.³ They saw little need to pay attention to it or to develop an elaborate anti-Christian apologetic. Christianity impinged so little on their immediate environment, or their constituency, that there was no point spending much time arguing with it, or protecting their “flock” against its influence. The alternative view is to see the lack of reference as itself largely a polemical device. The silence on Christianity in the Talmud and Midrash is a “loud” silence. The rabbis could not but have been aware of the growing power of Christianity and of the threat it posed to their authority. They chose pointedly to ignore it. There were advantages to be gained from this tactic. It could lend credence to the rabbinic claim to represent continuity with the past. As the true line of development in Judaism they could sail serenely on. The onus was on the upstart Christians to justify why *they* had broken with mainline Judaism. Moreover, by largely ignoring the Christians, the rabbis denied Christianity what in modern jargon would be called “the oxygen of publicity.” The trouble with attacking another point of view is that you draw attention to it—you dignify it with a response. The rabbis may have decided that the best way to deal with

(ed. H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, and P. Schäfer; 3 vols.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 1:501–10; Judith M. Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality,” *JSNT* 56 (1994), 101–19; Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999). For further bibliography see the footnotes below. In this essay I develop some of the positions I adumbrated in “‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (ed. J. D. G. Dunn; WUNT 66; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 1–26.

² On the Christian evidence, which lies outside the remit of the present study, see especially Simon, *Verus Israel*, and Lieu, *Image and Reality*.

³ Arguably they were not interested in much beyond the life of the adult male rabbinic Jew. Note Sacha Stern’s comments on their solipsism—their tendency to construct Jewishness in terms exclusively of the introverted concerns of the adult male rabbinic Jew (*Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* [AGJU 23; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 215–23).

Christianity was to develop and promote vigorously their own point of view, and to rely on that to keep Christianity at bay. They certainly played this card in hermeneutics. Rather than waste time refuting directly readings of the Bible of which they disapproved, they preferred on the whole to advance their own exegesis and rely on that pre-emptively to occupy the exegetical space and crowd out unacceptable interpretations.⁴

This ploy of not engaging directly with the enemy seems to be explicitly advocated in a paradigmatic story in *t. Hul.* 2:24:

(Text 1)

(A) It once happened that (*ma^caše bē-*) rabbi Eliezer was arrested for teaching *minut*.⁵ They brought him to the tribunal (*bema*) for judgement. The magistrate (*hegemon*) said to him, “Does an old man like you occupy himself with such things?” He said to him: “Trustworthy is the judge concerning me.” The magistrate supposed that he was referring to him, but he was only thinking of his Father in heaven. He [the magistrate] said to him: “Since you have declared me trustworthy concerning yourself, so I will prove to be. I said, Is it possible that these academies⁶ should err in this way? *Dimissus*,⁷ behold you are discharged.”

(B) When he had been released from the tribunal, he was troubled because he had been arrested for teaching *minut* (*‘al divrei minut*). His disciples came to console him, but he would not take comfort. Rabbi Aqiva came in and said to him: “Rabbi, Can I say something which may assuage your grief?” He said to him: “Say on.” He said to him: “Perhaps one of the *minim* has said to you a word of *minut*, and it has pleased you.” He said: “By Heaven, you have reminded me! Once I was walking along the main street of Sepphoris, and I met Jacob of Kefar Sakhnin, and he said to me a word of *minut* in the name of Yeshu ben Pantiri, and it pleased me. And I was arrested for words of *minut* (*‘al divrei minut*), because I transgressed the words of Torah, *Keep your way far from her, and come not near the door of her house* (Prov 5:8), *for she has cast down many wounded* (Prov 7:26).”

(C) Rabbi Eliezer used to say: Let a man always flee from what is disgusting, and from that which resembles what is disgusting.⁸

⁴See further Philip S. Alexander, “Pre-emptive Exegesis: Genesis Rabba’s Reading of the Story of Creation,” *JJS* 43 (1992): 230–45.

⁵In context this is surely the implication of *‘al divrei minut*. The parallel in *Qoh. Rab.* 1.8 §4 actually gives the word of *minut* which pleased Rabbi Eliezer, and has him repeat it, thus committing the offense again! *T. Hul.* is more circumspect.

⁶Reading *ha-yeshivot* with the parallel in *Qoh. Rab.* 1.8 §4. The Tosefta has the problematic *hsyw*. The governor’s reason appears to be that it was a priori highly unlikely that someone like Eliezer who taught in the rabbinic academies would be spreading Christianity. However, it should be noted that *yeshivah* in the sense of rabbinic academy is rather a late usage.

⁷*Dymws*, rightly taken by Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 137, as the Latin *dimissus*. For an alternative, less plausible explanation see Jastrow, 300a.

⁸This and the following translations of rabbinic texts are my own.

The story is an exemplum (a *ma'aseh*), which offers a concrete illustration of the general maxim contained in (C). The situation is clear. Someone has informed (presumably maliciously) on Rabbi Eliezer and charged him with being a Christian. The local Roman magistrate has been forced to investigate, since Christianity was still at this time not a legal cult; so he orders Rabbi Eliezer's arrest. The magistrate, however, is disinclined to pursue the matter, and having chaffed the rabbi lets him go.⁹ Rabbi Eliezer is mortified that he has been charged with *minut*: it raises suspicion and means loss of face in the rabbinic community. He cannot think why he was arrested. The reason is finally discovered: he had been seen talking to a Christian, Jacob of Kefar Sikhnin, in the street of Sepphoris. The wording is careful and subtle. It was not just that Eliezer had bid Jacob the time of day: he had engaged in some sort of discussion with him, and Jacob had told him a word of *minut* (perhaps a clever interpretation of Scripture: see *Qoh. Rab.* 1.8 §4) in the name of Yeshu ben Pantiri, and (surely the important point) *it had pleased him*, and he had repeated it. Eliezer was not entirely innocent. His arrest was punishment not only for associating with Jacob, but even more for being *pleased* with what he said.

The story cleverly makes to the rabbinic Jew a number of exemplary points. Christianity is “disgusting” and should be avoided, like harlotry (prophetic code for idolatry: note the Proverbs quotations). Christianity is illegal: by associating with Christians you may find yourself in court. There is, perhaps, here a concealed threat: if you associate with Christians we will turn you over to the authorities. Christianity is seductive: if something said by a Christian could please the great rabbi Eliezer, what chance has an ordinary Jew? Christianity should be shunned and left severely alone. The Christians were not the only non-rabbinic group whom the rabbis effectively ignored. There are grounds for thinking that, besides the Pharisees, other Second Temple parties survived, in some shape or form, well into the post-70 period, yet we hear even less about them from rabbinic sources.¹⁰ These sources also say little about the paganism that surrounded the Jewish communities, and what they do say is astonishingly garbled.

If Christianity was being pointedly ignored; if, in fact, it was more important than might at first sight appear, then we would expect to find, in addition to *some* direct references, indirect allusions to it in Talmud and Midrash. Close analysis would reveal the rabbis positioning themselves in all sorts of ways defensively over against it. This has been argued in a number of concrete cases. We shall consider some of these in more detail below, but two will suffice here briefly to

⁹A realistic touch, which probably accurately reflects the attitude most Roman magistrates would have adopted. Cf. Acts 18:12–17.

¹⁰See Martin Goodman. “Sadducees and Essenes after 70 CE,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (ed. S. E. Porter, P. Joyce and D. E. Orton; Biblical Interpretation Series 8; Brill: Leiden, 1994), 347–56. Further, David Satran, “Paul among the Rabbis and the Fathers: Exegetical Reflections,” in *The Church and Israel: Romans 9–11* (= *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Supplementary Issue 1; ed. D. L. Migliore; Princeton, 1990), 90–94.

illustrate the point. It has been suggested that rabbinic treatment of the Binding of Isaac (the Akedah) was developed in conscious response to Christian views of the person and work of Christ. And it has been argued that the rabbis finally closed their canon of Scripture in the late second century C.E. in response to the Christian canonization of the New Testament.¹¹

Thus it is possible to give both a minimalist and a maximalist reading of the evidence, and it is not easy to decide between them. Minimalism can look strong, in that it can seem to reflect a tough-minded determination to stick to facts, but in reality it is often weak in that it ignores the broader context, circumstantial evidence and probability. Occam's razor is actually of dubious value in historical explanation. We are dealing here essentially with a problem of intertextuality: the meaning of text (A) will appear different depending on whether it is read on its own, or against text (B). Deciding that there is an intertextual relation between (A) and (B) is often a matter of fine judgement: it cannot be reduced to the question of whether or not there are explicit quotations of (B) in (A). On the other hand maximalism has to be disciplined: there must be *some* evidence that the rabbis are responding to Christianity. The explanation that postulates such a response must be more convincing or illuminating than the one that does not. And it should be borne in mind that the maximalist position always implies intention: silence on the part of the rabbis is a deliberate ploy.¹²

(2) A second problem emerges from the first. Even when we have collected all the references, direct and indirect, to Christians, Christ, and Christianity in the rabbinic sources, can we be sure that these have specifically *Jewish* Christianity in view? The rabbis faced a Christianity that was increasingly polarized between its Gentile and its Jewish branches. It would be rash to assume that all the references in rabbinic literature contribute to a history of *Jewish* Christianity. When set in a broader context this problem may be less acute than it might at first sight appear. The rabbinic references to Christianity are uniformly apologetic or polemical. Their general purpose was to prevent Jews from converting to Christianity. But the real and present danger here was surely that Jews would join not the Gentile but the Jewish churches. It was the Jewish Christians who posed the immediate threat. They were the ones who continued to carry the Christian mission to Israel which the Gentile churches had effectively abandoned. So, broadly speaking, it is reasonable to assume that the rabbis *do* have Jewish Christianity in mind. However, direct inferences to Jewish Christianity should always be drawn with care. There are a considerable number of allusions to Christianity in later Amoraic

¹¹On both these points see further below.

¹²I have toyed with an astronomical image to illustrate the problem. Just as astronomers observing the movement of a body in the sky sometimes conclude that its behavior can only be explained by supposing that it is being influenced by the gravitational field of a body in proximity to it which they cannot see, so Christianity can be seen as a dark star affecting the orbit of rabbinic Judaism. But following the logic of this analogy, the largely unseen presence of Christianity should offer the best explanation for the path which rabbinic Judaism took.

rabbinic sources, which date from a time when, on other grounds, we have reason to believe that Jewish Christianity had largely disappeared. In fact, paradoxically, mention of Christianity in rabbinic literature grows more frequent and explicit as Jewish Christianity wanes. The purpose of these later references may be rather different—not to discourage Jews from converting to Jewish Christianity but rather to bolster Jewish morale in the face of the growing power and hostility of the Gentile church.

(3) There is also a general problem of how to write history from rabbinic sources. These sources cover a period of some four hundred years. To treat them synchronically is not very meaningful. But how can we discover from them diachronic development? It is no longer acceptable to take their attributions at face value, as older researchers tended to do, nor to assume that *ipsissima verba* have been accurately reported, nor to press their exact wording in order to find precise historical facts. We will assume that the stories are largely fictitious. However, this does not mean that they do not contain useful historical information. Though the story of rabbi Eliezer's arrest for *minut* (*t. Hul.* 2:24, Text 1 above) should not be regarded as simple fact, it is nonetheless shot through with historical realism: it rings true, and throws a flood of light on the historical situation. But the situation it illuminates is the situation of the document in which it occurs, not the implied situation of the story. Thus we assume that it tells us primarily about the late third century when the Tosefta was edited, not the early second century when rabbi Eliezer lived. This is reasonable. Even if the story does record a real event from the early second century, the fact that it has been repeated (and probably reworked) in the third century shows that it was still relevant then.

The present study is divided into two parts. The first (section 2 below) deals with the 2d/3d centuries. This means that it will concentrate primarily on evidence found in the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and the Tannaitic Midrashim, documents which belong to this period.¹³ The second part (section 3 below) deals with the 4th/5th centuries. There the focus will be on the evidence of the two Talmuds, *Genesis* and *Leviticus Rabbah*, the *Tanhumas* and the *Pesiqtas* (whatever the implied date of the individual traditions contained in these works). This division is defensible not only on literary grounds. It also corresponds to a major political fault line. In the reign of Constantine, to use the rabbinic phrase, "the empire went over to heresy (*minut*)."¹⁴ This had a significant impact on the Jewish communities in the Roman world. It will be interesting to see whether or not this event is reflected in the rabbinic sources. The division by sources is not absolute. Evidence for the earlier period may sometimes safely be taken from later documents when it is corroborated by external evidence. The vast bulk of the ma-

¹³ It should be noted that *t. Hul.* 2:20–24 offers the fullest treatment of Christianity to be found in the Tannaitic sources. It is clearly intended to set out all the major elements of the rabbinic policy towards the Christians.

¹⁴ *m. Soṭah* 9:15; *b. Soṭah* 49b; *b. Sanh.* 97b; *Cant. Rab.* 2.13 §4; *Der. Er. Zut.* X.

terial comes from classic rabbinic literature. However, there are other Jewish texts that survive from late antiquity, notably the Targumim, the Heikhalot literature and Jewish magical texts. These are of some relevance to our inquiry, and will be mentioned occasionally. However, the problems of dating that they raise are particularly acute. We will take them as evidence for Judaism in the Amoraic period, and so cite them, if at all, in section 3.

(4) The final problem we have to face is how to interpret the rabbinic evidence. The discrete references to Christianity in the Jewish sources from late antiquity can be interpreted only in the context of a comprehensive view of the history of rabbinic Judaism after 70 C.E. Since there is little consensus on this a definitive interpretation of the rabbinic evidence for Jewish Christianity cannot be presented. The account offered here will certainly be contested. My own reading of the evidence has led me to take a broadly maximalist line. I have come to the conclusion that the rise of Christianity had a decisive impact on the development of Judaism after 70—despite the “silence” of the rabbinic sources. In other words rabbinic Judaism defined itself in significant ways in conscious opposition to Christianity, and if Christianity had not been there, rabbinic Judaism would have looked somewhat different. The rabbinic sources illuminate almost exclusively the situation in Palestine, and to a lesser degree in Babylonia. This means that a critical phase in the struggle between the Rabbinate and the church—the battle for the hearts and minds of Greek-speaking Diaspora Judaism—is almost totally hidden from view. The fact that the Greek-speaking Diaspora seems to have remained largely loyal to Judaism and in the end recognized rabbinic authority is surely one of the greatest political achievements of the rabbis. To have triumphed in Palestine on their home ground was perhaps not surprising. To have finally gathered in the far-flung Diaspora under their aegis in the face of the growing power of the church was remarkable. How they managed it will be considered briefly in section 3. The rabbinic evidence is clearly of central importance for the study of early Jewish Christianity. It throws some light on the nature and history of the Jewish-Christian movement. However, it throws most light on the strategy and tactics adopted by the rabbis to contain the Christian “threat.” It is this latter subject which will occupy most of our attention.

2. Jewish Believers in Tannaitic Sources

2.1. The Emergence of Rabbinic Orthodoxy

There are no good grounds for believing that the group of rabbis who gathered at Yavneh to begin a reconstruction of Judaism in the aftermath of the fall of the temple in 70 C.E. represented anything more than a sect or party within Judaism. They may have been well organised, and ably led by respected scholars, but they were only one of a number of sects or parties within Palestinian Judaism at the time, and in no sense can they be regarded as at this stage representing

Jewish orthodoxy. This party over the next one hundred and fifty years was to make a successful bid for power within Judaism. It was to claim, with increasing emphasis and success, that its position did represent normative Judaism and that the views of its ideological opponents constituted heresy, which put them in some sense outside the “community of Israel” (*Kelal Yisra’el*). This was a new and momentous development within Israel, which stood in marked contrast to the broad pluralism of the Second Temple period,¹⁵ though the rabbinic attitudes were to some extent anticipated by the Qumran group, and were paralleled by the emergence in the second century of a competing concept of orthodoxy within another originally Jewish movement, Christianity.

The evidence for this development is registered first at the linguistic level with the emergence of a comprehensive vocabulary, both specific and generic, to designate the opponents of the rabbis as heretical. Of the generic terms the most widespread and basic is *min/minim* (see, e.g., *m. Ber.* 9:5; *m. Roš Haš.* 2:1–2; *m. Sanh.* 4:5; *m. Hul.* 2:9; *t. Ber.* 3:25–26; *t. Šabb.* 13[14]:5; *t. Yoma* 3:2; *t. Meg.* 4[3]:36–37; *t. B. Meṣ.* 2:33; *t. Sanh.* 3:7; 13:4–5; *t. Hul.* 2:20–24; *t. Parah* 3:3; *t. Yad.* 2:13). This appears to be derived from the common noun *min*, meaning “kind, genus, species,” but the semantic process by which this basic sense was extended to mean “heretic” has never been satisfactorily explained. What should be noted is that this extended usage appears to be distinctively rabbinic: it is part of the religious ideolect, unattested in non-rabbinic Hebrew, of the rabbinic party. From *min*, “a heretic,” was derived *minut*, “heresy” (see, e.g., *m. Meg.* 4:8–9; *m. Sotah* 9:15; *t. Hul.* 2:24)—a rare abstract formation that illustrates how the rabbis were beginning to form a *concept* of heresy.¹⁶ Several other distinctive rabbinic terms

¹⁵ Martin Goodman (“The Function of Minim in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” 501) points to the remarkable passage in *Ag. Ap.* 2.179–81 in which Josephus claims that “among us [Jews] alone will be heard no contradictory statements about God, such as are common among other nations, not only on the lips of ordinary individuals under the impulse of some passing mood, but even boldly propounded by philosophers; some putting forward crushing arguments against the very existence of God, others depriving him of his providential care for mankind. Among us alone will be seen no difference in the conduct of our lives. With us all act alike, all profess the same doctrine about God, one which is in harmony with our Law and affirms that all things are under his eye” (trans. Thackeray, LCL). Apparently the existence of sects within Judaism (*J.W.* 2.119–166; *Ant.* 18.11–22; *Life* 10–12) does not invalidate this claim. Josephus’s pluralism, his tolerance of variety within Judaism, as Goodman comments, “left only a little space for the concept of heresy.” Our argument is that it is precisely this pluralism, this consensus, which was probably broadly characteristic of the Second Temple period, that the rabbinic movement set about challenging. Shaye Cohen (“The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis and the End of Jewish Sectarianism,” *HUCA* 55 [1984]: 27–53) takes a rather different view. He argues that the Yavnean rabbis were tolerant and pluralistic in *contrast* to the sectarianism of the preceding period.

¹⁶ That only a Jew can be designated a *min* is the clear testimony of the sources. However, Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942), 141 note 191, claims that “*mina* . . . often means Gentile, especially in sources originating in Palestine.” He seems to base this on the fact that some-

were also used broadly to designate heretics: (1) *Meshummad* (see, e.g., *t. B. Mes.* 2:33; *t. Sanh.* 13:4–5; *t. Hul.* 1:1; *Sipra, Nedavah Perek* 3¹⁷; cf. *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 26a–b). As with *min* the etymology is obscure. The traditional translation is “apostate,” and the word is commonly derived from the root *shamad*; hence, possibly, “one who has destroyed himself,” or “one deserving extinction.”¹⁸ (2) *Mumar*. This word interchanges freely with *meshummad* in the manuscripts (e.g., it is a *varia lectio* at *t. Hul.* 1:1; *Sipra, Nedavah Perek* 3; cf. *b. Hul.* 4b, 5a; *b. ‘Eruv.* 69a; *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 26b; *b. Hor.* 11a). Yet again the etymology is obscure: it appears to be derived from the root *mwr*, “to exchange”; hence “one who has been changed, converted.” (3) *Perushim*. The word, from the root *parash*, means “to separate,” hence “one who withdraws from the congregation,” a “seceder,” “a renegade” (e.g., *t. Ber.* 3:25; cf. *t. Sanh.* 13:5).¹⁹ This word also denotes the Pharisees (e.g., *m. Yad.* 4:4–6), the party in the Second Temple period which was one of the closest forerunners of the rabbis, so this pejorative usage is rather puzzling. Again, like *min*, *meshummad*, and *mumar*, this usage is probably distinctively rabbinic.²⁰ (4) *Masor* (plur. *mesorot*; see, e.g., *t. B. Mesia* 2:33; *t. Sanh.* 13:5; cf. *y. Sotah* IX, 24c; *b. Roš Haš.* 17a; *b. B. Qam.* 5a; *b. Ker.* 2b). It is from the root *masar*, “to hand over,” specifically “to hand over to the Roman authorities, to betray, to inform against a fellow Jew or the Jewish community” (*t. Ter.* 7:20); hence, “traitor, informer.”²¹ The word seems at times to have been extended as a term of abuse to denote “heretics.” (5) *Hisonim*. This word derives from the adjective *hison*, “outside”; hence “outsiders,” i.e., people who do not belong to the community (*m. Meg.* 4:8). Cf. the phrase *sefarim hisonim*, “outside books,” i.e., books which do not belong to the Holy Writings, and which should therefore be shunned (*m. Sanh.* 10:1). (6) Finally we

one called a *min* in one version of a rabbinic story will be designated by a term which clearly indicates a Gentile in another. But the logic here is odd, and the conclusion does not follow, since what we have is surely substitution rather than equivalence.

¹⁷“Just as the sons of Israel are those who have accepted the covenant, so proselytes have accepted the covenant. Accordingly apostates [*meshummadim*] are excluded, who do not accept the covenant.”

¹⁸The Munich MS at *b. Pesah.* 96a attests the abstract noun *meshummadut*. The printed editions have been censored and replace with *hamarat dat*, “change of religion” (cf. *b. Yebam.* 71a).

¹⁹It is possible the word should be vocalized *parosh/peroshim*, which would distinguish it from *parush/perushim*, “Pharisee/Pharisees.” Cf. under *masor* below.

²⁰See further Alexander, “Parting of the Ways,” 8, n.12. The use of the verb *parash* in the sense of secede from the congregation is as old as 4QMMT C 7 (= 4Q397): *parashnu me-rov ha-‘am*, “we have withdrawn from the majority of the people.”

²¹The participle *moser* can also be used in the same sense. However, the MSS regularly prefer the adjectival form *masor* (cf. *gadol*, *qadosh*), perhaps to indicate abiding character rather than isolated action. On the *qatal* formation see E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (ed. A. E. Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 230–31 (§84 *h-k*); P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2 vols.; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991), 1:248 (§88D *c*). The use of the fem. form for the plur. (again well attested in the MSS) indicates a class of people rather than individuals (*mesorim*). Some modern Hebrew dictionaries, without obvious authority, vocalize the plur. *masorot*.

should note the phrase ‘*ammei ha-areṣ*, lit., “peoples of the land.” This is widely used in rabbinic writings to denote those who are ignorant of rabbinic law and do not apply it (see, e.g., *m. Demai* 1:2; *m. Hor.* 3:5; *m. Ḥobot* 3:10²²). Used sometimes more in sorrow than in anger, this word has, perhaps, less of the ideological overtones of the other terms. However, this precise usage does seem to be rabbinic. These different terms doubtless carried different nuances,²³ but they seem generally to be interchangeable. They all denote opponents of the rabbinic party, whom the rabbis want to suggest do not belong to the community of Israel. They show that the rabbis were beginning to formulate a concept of “heresy” and to define the characteristics of a heretic.

In addition to these generic terms, the rabbinic writings identify certain species of heretic. For our present purposes the most important of these heretics are the *Noserim*. *Noseri/Noserim* is the one clear and unambiguous term for Christian(s) in rabbinic literature. *Noseri* usually occurs in the phrase “Yeshu(a) the *Noseri*” (see below, *passim*). The name is most obviously derived from the town of Nazareth where Jesus was brought up. *Noserim* then designated the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The phrases “Jesus of Nazareth” (Mark 1:24; 14:67; 16:6; Luk 4:34; Matt 2:23; 26:71) and “Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5) seem to go back to the earliest phases of the Christian movement. However, they are rare in rabbinic sources in general, and apparently unattested in Tannaitic sources in particular. This is due at least in part to the activities of Christian censors who regularly either changed *Noserim* and other names thought to refer to Christians into ‘*ovedei kokhavim* (“star worshippers”) and the like, or even deleted whole passages where they occurred. Also specific in origin were *Kuti/Kutiyyim*, “Samaritans” (e.g., *t. Ḥabod Zar.* 3:5), *Seduqi/Seduqim*, “Sadducees” (e.g., *m. Niddah* 4:2; *t. Hag.* 3:35), and *Epiqoros/Epiqorsim* (e.g., *m. Sanh.* 10:1; *m. Ḥobot* 2:19). This third term is to be derived from the name of Epicurus the Greek philosopher. *Epiqorsim* means “Epicureans”; however, the word is probably not used in any strict philosophical sense, but means something like “loose-living Jews.” This usage is actually Hellenistic: Epicureans were often slandered in the Graeco-Roman world with the charges of “atheism, separateness and secrecy, misanthropy, social irresponsibility, the disruption of families, sexual immorality and general moral depravity.”²⁴

²² The phrase is, of course, biblical, but it is not used in the Bible in the technical rabbinic sense. See further Aharon Oppenheimer, *The ‘Am Ha-Aretz: A Study in the Social History of the Jewish People in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (trans. I. H. Levine; ALGHJ 8; Leiden: Brill, 1977).

²³ All these terms are attested in Tannaitic sources. The attempts by Amoraic authorities (e.g., *b. Ḥabod Zar.* 26a–b), continued by medieval writers such as Maimonides, to distinguish them are not always convincing.

²⁴ See Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (NovTSup 81; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 9 n.16. Sometimes Epicurean may be used more precisely in rabbinic literature to denote a (Jewish?) follower “of the philosopher Epicurus.” See Judah Goldin, “A Philosophical Session in a Tannaite Academy,” in his *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature* (Philadelphia: The Jewish

Interestingly they are regularly lumped together with Christians, and Christian apologists had to work hard to distance themselves in public perception from the Epicureans. Here the rabbis have taken over this pejorative sense and applied it to their Jewish opponents. Though specific in origin, *Epiqoros*, *Seduqi* and *Kuti* at times seem to be used generically for “heretic.” *Noseri*, however, remains stubbornly specific.

As well as developing an extensive vocabulary to categorize their ideological opponents as “heretical,” the rabbis began to develop a theology of heresy. Put very simply this claimed that those whom they designated “heretics” were to be shunned as no longer belonging to the Community of Israel. They had put themselves outside the covenant between God and Israel, and, if they did not repent, they would suffer eschatological damnation. Two passages, dating probably respectively from the late second and early third centuries C.E., forcefully make this point. The first is the important theologoumenon in *m. Sanh.* 10:1:

(Text 2)

(A) All Israelites have a share in the world to come, for it is written, *Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified* (Isa 60:21).

(B) These are they who have no share in the world to come: he who says that there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Torah; and [he who says] that the Torah is not from heaven; and an *Epiqoros*.

(C) Rabbi Aqiva says: Also he who reads outside books (*sefarim hisonim*), or who utters charms over a wound and says, *I will put none of the diseases upon you which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord who heals you* (Exod 15:26).

(D) Abba Saul says: Also he who pronounces the name with its proper letters.

The dissonance between (A) and (B) (C) (D) is startling. (A) is inclusive: *all* Israel will be saved, and the guarantor of this, as the quotation from Isa 60:21 implies, is God himself, who will ensure that the covenant does not ultimately fail. (B) (C) (D), however, immediately introduce severe qualifications by listing categories of Israelites who will not share in the world to come. (B) (C) (D) is almost certainly a secondary addition to (A). Among those excluded are people who hold certain heretical beliefs. (B) (C) (D) is probably a late second century rabbinic restrictive reworking of an old universalistic theologoumenon.

The penalty for heresy here is exclusion from “the world to come.” The phrase is vague in context, but in (A) seems to be equated with the covenant promise of “inheriting the land.” It probably, therefore, means participation in the blessings of the messianic age. However, as our next passage, *t. Sanh.* 13:4–5,

Publication Society, 1988), 60–62. Further, Hans-Jürgen Becker, “‘Epikureer’ im Talmud Yerushalmi,” in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, vol. 1 (ed. Peter Schäfer; TSAJ 71; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1998), 397–423.

suggests, it might also mean exclusion from the blessedness of the righteous after death:

(Text 3)

(A) The sinners of Israel, and the sinners of the nations of the world descend into Gehinnom in their body, and are judged there twelve months. After twelve months their soul perishes and their body is burnt, and Gehinnom casts it out, and they are made dust and the wind disperses them and scatters them under the soles of the feet of the righteous, as it is said, *And you shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be dust under the soles of the feet of the righteous, in the day that I do make, says the Lord of Hosts* (Mal 4:3).

(B) But the *minim*, and the apostates (*meshummadiim*), and the betrayers (*mesorot*) and the *epiqorsin*, and those who have denied the Torah, and those who depart (*poreschin*) from the ways of the congregation, and those who have denied the resurrection of the dead, and everyone who has sinned and caused the congregation to sin, after the manner of Jeroboam and Ahab, and *those who have caused their terror in the land of the living* (Ezek 32:24), and have stretched forth their hand against Zevul—Gehinnom is shut in their faces and they are judged there for generations of generations, as it is said, *And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who sin against me, for their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh* (Isa 66:24).

(C) Sheol shall wear out, but they shall not wear out, as it is said, *Their form shall wear out Sheol* (Ps 49:15). Why has this befallen them? Because they stretched forth their hand against Zevul, as it is said, *that there be no Zevul for Him* (ibid.).²⁵ And *Zevul* means the Temple, as it is said, *I have surely built you a house of habitation (Zevul), a place for you to dwell in for ever* (1Kgs 8:13).

Implicit here is a contrast between *Gan 'Eden*, the state of blessedness of the righteous after death (= “the world to come”), and *Gehinnom*, the state of suffering and punishment. The righteous enjoy paradise. The wicked of both Israel and the nations are punished for a year in hell and then annihilated. The heretics, however, suffer eternal torment.

This doctrine is somewhat surprising, and may not have been universally held in rabbinic Judaism. It should be remembered that rabbinic Judaism is a complex phenomenon on which doctrinal consistency cannot be imposed. There are universalistic and inclusivist elements in rabbinic thought which run counter to what is said here. The basic rabbinic definition of a Jew as one born of a Jewish

²⁵ Ps 49:15 is here given a rather idiosyncratic reading. The old Jewish Publication Society version translates: “Like sheep they are appointed for the nether-world (*Sheol*); death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their form shall be for the nether-world (*Sheol*) to wear away, that there be no habitation (*zevul*) for it.” What this seems to imply is that the wicked are annihilated (“worn out”) in Sheol. The midrashic reading in the Tosefta manages to turn this on its head and make the verse teach that the wicked suffer eternal torment.

mother could suggest that Jewish status is inalienable. One also thinks of the later maxim “even though he has sinned he remains an Israelite” (*b. Sanh.* 44a), which could form the basis for a counter argument. As we noted earlier, Judaism in the Second Temple, despite being divided among sects and parties, appears to have been broadly inclusivist, and does not seem to have formulated a clear notion of heresy, though two groups in that period were already coming close to it—the Qumran covenanters and the Christians, both of whom divided Israel into “true” and “false” Jews, identified the latter with their ideological opponents and consigned them to eternal damnation. However, what the rabbinic evidence does clearly show is the emergence within rabbinic Judaism in the second century C.E., at least in polemic contexts, of a strong consciousness of orthodoxy. Significantly this development keeps pace with a similar development in Christianity. That the two developments are in some way linked cannot be ruled out.

2.2. Elements of the Rabbinic Anti-Christian Program

2.2.1. Exclusion from Jewish Institutions

If the rabbinic party were to stamp its authority on the Jewish communities of Palestine it would have to control the major Jewish institutions. Of these the most widespread and significant in the day-to-day life of Jews was the synagogue.²⁶ The synagogue had originated in the Diaspora, but had spread into the land of Israel, and rapidly increased in importance there after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. The synagogue was not just a place of prayer on Sabbath. It was a community center, the hub of the local communal networks. Communal events would probably have been celebrated there, and disputes settled. The local school, if there was one, may have been held on the premises. To be excluded from the synagogue would have been socially devastating. The synagogue in origin was not a rabbinic institution, so by the time the rabbinic party emerged and made its bid for power, the synagogue was well established, its broad forms of organization, governance and liturgy laid down long ago. The rabbinic party was, in political terms, “entryist,” that is to say, it attempted to take over an institution which it had done little to create. It shrewdly exerted pressure at a point at which it could claim to have authority, i.e., the liturgy—how the prayers were to be recited, how the Torah was to be read and what text was to be followed, when the festivals were to be observed, who was and who was not fit to join in public worship. The synagogues were controlled by the local grandees, the people of wealth and substance who could keep them afloat financially and pay for repairs and improvements. These people were dignified by titles such as *archisynagōgos* (*ro'sh bet ha-keneset*), and their benefactions recorded in inscriptions. The rabbis were not in a position directly to challenge their authority. Instead, they concentrated on “rabbinizing” the liturgy. They claimed to have the right to decide when the

²⁶ For a comprehensive history of the synagogue see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

festivals were to be celebrated. The religious calendar had been determined before 70 C.E. by the Jerusalem priests. After 70 the rabbis took on this role. Initially they were probably little heeded. There is evidence to suggest that in the second and third centuries C.E., even in the land of Israel, let alone the Diaspora, local Jewish calendars were followed, and no-one saw any great problem in this. However, the rabbis in the end got their way, and all Jews, both in Israel and the Diaspora, followed the same calendar which the rabbis determined. This was a potent symbol of all Israel united under the rabbinic aegis. The rabbis also seem to have claimed to determine which text of the Bible was to be used. The evidence for this is circumstantial but compelling. We now know from the Dead Sea Scrolls that there were several different recensions of the Hebrew Scriptures circulating in Judaism before 70. After 70, however, the situation radically simplifies and only one text-type is attested—the forerunner of the Masoretic text. This was almost certainly due to rabbinic influence. The rabbis not only imposed the text, but insisted that it be read in Hebrew, even in the Greek-speaking Diaspora where Greek versions may have been employed.²⁷

We find clear echoes of the rabbinic attempt to gain control of the synagogue in the Tannaitic sources. Particularly important is *m. Meg.* 4, especially 8–10. These identify a range of liturgical activities the rabbis regard as unacceptable. They cover the manner in which prayer is offered, the form of the *tefillin* and how they are to be worn, the use of certain prayers, how the Torah is to be read, the content of the Targum (the Aramaic version used to render the Hebrew Scriptures into the vernacular), and what passages are not to be translated in public. The items are very diverse, and the reasons why certain practices are forbidden are notoriously obscure. They may sometimes be comparatively trivial. This may be the case with regard to the rulings on *tefillin*. We know from the Dead Sea Scrolls that there was indeed some variation in the way that *tefillin* were made in antiquity.²⁸ It is hard to see, however, that any profound theological issue was at stake here. Rather insisting on one form and only one was a simple and effective instrument by which the rabbis could bring influence to bear on their fellow Jews and assert their authority. It may have been precisely because nothing of substance was at stake that made this such an effective political issue. People had no strong, vested interests in maintaining the non-rabbinic practice. However, the whole passage is shot through with a strong, implicit distinction between “heresy” (*minut*) and “orthodoxy.” It is deeply exclusivist, the implication being that the worshipping community should be an orthodox community, and that “orthodoxy” will be determined by the rabbis. The term *minut* is used twice, and *minim* once. The allusions are too vague to conclude that Jewish Christians are specifically in view. However, two injunctions are suggestive. In the list of “For-

²⁷ On all this see further below.

²⁸ See Emanuel Tov, “*Tefillin* of Different Origin from Qumran,” in *A Light for Jacob: Studies in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Jacob Shalom Licht* (ed. Y. Hoffman and F. H. Polak; Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1988), 44*–54*.

bidden Targumim” the Mishnah stipulates that “the first account of the Calf is read [in Hebrew] and translated [into Aramaic], while the second is read [in Hebrew] but not translated [into Aramaic].” Christian use of the story of the Calf to argue God’s rejection of Israel provides a possible context for rabbinic sensitivity over this story (though other explanations have also been proposed).²⁹ Similar Christian polemical use of Scripture may also lie behind rabbi Eliezer’s injunction against using Ezek 16:1ff as a Haftarah.

M. Meg. 4:8–10 also points clearly to one way in which the rabbinic party exerted its influence in synagogue. Rabbinic members of the congregation insisted on the *rabbinic* forms being observed, if necessary interrupting public prayer, to rebuke, or silence, or possibly correct any *sheliah ha-sibbur* who was following a non-rabbinic practice. In this they were following an ancient tradition of “zeal for the Torah,” according to which zealots were prepared to take the law into their own hands (and even, at times, resort to violence) when they felt that the proper customs were not being observed. Public correction of “mistakes” has remained a feature of the synagogue service down to the present day. It hints at the fundamental weakness of the rabbinic party within the synagogue. They were not able directly to impose their will, so they had to exert pressure indirectly. Nevertheless as a tactic it proved effective. By persistence and attrition the rabbinic party in the end was able to gain a large measure of influence in the religious life of the synagogue.

It is against this background that we should see the attempt by the rabbinic party to modify the synagogue prayer *par excellence*, the Amidah, and introduce into it a formal cursing of the *minim*. The basic text on this is found in *b. Ber.* 28b–29a:

(Text 4)

(A) Our rabbis taught:

(B) Shim'on ha-Paqoli arranged the Eighteen Benedictions in order before Rabban Gamliel at Yavneh.

(C) Rabban Gamliel said to the Sages: “Is there no-one who knows how to compose a benediction against the *minim*?”

(D) Shmu'el ha-Qatan stood up and composed it.

(E) Another year he forgot it and tried to recall it for two or three hours, yet they did not remove him.

The cursing of the heretics is now found as one of the Berakhot of the Amidah. In the old Palestinian recension from the Cairo Genizah it runs as follows:

²⁹ See Pier Cesare Bori, *The Golden Calf and the Origins of the Anti-Jewish Controversy* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990). Further: L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, “The Golden Calf Episode in Post-Biblical Literature,” *HUCA* 39 (1970): 91–116.

(Text 5)

- (A) For apostates (*meshummadiim*) may there be no hope,
- (B) And the arrogant kingdom (*malkhut zodon*) uproot speedily in our days.
- (C) May the Christians (*noserim*) and the heretics (*minim*) perish in an instant.
- (D) *May they be blotted out of the book of the living,*
And may they not be written with the righteous (Ps 69:29).
- (E) Blessed are you, O Lord, who humbles the arrogant.

Though attested only much later, there are strong grounds for accepting the basic accuracy of the Bavli's report that the cursing of the heretics was introduced under rabbinic auspices into the Amidah in the late first/early second century C.E. The tradition is given as a baraita, and it is alluded to again in *t. Ber.* 3:25–26 and in *y. Ber.* IV, 8a. Justin Martyr probably has the Birkat Haminim in mind when he speaks of the Jews cursing the Christians in synagogue (*Dial.* 16 and 96).

In the extant versions of the benediction various terms are used to denote the targets of the curse: "wicked" (*resha'im*), "sinners" (*poshe'im*), "slanderers" (*malshinim*), "informers" (*moserim*), "apostates" (*meshummadiim*), "renegades" (*perushim*). Widespread rabbinic testimony, however, strongly suggests that the original word was *minim*. In its original form, then, the text did not mention the Christians by name. However, they, and any other opponents of the rabbinic party present in synagogue, could have been in no doubt that they were in view. They could not have acted as precentors and used this form of the benediction, nor could they have said "Amen" after it, for to have done so would have been tantamount to bringing down a curse on their own heads.³⁰ The use of liturgical cursing to mark and to police the boundaries of the congregation has a long pedigree in Judaism. It is found in the Bible and at Qumran (where a negative form of the Priestly Blessing was used to damn the men of the lot of Belial during the annual festival of the renewal of the covenant: 1QS II, 4–18). That the precise wording of a public prayer should have been the storm center of a power struggle within the synagogue causes no surprise. Indeed, one wonders whether the rabbinic version of the Amidah may not have been a response to Jewish Christians attempting to introduce the Paternoster into the synagogue service. There is nothing intrinsically objectionable to any Jew, rabbinic or not, in the Paternoster, and it would not have been out of place in public worship. That would have made it all the more dangerous in rabbinic eyes. The problem would not have been the content of the prayer but its source. It would have been the prayer of Jesus, and

³⁰ One must recall again that the term *min* = "heretic" was not common parlance, so you could not comfort yourself with the thought that *you* were not a "heretic." It was a distinctively *rabbinic* usage and denoted those who were not of the *rabbinic* party. If you were not of that party you would have had no doubt that *you* were being targeted.

any congregation reciting it and saying “Amen” to it would have been aligning itself with the Christian party in the synagogue.³¹

Another rabbinic modification of the synagogue service should be mentioned here (*y. Ber. I, 3c*):

(Text 6)

It used to be proper to recite the Ten Commandments every day. Why then do they not recite them now? Because of the claim of the *minim*: so that they should not say, Only these were given to Moses on Sinai.

The report here is found in an Amoraic source, but there seems little doubt that it refers to a change to the liturgy which goes back to earlier times. According to *m. Tamid* 5:2, the Decalogue was recited in the temple service before the Shema, and this practice was probably carried over into the post-destruction synagogue. It was thus assigned a very prominent place in the prayers, just before the fundamental declaration of the unity of God. This prominence is hardly surprising, since the Decalogue is a striking text and as early as Philo was identified as expressing the summation or essence of the Torah (*On the Decalogue* 154). The *minim*, however, went further. They made a sharp distinction between the Decalogue and the rest of the Torah. Only the former was given to Moses on Sinai. The sense is probably not that the rest of the Torah was given *after* Sinai, but that the Decalogue was the only part of the Torah directly communicated by God himself. Behind this lies a very literal interpretation of Deut 5:22 (19): “These words [the Decalogue] the Lord spoke to all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of thick darkness, with a great voice, and he added no more [*ve-lo' yasaf*]. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone, and gave them to me.” Only the Decalogue was on the tables of stone: whoever was responsible for the rest of the Torah (whether angels or Moses himself), it cannot be seen as direct utterance of God.

The identity of the *minim* here has been much disputed. They are unlikely to be Jewish gnostics, since one would expect them to reject the *whole* of the Torah. They might be “liberal” Hellenistic Jews. Certainly for Jews in the Diaspora much of the Torah was of little relevance: it could only be observed “within the Land,” and even if they had lived in Israel they probably would not have adopted the

³¹ See further, Alexander, “Parting of the Ways,” 6–11. The standard discussion of the *Birkat Haminim* is William Horbury, “The Benediction of the *Minim* and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy,” *JTS NS* 33 (1982): 19–61). For a different perspective see Reuven Kimelman, “*Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity,” in *Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period* (vol. 2 of *Jewish and Christian Self-definition*; ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 226–44, 391–403. Also noteworthy: Timothy C. G. Thornton, “Christian Understandings of the *Birkath Ha-Minim* in the Early Roman Empire,” *JTS NS* 38 (1987): 419–31; B.-Z. Binyamin, “*Birkat ha-Minim* and the Ein Gedi Inscription,” *Immanuel* 21 (1987): 68–79.

whole Torah. In effect they shrank the Torah back to a moral core and obeyed it only in part. They might have attempted to justify this position, which to the rabbis, the advocates of full-Torah Judaism, would have been anathema, by arguing that only the Decalogue was actually given by God: to obey that was to fulfil God's will. The position is coherent and has a certain plausibility. However, it is hard to demonstrate from our surviving Hellenistic Jewish texts. The *minim* might also be the Christians. Certainly Christianity argued for the abrogation of the ritual law, and privileged the Decalogue as the essence of the law. However, this view was more characteristic of Gentile Christianity. The evidence suggests that Jewish Christians continued to observe many of the laws (circumcision and kashrut) which are not part of the Ten Words. Whoever is in view, we have here a further instance of how the rabbis attempted to control the synagogue and exclude from it any who opposed their point of view.³²

The struggle between the rabbinic party and the Jewish Christians was probably publicly fought out in the synagogue. There were other important communal institutions in Judaism, but they were unlikely to have been a battleground, largely because Jewish Christians would have had little involvement in them. They held a narrowly *religious* view of Judaism, which effectively meant that they withdrew from much of the political life of the community. They would have had no interest in dominating the law courts, or even the schools. They were deeply sectarian. By way of contrast, the rabbis, though probably a minority party in Palestinian Judaism down to the mid third century C.E., aspired from the outset to control every aspect of Jewish communal life and to bring it into conformity with their understanding of the Torah. They were a much more political movement, with a broader view of Judaism. In the end they dominated the law courts (*batei din*) and applied rabbinic law in them. Their power-base was their academies (*batei midrash*) where they trained their followers and then sent them out into the community to act as arbitrators (*dayyanim*) and to teach the rabbinic way of life. They probably increasingly influenced the lower levels of the educational system, such as it was, from which they recruited students to their Yeshivahs. The seeds of its failure were sown in the narrowness of Jewish Christianity. It is hardly surprising that it found itself increasingly isolated within Jewish society. It

³² See further, Geza Vermes, "The Decalogue and the *Minim*," in his *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (SJLA 8; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 169–77. Recently Reuven Kimelman has returned to the matter in his important study "The Shema^c Liturgy: From Covenant Ceremony to Coronation," in *Kenishta: Studies of the Synagogue World* (ed. J. Tabory; Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2001), 9–105, esp. 68–80. Kimelman casts doubt on the report that it was the *minim* who prompted the omission of the Decalogue. He argues that it was dropped because of its perceived overlap with the Shema. This explanation does not seem to me entirely plausible. It fails to explain why it took so long for the overlap to become a problem: the Shema and the Decalogue were recited side-by-side for a very long time. It also fails to take account of the exegetical problem of *ve-lo' yasaf*, and since when was the avoidance of redundancy seen as an important principle in the construction of the synagogue liturgy?

conceded too much ground to the rabbinic party without a fight. In retrospect its elimination looks almost inevitable.

2.2.2. Social Ostracism

The rabbis did not only attempt to exclude the *minim* from communal institutions; they also attempted to ostracize them in everyday life.

(Text 7)

t. Hul. 2:20–23

(A) If meat is found in the hand of a Gentile, it is permitted to derive benefit from it, but if it is found in the hand of a *min*, it is forbidden to derive benefit from it.

(B) That which comes out of the house of a *min* [reading *mi-bet ha-min* for *mi-bet 'avodah zarah* of the Vienna MS] is indeed meat of sacrifices to the dead.

(C) For they said: The slaughtering of a *min* is idolatry; their bread is the bread of a Samaritan; their wine is the wine of libation; their fruits are untithed; their books are the books of diviners; and their children are *mamzerim*.

(D) We do not sell to them, nor do we buy from them. We do not take from them, nor do we give to them. We do not teach their sons a craft. We are not healed by them, neither healing of property or healing of life.

(E) The case of rabbi Eleazar ben Damah, whom a serpent bit. There came in Jacob, a man of Kefar Sama, to cure him in the name of Yeshua ben Pandira, but rabbi Ishmael did not allow it. He said: "You are not permitted, Ben Damah." He said: "I will bring you a proof that he may heal me." But he had not finished bringing a proof when he died. Rabbi Ishmael said: "Happy are you, Ben Damah, for you have departed in peace, and have not broken through the ordinances of the Sages; for upon every one who breaks through the fence of the wise, punishment comes at last, as it is written, *Whoso breaks a fence, a serpent shall bite him* (Eccl 10:8)."

The rulings here are comprehensive and amount to putting *minim* under the ban (*herem*). Rabbinical Jews are forbidden to have any social contact with them. They cannot engage in commercial transactions with *minim*. They cannot lend to or borrow from them, give or receive gifts, read their books, marry their children, eat with them, teach their sons a craft, or be healed by them. The reference to food is particularly significant, since much of the networking and socializing of society centers on food. "Deriving benefit" covers both buying and eating. Palestine was a rural economy, made up largely of small farmers. To survive they had to sell their surplus produce in the local market. This ruling effectively excluded rabbinical Jews as customers for the *minim*, i.e., it involved a boycott of their goods. But it also excluded that most basic of social activities—accepting the hospitality of others and eating with them. The meat is deemed non-kosher because it has not been slaughtered properly. Incorrect *shehitah* is levelled as a charge against the *minim* again *m. Hul. 2:9*. The point at issue there is somewhat

obscure, but it seems to turn on how the blood is treated. The *minim* treat the blood in such a way as to suggest idolatrous intent. Hence, presumably, the charge here: "their slaughter is the slaughter of idolatry." The wine is suspect for a similar reason: there is a suspicion that the *minim* will have made a libation from it. Fruit is suspect, because the *minim* will not have tithed it. The meaning of "their bread is the bread of a Samaritan," is obscure. Clearly it has to be treated with suspicion, but the grounds for suspicion are not stated. Perhaps again the issue is tithing, or the improper use of sabbatical year produce.

Minim are to be treated in the matter of food with greater suspicion than pagans. The comparison drives home forcefully the rabbinical disapproval, but it is puzzling, because the intent of (B) above is precisely to *equate* the *minim* with pagan idolators. Indeed it is hard to see how (A) can be justified halakically. The statement may be more rhetorical than halakic: *minim* are no better than pagans—indeed they are worse, since they pass themselves off as Jews, and so the unwary may be tricked into associating with them. It should be borne in mind that in second and third century Galilee there was probably effective segregation of Jews and Gentiles. There were Jewish towns and villages, and there were non-Jewish towns and villages. Contact with non-Jews was, consequently, minimal. The threat from the *minim* was more real, because they lived in the Jewish towns.

Intermarriage is also problematic. Children of *minim* are to be treated as *mamzerim*, presumably because there would be suspicion that they had not followed strictly the laws regarding the forbidden degrees (Lev 18). The observance of the laws of *arayot* seems to have been an issue for the Tannaim. Marriage with a *mamzer* is problematic in both biblical and rabbinic law (Deut 23:3; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Even ha-^cEzer* 4.13). Rabbinical society was very sensitive about genealogy, and the stigma of *mamzerut* was profound. No rabbinical family would have lightly entered into a marriage with a *mamzer*.

Rabbinical Jews should also not teach the sons of the *minim* a trade. In other words they should not accept them as apprentices. Craft skills were largely passed on in the ancient world through apprenticeships. This prohibition might seem particularly mean-spirited, but there is probably more to it than meets the eye. Accepting a boy as an apprentice forged a close link between his family and the family of the master craftsman. The apprentice would probably have lived with the craftsman, and become effectively one of his family. The fact that a craftsman took on a boy from another family might suggest that he did not have a son of his own to train up in his trade. The apprentice might in due course inherit the business, and could well have been a suitable husband for any daughters in the family. In small, close-knit communities the apparently simple matter of an apprenticeship could have wide social ramifications, and this was probably well understood.

The reference to the "books of the *minim*" should probably be understood as an allusion to the Gospels (see below). The Gospels are about Jesus who is regularly described as a "sorcerer" in rabbinic tradition. This interpretation is supported by the story of rabbi Eleazar ben Damah in (E), which illustrates the reference to "healing" in (D), and clearly shows that Christians are in view in this

passage, though perhaps not exclusively so. Jacob of Kefar Sama offers to heal Eleazar in the name of Jesus. This rings true, since healing had been an integral part of the Christian ministry from the earliest times of the movement. It was probably a potent weapon in the spread of the Gospel in societies where medicine even of the most primitive kind was absent.³³ The rabbis, however, regarded this healing as magic, and so condemned it. In general they were highly suspicious of magic, which is clearly banned in the Torah, and, at least in Tannaitic times, they would have avoided any appearance of it. They themselves were, consequently, not healers, but that gave the Christians an edge. This may explain the savagery of the story. It is, significantly, not actually denied that Jacob could have healed Eleazar. Nevertheless, it was better for him to die than to accept the ministry of the *min* in the name of Jesus. He is held up as a warning for other rabbinical Jews.

We do not know to what extent these rabbinic injunctions were observed, even by rabbinical Jews.³⁴ But they were potentially very divisive. It should be remembered that rabbinic law did not represent the common law of the Jewish communities in the Galilee. It marked an intensification of common practice, and we know that it was resisted (by, among others, the people referred to by the rabbis as ‘*ammei ha-’ares*). It would have sharply divided the Jewish towns and villages into rabbinic and non-rabbinic camps. As rabbinic influence grew, the non-rabbinic groups, including the Jewish Christians, must have found themselves increasingly beleaguered, increasingly “ghettoized.” They must have been forced to turn inwards and rely more and more on their internal networks for economic and social support.

2.2.3. Rejection of Gospels

A further move that the rabbis made to assert their authority was to close the canon of Scripture. The *locus classicus* on this is *m. Yad*. 3:5. The test of canonicity put forward there is whether or not the text in question “defiles the hands.” The origins of this paradoxical criterion are obscure and have been much debated, but

³³ For an interesting discussion of the possible historical identity of Jacob of Kefar Sama see Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 106–21. Richard Kalmin (*The Sage in Jewish Society in Late Antiquity* [London: Routledge, 1999], 71) notes that “Jacob” is a popular name for a Christian in rabbinic stories.

³⁴ It is important to realize that the rabbinic evidence reflects primarily the *aspirations* of the rabbis, rather than their actual achievements. “On the ground,” in a time-honored pattern of Middle Eastern life that has persisted down to the present, Christian Jews and rabbinical Jews probably mingled quite amicably on a day-to-day basis with each other, and even with Gentile Christians and with pagans. Each may well have turned to the other for support in times of trouble, and resorted to the other’s healers and holy men. It was this muddle that the leadership on both the Christian and the Jewish side set out to clarify. The parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity is the result of the emergence of elites on both sides who managed, in part for self-serving reasons, to impose their exclusivist views as orthodoxy on their respective communities and to force the separation. The natural pattern of religious development, if ordinary people had been given their head, would have been strongly syncretistic. See further nn. 42 and 47 below.

the implications of it are clear. A Torah scroll properly written for liturgical purposes “defiles the hands.” To declare that another text, similarly written, also “defiles the hands” is to put it in the same category as Torah: it is holy Scripture, given under the inspiration of the holy spirit (*t. Yad.* 2:14). This text too, consequently, can be appealed to as authoritative in matters of faith and practice, and, above all, can be read publicly in synagogue. Public reading in synagogue is probably primarily in view. Thus when *m. Sanh.* 10:1 excludes from the world to come “whoever reads the outside books (*sefarim hisonim*),” i.e., books which “do not defile the hands” and are not canonical, it is not so much worried about *private* reading (though doubtless that too would have been frowned upon), but *public* reading in the synagogue. The circle of private readers who owned their own books and had the leisure to read was very small in the ancient world.

M. Yad. 3:5 makes it very clear that as far as the rabbis were concerned the canon remained “fuzzy” only at the edges. The only two books whose status is discussed there are Qohelet and Song of Songs. This probably reflects historical reality. The canon had been emerging for a long time and was probably effectively defined by the end of the Second Temple period, at least in the sense that all sects and parties within Judaism acknowledged beyond dispute that certain books were Holy Scripture. These included the Torah of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. It was in the Writings that the few disputed texts were to be found. Round this core of universally recognized texts was a penumbra of other writings, which some sects claimed were Scripture, but others rejected. In defining their canon the rabbis were not only stating what was “in,” but, even more importantly, what was “out.” There were plenty of writings to exclude.

M. Yad. 3:5 is an unusually carefully constructed pericope dating from the end of the second century C.E. It seems to have been intended finally to close the rabbinic canon. It may allude to an earlier attempt by the Yavnian Sages to define the canon, but the text is problematic. Even if we allow an earlier attempt, it was clearly not successful, since some matters were still in dispute in the time of Akiba and later. From the end of the second century C.E., however, the disputes cease in rabbinic Judaism: the canon of Holy Scripture is definitively closed. It is probable that the famous canonic list found as a baraita in *b. B. Bat.* 14a was issued then.

Why should the rabbis have moved precisely at this point in time to define their canon? The answer may well lie with the Christians and their emerging canon of Scripture.³⁵ There are grounds for thinking that the late second

³⁵ For classic discussions of this problem see: George Foot Moore, “The Definition of the Jewish Canon and the Repudiation of Christian Scriptures,” in *Essays in Modern Theology and Related Subjects* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 99–125; repr. in *Canon and Masorah in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. S. D. Leiman; New York: Ktav, 1974), 115–41; Louis Ginzberg, “Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue towards Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings,” *JBL* 41 (1922): 115–36; repr. in Leiman, *Canon and Masorah*, 142–63; J. Bloch, “Outside Books,” in (the English part of) *Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume* (ed. Moshe Davis; 2 vols.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1953), 87–108; repr. in Leiman, *Canon and Masorah*, 202–23. See further Alexander, “Parting of the Ways,” 11–15.

century C.E. marked an important stage in the evolution of the Christian canon.³⁶ This hypothesis is supported by two passages from the Tosefta, dating probably from the same period as *m. Yad.* 3:5, which exclude the Gospels by name.

(Text 8)

t. Yad. 2:13

(A) The Gospels (*gilyonim*) and the books of the heretics (*sifrei minim*) do not defile the hands.

(B) The Book(s) of Ben Sira, and all books that were written from then on, do not defile the hands.

(Text 9)

t. Šabb. 13(14):5

(A) The Gospels (*gilyonim*) and books of heretics (*sifrei minim*) are not saved but are left where they are to burn, they and their sacred names.

(B) Rabbi Yose ha-Gelili says: On a weekday one cuts out their sacred names and hides them away (*gonez*) and burns the rest.

(C) Rabbi Tarfon said: May I bury my sons! If they were to come into my hand I would burn them along with their sacred names. For if a pursuer were pursuing after me, I would enter a house of idolatry rather than enter their houses, because the idolators do not acknowledge him and then deny him, but *they* do acknowledge him and then deny him. Of them Scripture says: *Behind the door and the doorpost (mezuzah) you have set up your symbol (zikkaron)* (*Isa 57:8*).

(D) Rabbis Ishmael said: If to bring peace between a husband and his wife, the Omnipresent has said that a scroll (*sefer*) which has been written in holiness may be erased by means of water, how much more should books of heretics, which cause enmity, jealousy and strife between Israel and their Father in heaven be erased, they and their sacred names.

(E) With regard to them Scripture says: *Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate you? Do I not strive with those who rise up against you? I hate them with a perfect hatred; I count them as my enemies* (*Ps 139:20–21*).

(F) Just as they are not saved from a fire, so they are not saved from a cave-in, nor from water, nor from anything which would destroy them.

Gilyonim is most plausibly explained as a deliberate deformation of the word εὐαγγέλιον, “Gospel” (cf. *b. Šabb.* 116a). The pairing “Gospels and books of *minim*” should probably not be taken contrastively, as implying that the Gospels

³⁶ See, e.g., Lee M. McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007) and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

are not “books of *minim*.” Rather the sense is: “the Gospels and [other] books of *minim*.” The reference may be to other parts of the New Testament, or other early Christian writings. The issue in *t. Yad.* is somewhat different from that in *t. Sabb.* In the former the question is whether or not these books “defile the hands,” that is to say (as we have seen), whether or not they were given under inspiration, can act as authority in matters of faith and practice, and can be publicly read in synagogue. In the latter, however, the question is whether or not they can be saved from destruction on the Sabbath, that is to say whether or not the law against carrying objects from one domain to another on Sabbath can be violated, because these books are holy and contain sacred names. Certainly a Torah-scroll could be rescued from a burning building on Sabbath, to protect it and its holy names. The pericope concludes that Gospels and other books of *minim* should not be saved: they should be allowed to burn, sacred names and all. The implication is clear. The Gospels and other books of the *minim* are not holy books; it were better if they were destroyed. The rhetoric is strong. As in *t. Hul.* 2:20–23 the *minim* are depicted as worse than idolatrous pagans. The reason is obvious. The threat of paganism is open and “honest”; Christianity’s threat is concealed behind a façade of Jewishness. Outwardly Christian houses display the sign of Judaism (the *mezuzah*). It is only when you enter that you find concealed inside “their symbol,” or “memorial” (a cross?). The *minim* are God’s enemies, to be hated with “a perfect hatred.” The fact that what the rabbis are most obviously concerned about is *public* reading of “outside books” in synagogue raises some intriguing questions. Were the Christians attempting to read the Gospels publicly in synagogue, and if so, in what language would they have read them? One assumes that the Scriptures would have been read in Palestinian synagogues in the second/third centuries C.E. in Hebrew, but there might have been some Greek-speaking congregations to whom some form of Greek Gospels could have been read. It is also possible that the rabbis might have had Greek-speaking Diaspora synagogues in mind, where the Torah was still being read in Greek. However the text clearly envisages scrolls in *Hebrew*. A Greek translation of the Torah would not “defile the hands,” nor would one be obliged to rescue it from destruction, nor would its divine names be regarded as sacred.³⁷ The question as to whether one should save Gospels and other books of the *minim* from destruction could only arise if those texts were in *Hebrew* and contained divine names in *Hebrew*. This text may point, then, to Hebrew Gospels circulating among Jewish Christians in Palestine, and to attempts by Jewish Christians to read some of these texts publicly in synagogue.

2.2.4. Polemic

Though, as we noted earlier, it was a part of the rabbinic strategy not to engage in direct theological debate with their opponents, there are, nevertheless, elements of an anti-Christian polemic in Tannaitic sources. The vilification of

³⁷ Though it should be noted that in some Greek Torah scrolls the Tetragram was written in *Hebrew* letters.

Jesus, which was to grow in strength in the Amoraic period and culminate in the early middle ages in the *Toledot Yeshu*, already seems to have begun in the second century C.E. Note the reference to “Yeshua ben Pandira” in *t. Hul.* 2:22–23 (Text 7 above). The debate about “two powers in heaven” might also, in some cases, have Christianity particularly in view. “Two powers in heaven,” like *minim*, was probably a generic expression designating a range of positions which the rabbis saw as compromising the unity of God.

Mekilta deRabbi Ishmael, *Bahodesh* 5 illustrates this tradition:

(Text 10)

(A) *I am the Lord your God* (Exod 20:2).

(B) Why is this said?

(C) At the sea he appeared to them as a mighty hero making war, as it is said, *The Lord is a man of war* (Exod 15:3). At Sinai he appeared to them as an old man full of mercy, as it is said, *And they saw the God of Israel etc.* (Exod 24:10). And of the time after they had been redeemed what does it say? *And the like of the very heaven for clearness* (Exod 24:10). Again it says: *I beheld till thrones were placed* (Dan 7:9). And it also says, *And a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him etc.* (Dan 5:10).

(D) Scripture, therefore, would not let the nations of the world ('ummot ha-'olam) have an excuse for saying that there are two powers, but declares, *I am the Lord your God.*

(E) I am he who was in Egypt and I am he who was at the sea. I am he who was at Sinai. I am he who was in the past and I am he who will be in the future. I am he who is in this world and I am he who will be in the world to come, as it is said, *See now that I, even I, am he etc.* (Deut 32:39). And it says, *Even to old age I am the same* (Isa 46:4). And it says, *Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts: I am the first and I am the last* (Isa 44:6). And it says: *Who has wrought and done it? He that calls the generations from the beginning. I, the Lord, who am the first, etc.* (Isa 41:4).

(F) Rabbi Nathan says: From this one can cite a refutation of the *minim*, who say, There are two Powers. For when the Holy One, blessed be he, stood up and exclaimed, *I am the Lord your God*, was there any one who stood up to protest against him?

This passage, though much discussed, has perhaps not received as close a reading as it deserves. It is concerned with Israel's experience of God as described in the Bible. Israel experienced God in different ways, at different places and under different forms. At the crossing of the Red Sea God manifested himself as a young warrior fighting on Israel's behalf; at Sinai, however, he showed a very different character: he was like an old man full of mercy. How could Israel be sure that it was the same God who had appeared to them at the Red Sea and at Sinai, and, indeed, in all the other theophanies? The problem is a profoundly serious one. The experience of the numinous is very diverse, and it runs against the

appearances to claim that these experiences are all encounters with a single transcendent power. Polytheists would have had no hesitation in claiming that they were manifestations of *different* deities. Polytheism seems, on the face of it, to be the more reasonable deduction from experience. The rabbis addressed a similar problem in their doctrine of the Shekhinah. The Shekhinah is their term for the numinous: it is the sense of a transcendent presence. The Shekhinah can be experienced by different individuals in different places and under diverse circumstances, but these, they claim, are not encounters with different *numina* or *genii loci* as most pagans would say. They are encounters with the one supreme God. They used the image of the sea to make this point. Just as it is the same sea which rises to fill the numerous individual caves around the coast, so the different individual experiences of the Shekhinah are all experiences of the one divine reality.³⁸ In the Mekhilta, the problem, having been posed exegetically, is solved exegetically. Put very simply the answer is this: the theophanies are all manifestations of the same God because that God declared their identity. He revealed himself to Israel as the one and only God, their covenant God, who would be with them through all the vicissitudes of their history. Abundant proof-texts are cited to make the case.

The logic of the problem, as we have analysed it, suggests that what is in view is the question of a *plurality* of gods. But this raises the obvious question as to why then the text speaks specifically of “*two* powers.” The answer probably is that here, and in the other Tannaitic sources which mention the “two powers,” two should not be taken in the sense of “two and only two,” but rather as meaning “more than one,” or “*at least two*.” For the rabbis declaring the existence of even one additional “power” was unacceptable, and breached monotheism. In other words what is being attacked here is not just a “binitarian” point of view (that may be the focus in the Amoraic sources: see below). Binitarianism is included, but it is not the sole focus of the polemic. Significantly what is probably the earliest use of the phrase, in *m. Sanh.* 4:5, speaks not of “*two powers*” but of “*many powers*.” There is no contradiction between *m. Sanh.* 4:5 and the Mekhilta. Both are essentially saying the same thing.

What reality, if any, lies behind this apologetic? Is it designed purely for internal consumption, to still the doubts of educated rabbinic Jews who might be worried by this question, or are there real opponents in mind? Are the rabbis tilting at windmills? Certainly we can find cases where they raise serious theological problems, but because these are of such a “shocking” and fundamental nature they do not pose them in their own name but put them into the mouths of “outsiders” (a philosopher, a *min*, a *matrona*, the emperor, and so forth), whom they then triumphantly refute. To attribute these difficulties to outsiders is already a way of dealing with them. It hints to the faithful that to entertain such questions is to be in danger of putting one’s self beyond the pale. To look in every instance for a

³⁸ See *Cant. Rab.* 3.10 §1. *b. Sanh.* 39a uses the image of the rays of the one sun shining on different individuals in different places.

precise group within the rabbinic milieu advocating these objectionable views is probably misguided. Here, however, there are hints that the polemic is more specific. There is a range of real, known parties who held views which would come under the rabbinic condemnation of the doctrine of “two Powers in heaven.” Two clues point in this direction. First there is the precise terminology “two Powers (*reshuyyot*) in heaven.” Second, there is the role Scripture plays in the argument. The second clue suggests that, despite our analysis above, the rabbis are unlikely to have polytheistic paganism primarily in mind. It is not credible to imagine that pagans would have defended paganism to Jews by citing in detail the Jewish Scriptures. Rather we should be looking for *Jewish* groups who may have argued that the different theophanies of the Hebrew Bible were evidence for a plurality of divine powers.

Three possible groups come to mind. The first is the Jewish gnostics, who could well have taken some of the theophanies in the Bible as manifestations of different powers (e.g., the Demiurge as against the transcendent supreme God). The second is the Heikhalot mystics, who could have argued that some of the theophanies were, in fact, appearances of high archangels such as Metatron (see Text 14 below). The third is the Christians, who may have argued that some of the theophanies were manifestations not of the Father but of the pre-incarnate Son. These are real groups, real opponents, who would have been prepared to fight it out exegetically with the rabbis over the text of Scripture. The text refers to the opponents both as *minim* and as “the nations of the world.” The former unquestionably denotes *Jewish* groups. The latter might appear to refer to pagans, but, in fact, it is sometimes used to denote Gentile Christianity (see Text 14 below). The second clue is also illuminating. The precise wording “two powers” seems very precise. At bottom the issue is monotheism. Why then not “two gods”? The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *rashut* here is probably not δύναμις, but ἔξουσία or ἀρχή. Conceptually the idea expressed would be close to that of the Greek δαίμων. However, there is no strict semantic correspondence between δαίμων and *rashut*. One immediately thinks of the phrase ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἔξουσίαι in Christian texts. Indeed, a close and reasonable translation into Hebrew of Eph 3:10, ταῖς ἔξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, would be *la-reshuyyot ba-shamayim*. The language might not be exclusively Christian but could have been used by Gnostics as well. However, this use of *rashut* is not found in the Heikhalot texts.³⁹

In the Mekilta, *Bahodesh* 5, the exegetical opponents are named (however vague those names may be). There may, however, be other cases where an exposition is equally apologetic, but no named opponents appear. This has been argued for *Sipre Deuteronomy* §312, which, it has been suggested, mounts a strong affirmation of the continued election of Israel against Christian supersessionism.⁴⁰

³⁹ See further, Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977).

⁴⁰ See E. Mihaly, “A Rabbinic Defence of the Election of Israel: An Analysis of *Sifre Deuteronomy* 32:9, Pisqa 312,” *HUCA* 35 (1964): 103–43.

These cases are inevitably hard to prove. They often come down to a fine judgement on the rhetoric of the passage. Does the writer protest too much? Or does the structure of his argument appear to have been skewed in some way that betrays the presence of an invisible foe?⁴¹ In general, given that the Christians were real, historical opponents, whose agenda was known to the rabbis, it seems reasonable to read any rabbinic passage which deals with issues known to be in dispute between the two parties (the election of Israel, the continuing validity of the whole torah, the unity of God) intertextually against Christian sources.

2.3. *Interim Conclusions*

The Tannaitic sources yield little direct, concrete evidence for the history of Jewish Christianity in the second and third centuries C.E. However, read carefully against its historical background this rabbinic material does yield some important results:

(1) Jewish Christianity was a more significant movement in the Jewish communities of Palestine than it might at first sight appear. Jewish Christians were one of a range of ideological opponents of the rabbis, who struggled with them for dominance in the Judaism of the post-70 era. They affected the shape of rabbinic Judaism and forced the rabbis to define, perhaps for the first time in the history of Judaism, a concept of Jewish orthodoxy.

(2) Jewish Christians were scattered through the Jewish towns and villages of the Galilee. They lived like other Jews. Their houses were indistinguishable from the houses of other Jews. They probably observed as much of the Torah as did other Jews (though they would doubtless have rejected, as many others did, the distinctively rabbinic interpretations of the *misvot*). They studied Torah and developed their own interpretations of it, and, following the practice of the Apostles, they continued to perform a ministry of healing in the name of Jesus, which may, as in the early days of Christianity, have been a significant factor in commanding the Christian Gospel. The Jewishness of the Jewish Christians made them particularly dangerous in rabbinic eyes. The threat of paganism was open and “honest.” Christianity was much more seductive because it came clothed in Jewish garb.

(3) The rabbinic strategy against the Christians was to exclude them from all areas of Jewish life, both religious and social, in effect to put them under ban—to make them non-persons. The main battleground was the synagogue. Whatever distinctively Christian conventicles the Jewish Christians may have established on “the Nazarene day” (= Sunday), they seem to have continued to attend their local synagogues on Sabbath. They may have attempted to influence the service of the synagogue, even to the extent of trying to introduce into it the Paternoster,

⁴¹ There is also the problem here of whether or not Jewish Christianity would have argued for supersessionism, and if so, in what form.

or readings from Christian Gospels, or they may have preached sermons which offered Christian readings of the Torah. The rabbis countered with a program which thoroughly “rabbinized” the service of the synagogue and ensured that it reflected the core rabbinic values.

3. Jewish Believers in Amoraic Sources

3.1. The Changed Situation of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries

The picture of Jewish Christianity which emerges from Amoraic sources is very broadly similar to that found in the Tannaitic texts. The rabbis continue to be implacably opposed to Christianity, to attack and denigrate it in various ways, and to advise against fraternising with Christians. The policies laid down by their Tannaitic predecessors are largely still being followed. This can be seen, for example, in the re-use and updating of Tannaitic anti-Christian material. There are, however, subtle but significant changes of emphasis—hardly surprising since the general situation in the fourth century bore little resemblance to that in the second when the strategy for dealing with the Christians and other non-rabbinic groups was devised.

(1) To begin with, the rabbinic party seems much more confident and self-assured. It had made considerable advances in imposing its authority on the Jewish community in Palestine. A significant turning point in its fortunes probably came with Judah ha-Nasi in the early third century. Judah was a wealthy land-owner who seems to have had the confidence of the Roman authorities. But he was at the same time a member of the rabbinic party, and it was under his auspices that the great code of Jewish law, the Mishnah, was edited.

(2) Second, the stage of rabbinic activity had greatly widened. In the second century the rabbinic movement seems to have been confined largely to Palestine. By the fourth it had taken firm root in Babylonia and was extending its influence strongly into the Greek Diaspora. The presence of Jewish Christians living cheek-by-jowl with rabbinic Jews in Palestine is clearly attested. It is less clear whether this was the case in Babylonia. The magical bowls provide some tantalising hints of close social interaction between different ethnic and religious communities in Mesopotamia, but in general Christianity was probably less strong in the Jewish areas of Babylonia in the fourth-fifth centuries than in the West.⁴² And evidence for an organized Jewish-Christian movement in Babylonia challenging the rabbis

⁴² See J. A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Publications of the Babylonian Section, vol. 3; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, The Museum, 1913); C. D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975); J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (rev. ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987); and, above all, Dan Levene, *Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity: A Corpus of Magic Bowls* (PhD diss.; University College, London, 2000), esp. 30–33 and 39–40.

for the hearts and minds of Jews is extremely sparse. We have virtually no stories of Babylonian rabbis disputing with *minim*. Here the silence is not “loud,” but probably reflects genuine lack of contact and conflict.⁴³ However, the Babylonian rabbis were clearly aware of Christianity. Curiously it is the Babylonian Talmud and not the Palestinian Amoraic sources, which has preserved much of the evidence for the continuing conflict in the West.⁴⁴ Though the possibility that this material has been reworked in Babylonia should not be discounted, there seems to be little reason to deny that its origin genuinely lies in the West. There was increasing to-ing and fro-ing between the rabbinic schools of Babylonia and Palestine in the later Amoraic period, which led to the Babylonians receiving a considerable body of Palestinian tradition.

It is unlikely that the Babylonian rabbis would have shown such an interest in Palestinian traditions regarding Christianity if they had not served some purpose in their own context. This material could, as in the West, have helped them to formulate a concept of “heresy,” which would have been of use in asserting their own authority. It could also have provided a paradigm for a defence against non-Christian opponents, for example Jewish gnostics, Zoroastrians, Manicheans, Mandeans and pagans.⁴⁵ And, of course, it could have been useful specifically against its primary target, Christianity. There were very significant centers of Christianity in Mesopotamia. The rabbis were aware of the important Christian school in Nisibis, and there are strong indications from the Christian side of contact and dispute with Jews.⁴⁶ These Christians were, for the most part, Aramaic speakers, and could probably have communicated directly

⁴³ On the general lack of interaction between the Babylonian rabbis and the non-Jewish environment see Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society in Late Antiquity*.

⁴⁴ Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society in Late Antiquity* notes this problem: “Disputes between rabbis and *Minim* are virtually non-existent in Palestinian documents such as the Yerushalmi but relatively common in the Bavli. The Bavli records many disputes between heretics and Palestinian rabbis, but the Palestinian compilations record fewer than a handful of such disputes. Why does the Bavli depict Palestinian rabbis as frequent debaters with heretics but the Palestinian compilations do not?” He offers some possible explanations, none of them very convincing (73–74).

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Gerard P. Luttikhuijzen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (TSAJ 8; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985).

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Jacob Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (StPB 19; Leiden: Brill, 1971); Han J. W. Drijvers, “Jews and Christians at Edessa,” *JJS* 36 (1985): 88–102; Isaiah M. Gafni, *The Jews of Babylonia in the Talmudic Era: A Social and Cultural History* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1990), 137–48 [Hebrew]. As further evidence of the interaction between Jews and Christians in the East one may note Michael P. Weitzman’s argument that behind the Christian Peshitta version stands a non-rabbinic Jewish Aramaic version, which Christians appropriated and adapted. See his *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and *From Judaism to Christianity: Studies in the Hebrew and Syriac Bibles* (JSSSup 8; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. 3–30.

with rabbinic Jews.⁴⁷ However, the fact remains that what the Babylonian Talmud seems to reflect is contact with *Gentile* Christianity. There appears to have been no significant *Jewish* Christian movement in the rabbinic communities of the East.

The evidence for the expansion of rabbinic authority into the Greek-speaking Diaspora is much more circumstantial, but nonetheless compelling. By the late Byzantine period the picture emerges of a Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora that seems broadly loyal to rabbinic Judaism. But for the most part we can only speculate as to how the rabbis managed to project their authority into these communities. Here the battle with Christianity must have been particularly sharp, because this was the theatre where the Christian mission was most successful. There were probably significant numbers of Jewish converts to Christianity in the Diaspora and there must have been for a time Diaspora synagogues and communities split into pro-and anti-Christian factions. We can hear some of the sound and fury of this conflict in Christian writers such as John Chrysostom, but echoes of it are very muted in the rabbinic sources.

A number of measures taken by the rabbinic authorities would have served to promote their authority in the Greek-speaking Diaspora and counter the influence of Christianity there. As in their struggle to influence the synagogues in Palestine in the second century, they successfully identified tactical issues through which they could assert their claims. Two of these—the proper version of the Bible and the correct calendar—were probably particularly effective in advancing the rabbinic cause. The reading and study of the Bible seems to have been central to the life of the Greek synagogues, but the old Greek version, the Septuagint, was for a number of reasons unsatisfactory from the rabbinic point of view. It had been appropriated by the Christians and seemed to favor their position. Moreover, its underlying Hebrew text did not correspond to the Hebrew text which the rabbis had adopted and promoted.⁴⁸ The rabbis sponsored two new Greek versions of the Bible—Aquila in the first half of the second century C.E. and Symmachus about a century later—to replace the Septuagint and present a more rabbinically acceptable understanding of the Torah. But they also, in the end, seem to have promoted the public reading of Torah *in Hebrew* in the Greek-speaking synagogues. This was probably a radical innovation. The Greek synagogues, convinced perhaps by the old tradition that the Septuagint was inspired,

⁴⁷The street-level syncretism of the various religious and ethnic communities in Babylonia is graphically illustrated by the magical bowls. Members of different groups seem to have consulted the same magicians, who drew indiscriminately on diverse traditions in composing their incantations. See n. 42 above. Like their counterparts in the west, the Babylonian rabbinic leadership would have found a concept of heresy useful in fighting these syncretistic tendencies.

⁴⁸See P. S. Alexander, “Why no Textual Criticism in Rabbinic Midrash: Reflections on the Textual Culture of the Rabbis,” in *Jewish Ways of Reading the Bible* (ed. G. J. Brooke; JSSSup 11; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 175–90.

had seen little reason to read the Torah in Hebrew.⁴⁹ Knowledge of Hebrew seems to have been very poor in the Greek Diaspora, and so the Hebrew Bible would have been unintelligible to the vast majority of congregations. Promoting the Hebrew text had profound implications, both political and theological. If a Greek-speaking congregation was to adopt the Hebrew it had to acquire a Hebrew scroll, and at least some of its members had to learn Hebrew sufficiently well to be able to read it. For assistance in these matters it would have naturally turned to the rabbis, the custodians of the Hebrew Bible and of Hebrew learning, which would, at a stroke, have increased their influence and authority in that congregation. But by going over to the Hebrew the Greek-speaking congregation would also have been tacitly subscribing to the rabbinic doctrine that the *Hebrew* was the inspired text, not the Greek. This doctrine down the centuries was to give the rabbis a considerable advantage in their exegetical disputes with the church. It was even espoused by some Christian scholars (e.g., Origen and Jerome) and revisions of the Christian Scriptures were produced *iuxta Hebraeos*. The effect of this Hebraism was, arguably, profoundly destabilizing within the church.⁵⁰

The calendar presented another issue through which the rabbis could assert their authority. There is good evidence to suggest that a variety of calendars were followed by the Jewish communities both in Palestine and in the Diaspora in the second and third centuries C.E., with the result that the festivals could be celebrated at different times in different places. The majority of Jews probably saw nothing wrong with this: provided one had celebrated the festival at roughly the right time, one would have fulfilled one's duty. The rabbis, however, following old priestly concerns, thought differently. The festivals should be celebrated on the correct day by everyone together. They promoted a uniform calendar for all Jews. The implications were again both political and theological. They claimed that only the authorities in Palestine had the right to determine the calendar, and at the same time they held up a vision of the Jewish people world-wide united in the worship of God under their leadership. Most Jews were probably happy to accept their lead in this, but it meant, in effect, bowing to rabbinic authority, which must have been problematic for Jewish Christians.⁵¹ It is not an exaggeration to see the outreach of the rabbinic movement of Palestine to the Jewish Diaspora both in the east and the west as amounting to a mission which mirrors in many ways the Christian mission. There is clear evidence from the third century onwards of close contact between the Patriarchate and the rabbinic establishment in Palestine on the one side and the far-flung Diaspora on the other. Emissaries

⁴⁹ See Mogens Müller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint* (JSOTSup 206; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

⁵⁰ Further, Philip S. Alexander, "Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories," in *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 63–80, esp. 64–65.

⁵¹ See Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar 2nd Century BCE—10th Century CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

(*shelihim/apostoloi*) were regularly sent out by the Palestinian authorities to communicate with the Diaspora, for example, to announce the calendar, to collect the Patriarchal tax, or to solicit donations to support the Palestinian schools. This mission was, it seems, largely successful: the Jewish Christians were forced out of the Diaspora synagogues, which apparently broadly recognized the Patriarchate and the rabbinic schools of Palestine as their spiritual authorities.

(3) Finally the political situation was totally transformed. Under Constantine the Christian church found itself at the center of political power. The empire, as the rabbis said, went over to *minut*. It was to take a while before the political implications of this for Judaism were to be played out in the form of anti-Jewish legislation and harassment of the synagogue, but one immediate effect was the Christian spiritual colonization of Palestine. Christians, led by Constantine's mother, began to implement an impressive program of church building to claim the land of Israel, and especially Jerusalem and Bethlehem, as Christian holy land. This would have been very visible to rabbinic Jews, who must have felt that their spiritual patrimony was being usurped before their very eyes. But, of course, what they confronted was Gentile Christianity. It was Gentile Christianity which was flaunting its new-found power and wealth, not Jewish Christianity. Indeed, the Christian "invasion" of the Holy Land proved in many ways as threatening to Jewish Christianity as to rabbinic Judaism. Gentile Christianity was deeply suspicious of Jewish Christianity, and, probably wrongly, was inclined to question its orthodoxy. It probably hastened its demise.

3.2. Reflexes of the Changed Situation in Rabbinic Sources

The relationship between rabbinic Judaism and Christianity changed dramatically in the fourth century, but to what extent does this change register in the rabbinic sources?

It is noticeable that there are many more identifiable references to Christianity in the Amoraic texts. The field of conflict had simplified for the rabbis. The opponent *par excellence* was now clearly Christianity since the "empire had gone over to *minut*." The term *min*, which in Tannaitic sources was used generically to designate a range of Jewish opponents of the rabbis, has come in the Amoraic texts overwhelmingly to denote the Christians. And polemical traditions of the Tannaim whose target was rather vague (e.g., the doctrine of the Two Powers) were reworked with Christianity specifically in mind. The increase in the number of references to Christianity in the Amoraic texts is in itself perhaps not so surprising given that the Amoraic corpus is much larger than the Tannaitic, but one senses also an intensification of debate, both open and concealed.

The rabbinic authorities still tried to maintain the Tannaitic policy of generally ignoring Christianity. The official line remained that it was better not to have anything to do with Christians or to listen to what they say. The continuity of policy is illustrated by the reuse of the paradigmatic story of rabbi Eliezer's arrest on a charge of *minut*. Of course, after the time of Constantine this would have

lost some of its force, since Christianity was no longer an illegal cult. However, it still made the useful point that Christianity can be seductive and flirting with it can only lead to embarrassment and loss of standing in the community. A story in *Qoh. Rab.* 1.8 §4 has the same general moral and may be a recasting of the tale about Eliezer's arrest in the light of the post-Constantinian status of Christianity.

(Text 11)

(A) One of rabbi Jonathan's disciples ran away [to the *minim*]. He came and found him doing menial tasks for them.⁵² The *minim* sent the following message after him: "Is it not written thus, *Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse* (Prov 1:14)?"

(B) He fled and they pursued after him. They said to him, "Rabbi, do an act of kindness to a certain bride." He went and found them ravishing a girl. He exclaimed, "Is this the way for Jews to behave!" They replied to him, "But is it not written in the Torah, *Cast in your lot among us; let us have a common purse?*

(C) He fled and they pursued him till he came to the door [of his house] and shut it in their faces. They said: "Rabbi Jonathan, go tell your mother that you have not turned and looked upon us; for if you had turned and looked upon us, more than we pursue you would you have pursued us!"

It is not necessary to accept the literal veracity of this tradition to detect in it elements of realism and historical truth. The loss of a young student to the *minim* rings true, and would have been every Rabbi's nightmare. Significantly the setting is not the courts but a *simhah*—a wedding, an occasion when all sides of the community might well have come together. Rabbi Jonathan naively accepts the invitation of the *minim* to honor the bride, only to find that what is involved is group sex with the girl. There is surely an allusion here to the Christian doctrine of the "sharing all things in common," but this is interpreted perversely as extending to sharing women! The charge of sexual immorality was commonly levelled against the Christians (and the Epicureans) in antiquity. It has remained down to modern times one of the most potent ways of blackening the name of an opposing religious group. The picture of the *minim* chasing the rabbi through the streets, his slamming of his front door in their faces, and the altercation through the closed door, is pure burlesque, but it makes a serious point by showing the venerable rabbi in an undignified light, and it may well reflect boisterous, anti-rabbinic behavior by Jewish Christians at the time of communal *simhahs* and Christian festivals. The *minim* themselves point up the moral. Rabbi Jonathan escaped their

⁵² What the student was doing is unclear. The standard editions read 'bd bn 'ptwnywt. Jastrow 101b suggests emending the final word here to 'pswnywt, a denominative from 'pswlyn = ὄψώνιον. He proposes the sense "doing the cooking for them." But ὄψώνιον normally means "wages"—unless it is used as the equivalent of ὄψον, "cooked food" (see LSJ 1283a,b, *sub* ὄψώνιον and ὄψον). Alternatively one could emend to 'ksnywt, hence, "keeping house for them" (?) (cf. Jastrow 65a).

blandishments only because he took to his heels and ran. If he had looked them in the eye, they would have converted him.

Despite the reaffirmation of the Tannaitic policy of avoiding all contact with the *minim* there is evidence, both direct and indirect, of an intensifying dialogue. Stories of rabbis disputing with *minim* become more frequent. Like most dispute stories in rabbinic literature, these contain little of substance. The opponents are stereotyped, and, when named, usually called “Jacob”—a reflection, perhaps, of the popularity of this name among Jewish Christians because of James the brother of Jesus.⁵³ The Rabbi, of course, always has the last word. But these tales surely reflect genuine contact in situations where words might be exchanged, as well as unease about Christian mission to the Jews. And their themes probably correspond accurately enough to key issues in the Jewish-Christian debate. It is significant how often these dialogues involve quotation or exegesis of Scripture. A story in *b. Abod. Zar.* 4a throws interesting light on this. In it Rabbi Abbahu explains to Rav Sheshet that the rabbis in Palestine are more skilled in exegesis of Scripture than their Babylonian brethren because they live among the *minim* and have to refute their interpretations of Scripture. It is a striking fact that Palestinian Judaism has bequeathed to posterity a vastly richer tradition of Bible exegesis than Babylonian Judaism. All the major midrashim were compiled in Palestine, and references to Babylonian scholars interpreting Scripture are comparatively rare. The extant Midrashim are all post-Mishnaic collections dating, at their earliest, from the late third century C.E. The heyday of midrash, however, was the fourth to seventh centuries. The reasons for this outburst of Bible commentating in the Palestinian rabbinic schools has been much disputed. There may have been an inner theological logic to the development, namely the pressing need to ground the Mishnah (published around 210 C.E.) in Scripture, to unite the Oral and the Written Torahs. The Mishnah can be seen as having generated rabbinic literary activity in Amoraic Palestine by calling forth two great commentary projects. The first of these involved commenting on the Mishnah itself, and it resulted in the creation of the Palestinian Gemara, which regularly offers scriptural proof-texts for Mishnaic rulings. The second involved commenting on Scripture which was read in the light of the Mishnah, and resulted in a systematic rabbinic reading of most of the Hebrew Bible. However, if we are to take *b. Abod. Zar.* 4a seriously, then the growing dialogue with Christianity may have been a significant factor in the creation of Palestinian Midrash. As so often early rabbinic Judaism waltzes in step with early Christianity, because it was precisely in the same period that Christianity completed its enterprise, begun in the first century with a handful of key proof-texts and stories, to provide a Christian reading of the whole of the Old Testament. *b. Abod. Zar.* 4a provides a rabbinic justification for reading Midrash intertextually with the patristic Bible commentaries.

The social loci of conflict between the rabbis and the *minim* also subtly change. The synagogue seems to figure less prominently. This is hardly surprising.

⁵³ See further n. 33 above.

By the fourth century in Palestine the social and religious separation of the rabbinic and Christian communities would largely have been completed. The Jewish Christians had probably withdrawn into their own conventicles. It should be noted, however, that Amoraic sources show an interest in traditions about the creation of the Birkat Haminim. As we suggested above, this benediction probably does, as the texts claim, go back to the early second century C.E., but with the conversion of the empire to *minut* it took on a new relevance, and it is possible that the wording may have been strengthened to make the link between the *minim* and the “arrogant empire” more explicit.⁵⁴ Moreover, the term *minim* would probably now have been taken on all sides as referring specifically to Christians. We noted earlier that there is little evidence in the Tannaitic period that Jewish Christianity attempted to challenge the expertise of the rabbis in the field of law. The *Batei Din* were not a theatre of struggle between the parties. There is, however, at least one Amoraic source which seems to denigrate Christian judges, with the view perhaps of dissuading rabbinic Jews from resorting to Christian arbitration.⁵⁵ Again this makes historical sense. By the fourth century it is probable that the Jewish courts in the Jewish Christian areas would largely have been rabbinized, in a way that would not have been the case in the second century. This may, in turn, have forced the Christians to set up their own system of courts, a system that could, of course, have been used by rabbinical Jews. There is now good evidence for an extensive network of “native” courts and “native” legal systems operating in Syria-Palestine within the framework of Roman law. The Romans were content for these to deal with everyday civil matters in which Rome did not have an interest. But the existence of different systems created a legal market, and it is probable that people “shopped around” in the hope of getting the verdict they wanted. In fact, in practical matters the law administered in these courts might not have differed much. These systems of “native” law had interacted for centuries in the Middle East, and as a result a sort of local “common law” may have emerged. Resorting to non-rabbinic courts may, consequently, have had more symbolic than practical significance. But the issue was important to the rabbis: it involved a diminution of their authority, and led to the social interaction which they were striving to prevent. There is a strong tradition within rabbinic law that rabbinic Jews should not resort to non-rabbinic courts.

Deep concern continues to be expressed about the activity of Christian healers. The story about Eleazar ben Dama quoted in *t. Hul.* 2:22–23 (Text 7 above) is repeated with embellishments in *y. Šabb.* XIV, 14d, *y. ‘Abod. Zar.* II, 40d–41a and *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 27b. An interesting variation on it occurs in *y. Šabb.* XIV, 14d.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The precise alliance between “the kingdom” and *minut* envisaged in the wording of the benediction which we now have really makes little sense before the time of Constantine.

⁵⁵ See *b. Šabb.* 116a-b.

⁵⁶ Cf. *y. ‘Abod. Zar.* II, 40d and *Qoh. Rab.* 10.5 §1.

(Text 12)

- (A) The grandson [of rabbi Joshua ben Levi] had a choking fit.
- (B) There came a man and whispered [something] to him in the name of Yeshu ben Pandira, and he recovered.
- (C) When he [the man] came out, he [rabbi Joshua] said to him, “What did you whisper to him?” He said to him, “A certain word.”
- (D) He said: “It had been better for him to have died than that this should have happened.”
- (E) And it happened to him thus, *like an error that proceeds from the ruler* (Eccl 10:5).

The text is ambiguous at (D) and (E). It is possible that (E) should be taken as part of rabbi Joshua’s words: “but it has happened to him [my grandson] thus, like an error that proceeds from the ruler.” In other words, the Christian should not have said what he said, but his speech had power, just like the decrees of a king, which, even when said in error, will inevitably have consequences. Rabbi Joshua’s attitude might then be, “I would rather this had not happened, but since it has, so be it!” The alternative, more common, interpretation is reflected in the translation above. Rabbi Joshua’s utterance killed the boy, who had just been healed. He should not have said what he said. He was in error. But just as the word of the king has power, even when spoken in error, so had the word of Rabbi Joshua. If this is the correct reading, then it is hard not to detect here a nuancing of the Eleazar ben Dama tradition. In the case of Eleazar, the Christian healer was prevented from attempting a cure, and rabbi Eleazar died. Not letting the Christian healer into the house in the first place presumably remained the preferred rabbinic option. But if he is called in, and a cure effected (the ability of the Christian to cure the boy is not disputed!), then it should be accepted. Rabbis should behave responsibly and not undo the good that has been done. The story is deeply affecting: the audience would naturally react with horror and pity to the idea that the great rabbi thoughtlessly killed his own grandson. This suggests a softening of attitude towards Christian healing. But at the same time we should not ignore the hidden menace in the tale. The Christian healer had the power of performative speech, but so too did the rabbi—even to the extent of being able to cause death! The rabbi matches, indeed overmatches, the power of the Christian healer. Be careful not to cross the rabbis!

This latter point chimes in well with the transformation in the Amoraic period of the rabbinic Sage into a much more charismatic figure. In Tannaitic times the rabbi was a scholar pure and simple: his authority rested on his knowledge of Torah and his ability to interpret it. In keeping with this the Tannaitic sources show a deep aversion to anything that smacks of magic. In the Amoraic period, however, the rabbi becomes decidedly more charismatic, much closer to the *magus*. The Torah that he knows is seen as a source of enormous “magical”

power. The texts begin to show a deep interest in stories preserved within rabbinic tradition about early wonderworkers such as Haninah ben Dosa and Honi the Circle-drawer.⁵⁷ Rabbis are regularly depicted as being in contest with various charismatic figures—magicians, healers, dream-interpreters, and wonder-workers of various kinds. A interesting case of this is found in *y. Sanh.* VII, 25d:

(Text 13)

- (A) Once rabbi Eleazar, rabbi Joshua and rabbi Aqiva⁵⁸ went to bathe in the public baths of Tiberias.
- (B) They saw a *min* who said what he said and the vault [of the baths] held them fast. Rabbi Eleazar said to rabbi Joshua: “What, Joshua ben Hananiah, do you see that you can do?” When the *min* went to go out rabbi Joshua said what he said and the doorway held him fast, so that everyone who came in gave him a punch [on the front] and everyone who went out gave him a blow [on the back].
- (C) He said to them: “Release what you have done.” They said to him: “You release and we will release.” They both released.
- (D) When they had gone out, rabbi Joshua said, “Well, how clever you are!” He said, “Let us go down to the sea.”
- (E) When they had gone down to the sea, the *min* said what he said and the sea was divided. He said to them, “Did not Moses your Master do this to the sea?” They said to him, “Will you not agree with us that Moses our Master walked in the midst of it?” He said to them, “Yes.” They said to him, “Then you walk in the midst of it.” He walked in the midst of it. And rabbi Joshua commanded the Prince of the Sea, and it swallowed him up.

Here is no dispute about the interpretation of Scripture, though the *min*, who is probably a Jewish Christian, knows something about the Bible. Rather we have a straight fight of *magus* against *magus*, which the rabbinic *magus*, of course, wins. Rabbi Joshua does not refute the *min* with a well-aimed proof-text from Scripture. Rather he kills him, because he knows how to invoke the angel in charge of the sea. Hand in hand with this development went a re-evaluation of magic, the upshot of which was the claim that the rabbis possessed magical powers. So long as the “magic” was performed by them, it was *kosher*, but if it was performed by anyone else, then it remained a capital offense.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Geza Vermes, “Hanina ben Dosa,” in his *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (SJLA 8; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 178–214; Baruch M. Bokser, “Wonder-Working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Hanina Ben Dosa,” *JJS* 14 (1985): 42–92. See especially *b. Ta'an.* 24b–25a, and Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity*, 75–79. Further, William Scott Green, “Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Roman Tradition,” in *ANRW* II.19.2 (1979): 619–47.

⁵⁸ It is interesting that rabbi Akiba plays no part in the subsequent action. Perhaps the story has been reworked by someone who was aware of the tradition that Akiba was opposed to magic (see *m. Sanh.* 10:1, Text 2 above).

⁵⁹ See especially *b. Sanh.* 67b.

Certainly historical realities are reflected here. The fifth and sixth centuries saw the emergence in the Levant of a cult of holy men, charismatic wonder-workers, particularly in Christianity.⁶⁰ Jews would doubtless have come into contact with these people, and would have been as susceptible as anyone else to their appeal. As we have already noted, the ethos in most communities would have been deeply syncretistic. Ordinary people would have been inclined to venerate a holy man and wonder-worker, whatever his religious affiliation. They would have gone to any prominent soothsayer or healer in time of trouble, and would not have been in the least fastidious about whether or not he belonged to their own religious community. This fact is illustrated dramatically by the magical texts which survive from the late antique Middle East. The Jewish and the Christian religious authorities deeply disapproved of this syncretism, which muddled up the traditions, and posed a challenge to their power. They had a vested interest in keeping their communities apart, in resisting intermingling. Part of the rabbinic response to this challenge was to claim that in fact the rabbis possessed the same magical powers. Indeed, through their access to the Torah of Moses, the instrument by which the world was created, they had access to the ultimate source of magical power.

3.3. The Emerging Rabbinic Theology of Christianity

The fourth and fifth century rabbinic sources not only reflect subtle changes in the social relationships of rabbinic Jews and Christians. They also testify to the beginnings of a rabbinic attempt to engage more directly with Christianity at an intellectual level. The engagement is seldom profound or well informed, but it represents a sea change from the time of the Tannaim, who showed little interest in serious theological debate with Christians. The Amoraim have begun to develop a rudimentary theology of Christianity, which is manifested not only in explicit *theologoumena*, but also in more frequent intertextual allusions to Christianity in rabbinic exegesis.

3.3.1. Who is Esau?

One interesting sign that the rabbis were beginning to reflect more deeply on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is found in Amoraic treatments

⁶⁰This phenomenon has been studied among others by Peter Brown: see his seminal essay, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101, and further his *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55–78. I am not ignoring the differences between the Christian holy men and the rabbis. Certainly it is hard to think of anyone in the rabbinic tradition quite so flamboyant as Symeon Stylites. However, what does seem to be the case is that the later Amoraic rabbis are invested with more charismatic powers than their Tannaitic predecessors. In the world of the fifth and sixth centuries the scholar, however great he might have been, seemed a poor champion when faced with such vivid and powerful wonder-workers as the Christian holy men. His image had to be strengthened.

of the Jacob and Esau cycle of stories in the Hebrew Bible.⁶¹ Christian writers had, of course, seized on these stories to claim that the church had superseded the synagogue, just as Jacob had superseded Esau. The rabbis turned this on its head, arguing that actually it is Esau who represents the church: “Rabbi Aha said in the name of rabbi Huna: In the time to come, Esau the wicked will wrap himself in his *tallit* and sit with the righteous in Gan ‘Eden. But the Holy One, blessed be he, will drag him and put him out from there” (*y. Ned.* III, 38a). Involved here is a rebuttal of the church’s claim to be the true Israel. God will finally expose her for the impostor that she is. If the reference to the *tallit* (the prayer shawl) is to be taken at face value then presumably Jewish Christianity is specifically in view. This would make sense, since what particularly exercised the rabbis was the fact that Jewish Christians could easily pass themselves off as Jews, and so were a greater danger to rabbinical Jews. Gentile Christianity was manifestly “false” and therefore less of a threat.

The equation of Esau with the church has a number of interesting implications. It is hardly surprising that *Christian* writers should have exploited the Jacob-Esau stories. The chronology is tailor-made to fit their views, and can readily support supersessionism. But identifying Christianity with the *elder* brother is obviously problematic, and seems to call into question one of the rabbis’ most basic anti-Christian arguments, namely that *they* represented the old faith: *they* were maintaining loyally the Torah Judaism of the Bible. By identifying Judaism with Esau, Christianity was, to a degree, affording legitimacy to Judaism. But mainline Christianity was willing to do this, since it was always conscious of a debt to ancient Judaism, and exploited its historical links with Judaism to validate its own position. However, when the Amoraic rabbis reversed the equation, there were some paradoxical results. They were offering, albeit in a rather back-handed way, a degree of recognition to Christianity that would probably have surprised their Tannaitic forebears. They appear to be publicly acknowledging that Judaism and Christianity *are* siblings—both heirs of Abraham and Isaac. The way was thus opened to explore on the basis of a shared grand narrative the relationship between the two traditions.⁶²

⁶¹ See Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (trans. H. Szold; 7 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–1938; repr., Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1:309–424.

⁶² See Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 2–6 and passim. Further, Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca’s Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986). The blackening of Esau’s, and indeed of Laban’s, character in the Midrash should surely be seen in the light of this Jewish-Christian debate. On Laban see the doctoral dissertation of Karin Zetterholm, *Portrait of a Villain: Laban the Aramean in Rabbinic Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002). See further Gerson D. Cohen, “Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought,” in *Jewish Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* (ed. A. Altmann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 19–48; Israel Jacob Yuval, “*Two Nations in Your Womb*: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

3.3.2. Jesus ben Pandira

Amoraic sources also show increased interest in the figure of Jesus. Though there are fleeting references in Tannaitic texts to Yeshu(a) ben Pandira and Yeshu(a) ben Stada (both derogatory soubriquets of Jesus of Nazareth, the precise meaning of which remains in dispute), it is not until the Amoraic period that we find any serious attempt in rabbinic texts to tell the story of Jesus and to provide a rabbinic answer to the Gospels.⁶³ This development was to culminate in the early Middle Ages in the *Toledot Yeshu*. The stories are for the most part scurrilous and ill-informed even as to basic facts. Jesus is misdated either to the first century B.C.E. (*b. Sanh.* 107a–107b, Text 14 below), or to the early second century C.E. One tradition has him killed in Lod, and assumes that it was the Jewish authorities who put him to death by stoning and hanging (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 67a). However, it is noticeable how two more serious themes dominate these traditions. First there is considerable emphasis on the mother of Jesus. She tends to be depicted as a woman of ill-repute, and Jesus as a *mamzer*. This must surely involve a rabbinic counter to the doctrine of the virgin birth, and, possibly, to the growing role of Mary in Christianity. Second, there is an attempt to define Jesus' standing in Jewish law, and thereby to justify his execution. The overwhelming view is that he was a magician who attempted to lead Israel astray. Involved here are two capital offenses. This view is clearly reflected in a much discussed passage in *b. Sanh.* 107a–107b (par. *b. Soṭah* 47a):

(Text 13)

- (A) Our rabbis taught: Always let the left hand thrust away and the right hand draw near.
- (B) Not like Elisha who thrust away Gehazi with both hands, nor like rabbi Joshua ben Perahiah who thrust away Yeshu ha-Nosri with both hands.
- (C) What was the case of Elisha? . . . [Story of Elisha and Gehazi.]
- (D) What was the case of rabbi Joshua ben Perahiah?
- (E) When King Yannai put the rabbis to death, [Shim'on ben Shetah was hidden by his sister and] rabbi Joshua ben Perahiah and Yeshu fled to Alexandria in Egypt.

⁶³In addition to Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 35–96, see: Gustav Dalman and Heinrich Laible, *Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, and the Liturgy of the Synagogue. Texts and Translations by . . . Gustav Dalman, . . . Together with an Introductory Essay by Heinrich Laible* (trans. and ed. A. W. Streane; Deighton, Bell and Co.; Cambridge, 1983); L. Patterson, “Origin of the Name Panthera,” *JTS* 19 (1918), 79–80; Jacob Z. Lauterbach, “Jesus in the Talmud,” in his *Rabbinic Essays* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College Press, 1951; repr., Ktav: New York, 1973), 473–570; Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978).

(F) When there was peace, Shim'on ben Shetah sent [a letter] to him: "From me, the Holy City (Jerusalem) to you Alexandria in Egypt, my sister. My husband dwells in your midst while I sit desolate!"

(G) Rabbi Joshua arose to go back and chanced upon a certain inn.

(H) They showed him great honor, and he said, "How beautiful is this *akhsanya* [= inn *and* innkeeper]!" Yeshu said to him: "Rabbi her eyes are narrow!" He replied: "Wretch is this how you employ yourself?"

(I) He sent out four hundred horns and excommunicated him.

(J) Yeshu came before him on many occasions, saying, "Receive me back!" But he took no notice of him.

(K) One day, while rabbi Joshua was reciting the *Shema*^c, Yeshu came before him. His intention was to receive him back, and he made a sign to him with his hand, but Yeshu thought that he was repelling him. He went away, set up a brick and worshipped it.

(L) Rabbi Joshua said to him: "Return!" but he replied: "Thus have I received from you, that everyone who sins and who causes the congregation [*ha-rabbim*] to sin is deprived of the ability to repent."

(M) Mar said: Yeshu ha-Nosri practiced magic and led Israel astray.

It is not possible to enter into all the complexities of this tradition here, but several points are relevant for our present argument.

(1) The tradition-history is complex. The story of Jesus and Joshua ben Perahiah (D-M) is found exclusively in Babylonian sources. The parallel in the Yerushalmi (*y. Sanh.* X, 29b) has only the story of Elisha and Gehazi (A-C). This is puzzling, since we would have expected western rabbinic sources to have taken a closer interest in Christianity than eastern, because Christianity bulked larger in their world than in the east. However, as we noted earlier, this follows a general pattern in which it is the eastern rabbinic sources which on the whole preserve western anti-Christian traditions. I suspect that (D-M) is western in origin and reflects western tradition. It is not impossible that (D-M) was omitted deliberately in the western texts in an act of self-censorship. If this is the case, then it could actually testify to the stronger presence of Christianity in the west. The Babylonians could retain the story, because they had less reason to fear the power of Christianity. Certainly M, the "punch-line" of the unit, though transmitted in the name of an eastern authority (cf. *b. Sanh.* 43a), represents western opinion.

(2) Though the death of Jesus is justified on the grounds that he committed two capital offenses according to the Torah of Moses (practising magic and leading Israel astray), there is a clear and surprising note of self-criticism in the rabbinic tale. Rabbi Joshua intended to receive Jesus back, but he did not make his intention clear enough. As a result Jesus went off and committed the unforgivable sin, and so was deprived of the possibility of returning. There is condemnation of

the severity of the Rabbi: he over-reacted to Jesus' peccadillo (excommunication with "four hundred horns" no less), and look what happened next! Jesus was more of a simpleton, who proclaimed his own damnation (L), than a deeply wicked person. There is surely real regret here for the split between Judaism and Christianity, and a shouldering by the rabbinic establishment of some of the blame.

(3) The convergence of the story with Christian sources suggests that it echoes real debate. Already in the New Testament Jesus is described by his Pharisaic opponents as a "deceiver" (Matt 27:63–64), and as a magician who cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul (Mark 3:28; Matt 12:31). The latter charge is seen by the Christian sources as constituting the unforgivable sin.⁶⁴

3.3.3. Two Powers

We have already noted the emergence of a polemic against the doctrine of Two Powers in Heaven in the Tannaitic period. Originally this involved a broad defense of rabbinic monotheism against any position that advocated more than one God. By the end of the Tannaitic period, however, this polemic has become targeted specifically on binitarianism, and Christianity seems to be primarily in view.⁶⁵ This sharpening of focus continues in the Amoraic sources, which show a growing interest in Two Powers speculation. It has been argued that at least some of the Amoraic Two Powers traditions may be directed against gnostics, but this is implausible, since the two powers are usually depicted as working in concert, in a way that would not fit the relationship between the Father and the Demiurge in Gnosticism. It is much better to see these texts as reflecting in some way the fierce and very public debates in Christianity in the fourth century about the divinity of Christ. A richly instructive case is found in *b. Sanh.* 38b:

(Text 14)

- (A) R. Nahman said: He who is skilled in refuting the *minim* as was R. Idi should do so, but not otherwise.
- (B) Once a *min* said to R. Idi: "It is written, *And to Moses he said, Come up to the Lord*" (Exod 24:1). But surely it should have said, "*Come up to me!*"
- (C) He replied: "That was Metatron, whose name is similar to that of his Master, for it is written, *For my name is in him* (Exod 23:21)."

⁶⁴ See further, Stephen Gero, "The Stern Master and His Wayward Disciple: A "Jesus" Story in the Talmud and in Christian Hagiography," *JSJ* 25 (1994): 287–311.

⁶⁵ One might ask why, if the Amoraic sources are reflecting the Trinitarian debates of the fourth and fifth centuries, the reference is not to *Three Powers* in Heaven? Several possible answers come to mind. The first is that the rabbis shared with Christians a belief in the holy spirit (the *ruah ha-qodesh*) as an agent of God. The rabbinic doctrine was not, to be sure, developed, nor did the rabbis regard the holy spirit as a divine person, but they were not going to appear to deny the divine agency of the spirit. Second, the rabbinic sources are probably accurately reflecting the focus of the Trinitarian controversy in the fourth and fifth centuries on the status of the Son. The real debate over the status of the Spirit came later.

(D) “But if so, we should worship him!”

(E) R. Idi replied: “The same passage, however, says, *Do not be rebellious against him* [i.e., do not exchange me for him].”

(F) But if so, why is it stated: *He will not pardon your transgression?* (Exod 23:21).

(G) He answered: “In truth we would not accept him even as a messenger [*parvanka*], for it is written, *And he said to him, If your presence does not go with us* (Exod 33:15).

The *min* here notes that the precise language in Exod 24:1 seems to imply the presence of a second party who invites Moses to “come up to the Lord.” That party must in context be a figure of great power and authority to issue such an invitation; indeed he must be a heavenly figure, given the rabbinic belief (which the *min* doubtless shared) that Moses ascended *into heaven* to receive the Torah. He identifies the second party with the Angel of the Lord mentioned just before (Exod 23:20–23). The rabbi accepts that the language implies a second party, and that he should be identified with the Angel of the Lord. It is actually the rabbi who makes this link, which the *min* does not dispute, not surprisingly, since, on the face of it, it helps his case. The point at issue, then, turns on the status of the second party. Though the Two Powers formula is not used, the *min* clearly wants to suggest that the Angel of the Lord is a “second power,” an exalted heavenly being, who should be worshipped, since God’s name is in him, and since he pardons sins, a power exercised by God alone (cf. Josh 24:19). The Rabbi, in reply, identifies the heavenly being with the archangel Metatron, and argues that Scripture actually warns against treating this heavenly being as a second power. He cleverly puns on the words “Do not be rebellious against him” in Exod 23:21 to suggest that they mean “Do not exchange me for him,” “Do not equate him with me,” and he invokes Exod 33:15 to show that the Angel of the Lord was not so important. What actually mattered to Israel in the wilderness was God’s own presence.

The subtlety and seriousness of the debate here is striking. The rabbi does not have it all his own way. His clinching argument at G is, in fact, weak. It involves virtually a bald negation of Exod 23:20–21, and is open to the obvious riposte that if Exod 33:15 is harmonized with Exod 23:20–21, then one must conclude that the Angel of the Lord *is* the presence of God, which reinforces the *min*’s case. We are surely dealing here with a real dispute. The most obvious context for that dispute was the attempt by Christian exegetes to find in the Old Testament manifestations of the pre-incarnate Christ. The rabbi denies that the Angel of the Lord is a “messenger.” He uses the Persian loanword *parvanka*. The choice of term is precise and surprising. He does not use the Hebrew *shaliah*, probably because to deny that Angel of the Lord was the Lord’s agent (*shaliah*) would be virtually a contradiction in terms. *Parvanka* must suggest something more than *shaliah*. It is probably being used in a soteriological sense. The rabbi is

denying that the Angel of the Lord was Israel's "deliverer": it was God who saved Israel from Egypt. Again this would make sense against a Christian typological reading of the Exodus: just as the pre-incarnate Christ in the person of the Angel of the Lord delivered the Israelites from Egypt and brought them to the promised land, so in the present dispensation he will deliver the souls of those who trust in him and bring them to the heavenly country.

It is tempting to suppose that this unit is directed not against the Christians but against the Heikhalot mystics within the rabbinic camp, who exalted the figure of Metatron. It is unlikely, however, that this was the original thrust of the argument. It should be recalled that it is the rabbi who introduces Metatron, not the *min*. The naming must be part of the polemic: what it implies is: "No, the Angel of the Lord is not X, which you claim, but rather Metatron." Metatron excludes the opponent's implied identification. However, the unit would also secondarily serve, and was apparently subsequently seen as serving, to admonish those mystics who accorded inordinate powers to Metatron. There was certainly unease in rabbinic circles about the status of Metatron: this is reflected in the famous story about how the arch-heretic Elisha ben Avuya (Aher) mistook him for a Second Power—a story which was incorporated into the Heikhalot literature in an act of self-correction (*b. Hag.* 15a; *3 En.* 16:1–5⁶⁶). But that is not the primary intention in *b. Sanh.* 38b. The figure of Metatron probably arose in connection with rabbinic speculation on the Angel of the Lord in Exod 23:20–23. The name "Metatron" is derived from the Latin *metator*, a term used in the Roman army for the officer who went ahead of the army on the march to ensure that the next campsite was prepared. The Angel of the Lord acted as Israel's *metator*, her guide and forerunner during the wilderness wanderings. In the mystical circles, however, the figure of Metatron was further developed, and by linking him with other archangels, he became in some mystical texts a second God. This development from a rabbinic perspective was clearly dangerous. It is also suspiciously christological. The parallels between the exalted Metatron and the exalted Christ are striking, and have been rightly noted by a number of scholars.⁶⁷ A background to this evolved figure of Metatron in the christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries is entirely plausible. Again the intention may be polemical. Metatron is being built up as a substitute for the exalted Christ, but to function adequately as a substitute he must have Christ's powers. This is a high risk strategy, which clearly worried some rabbis. If this reading of the evidence is even half correct then it strongly suggests that christological speculation was known within the rabbinic milieu, and attempts were made to rebut it. It also lifts the

⁶⁶ Philip S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *JSJ* 18 (1987): 41–68, esp. 54–66.

⁶⁷ See further, Philip S. Alexander, "3 Enoch," in *OTP* 1:243–44; A. Murtonen, "The Figure of Metatron," *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953): 409–11; Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," *HTR* 76 (1983): 269–88; Daniel Abrams, "The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead," *HTR* 87 (1994): 291–321.

curtain on an intense, but largely hidden, theological debate between the rabbis and the Christians.

3.3.4. *The Two Torahs and the Doctrine of Semikhah*

The development of a full-blown doctrine of the Two Torahs in the Amoraic period should also probably be seen as a response to the growing power of Christianity, and as part of the evolving rabbinic theology of Christianity. It is striking how muted this doctrine (which was to become one of the cornerstones of rabbinic orthodoxy) is in Tannaitic sources. The *locus classicus* for it in Tannaitic texts, the famous Chain of Tradition in *Pirqe 'Abot* 1, significantly does not speak of Oral Torah (*Torah she-be'al peh*), though clearly its concept of Torah is a complex one and embraces more than simply the written text of the Torah of Moses. That the Chain of Tradition is polemical can hardly be doubted. Its purpose is to assert that the rabbis have the true teaching. In this respect, as has often been pointed out, it is paralleled by similar chains of tradition within the Greek schools.⁶⁸ It is also specifically intended to legitimate the political authority of the House of Judah the Patriarch, the names of whose family have been added to the original list. In this respect there is an obvious parallel with Christian texts giving chains of apostolic succession, or of bishoprics, the purpose of which was to bolster the claims of certain churches or traditions to represent Orthodoxy.⁶⁹ The Chain of Tradition, however, was probably not originally aimed specifically at Christianity. It was primarily intended to assert the authority of the Rabbinate and the Patriarchate against a range of potential deniers and challengers.

The developed doctrine of the Oral Torah in the Amoraic period does seem to have a more obviously anti-Christian function. The doctrine of the Two Torahs is a thoroughly polemical construct. It tends to be mentioned explicitly only in apologetic contexts. It does not figure in inner rabbinic debates. The rabbinic distinction between laws which are *de-'oraita* and those which are *de-rabbanan* mirrors it to some degree, but that distinction was more jurisprudential than theological. That the rabbis were the authoritative interpreters of the Torah would simply have been taken for granted within the schools. That claim only needed defending when it was challenged by outsiders. The doctrine of the two Torahs within the classic rabbinic sources is remarkably vague and undeveloped, as the mediaeval Jewish theologians were later to discover. It takes the form more of an assertion, or a *credo*, than a clearly worked out theological position. It begs a lot of questions. Just what was passed on orally to Moses on Sinai, which he then passed on to Joshua, and so on, down to the present day? Was it the *whole* of the rabbinic tradition verbatim? But if so, why is so much of that tradition transmitted in the names of rabbinic authorities who lived in recent times? Or was it only the correct principles of interpretation (the hermeneutical *midot* and how to use

⁶⁸ See Elias J. Bickerman, "La chaîne de la tradition pharisienne," *RB* 59 (1952): 44–54.

⁶⁹ Note, e.g., the Jerusalem bishops list, on which see Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 70–78.

them) that were passed on? And how was Torah “passed on”? Was some sort of sacramental transmission of authority involved, symbolized by the laying on of hands, in virtue of which the rabbinic authorities when deliberating together could be assured that they would discover the truth? Though as individuals they did not, like the prophets of old, possess the holy spirit, in a sense the spirit still operated within the collectivity of the Sages and ensured that they reached the truth.

The doctrine of ordination in rabbinic Judaism goes hand in hand with the doctrine of oral transmission of the Torah. It helps to give concrete expression to the concept of “transmission.” Rabbinic ordination develops in the Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition only in the post-70 period. Originally it seems to have been performed by the laying on of hands. This is indicated by the early rabbinic term used for it, *semikhah*, which recalls the use of the verb *samakh* in Num 27:18 (“Take you Joshua the son of Nun . . . and lay [*ve-samakhta*] your hand upon him”). This suggests a sacramental transfer of power and authority (see Deut 34:9, and cf. the use of the verb *samakh* in Lev 1:4 for the transfer of the sin of the worshipper to the sacrificial animal). The same means of ordination was, of course, used by Christians to appoint bishops and other clergy, and in the Christian case the sacramental transfer of power and authority is clear. Later, however, the rabbis seem to have dropped the custom of laying on of hands, while retaining the term *semikhah*, though the term *minnui*, “appointment,” also came into use, perhaps because *semikhah* was no longer literally accurate. Instead rabbis seem to have been ordained by proclamation.⁷⁰ The reason for this change of practice may well have been to differentiate rabbinic from Christian ordination.⁷¹ However, the point continued to be stressed that no-one could interpret the Torah correctly who had not studied with teachers, who in turn had studied with teachers, in an unbroken chain of tradition going all the way back to Moses. The teachings of the Sages constituted a Second Torah which had its origin, every bit as much as the first Torah, at Sinai.

Scripture represented common ground between the rabbis and their Christian opponents, and, as we have seen, much of the debate turned on arguments over its meaning. That gave the impression that the disagreements could be solved by exegesis. Whoever had the better exegesis would win the argument. Both sides, however, rapidly realized that exegesis was never in the end going to

⁷⁰ That the laying on of hands was discontinued is evident (as Maimonides correctly observes, *Yad: Sanhedrin* 4.2), but when precisely this happened is not clear. Cf. *b. Sanh.* 5a-b. In the end the formula of ordination came to be: *Yoreh yoreh. Yadin yadin. Yattir yattir*, “May he decide? He may decide. May he judge? He may judge. May he permit? He may permit.”

⁷¹ The rabbis seem inconsistently to have used *both* rejection and assimilation to counter Christian influence and to forge a distinctive rabbinic identity. Sometimes they rejected or modified an earlier Jewish belief or practice precisely because the Christians had adopted it. At other times, however, they consciously assimilated rabbinic belief or practice to Christian in order to provide a *rabbinic* alternative for their followers.

prove anything to the satisfaction of the other party. Both, therefore, resorted to doctrines which bluntly asserted, without objective proof, the correctness of their respective positions. On the Christian side there were the inter-related doctrines of ordination and the apostolic tradition; on the rabbinic side there were the inter-related doctrines of *semikhah* and the Oral Torah. The two positions are mirror images and almost certainly reflect mutual influence. A text in *Tanhuma, Vayyera'* 6 (ed. Buber II, 88) aptly sums up the rabbinic view:⁷²

(Text 15)

(A) Rabbi Judah bar Simon said: *I have made a covenant with you and with Israel* (Exod 34:27)—both in writing and by word of mouth: *for these words are by mouth.*

(B) If you preserve what is in writing in writing and what is by word of mouth by word of mouth, then I have made a covenant with you, but if you change what is by mouth into writing and what is in writing into word of mouth, then I have not made a covenant with you.

(C) R. Judah b. R. Shallum the Levite said: Moses wanted also the Mishnah to be in writing, but the Holy One foresaw that the nations of the world ('*ummot ha-'olam*) would one day translate the Torah and read it in Greek, and would then say: "We too are Israel."

The Holy One said to him: *Shall I write the fullness of my Torah for you?* (Hos 8:12). If so, *they would have been reckoned as strangers.*

(D) And why all this? Because the Mishnah is a mystery (Gk. *mysterion*) belonging to the Holy One, and the Holy One reveals his mystery only to the righteous, as it is said, *The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him* (Ps 25:14).

Here God is pictured as having to decide between two parties claiming to be Israel. The "nations of the world" (i.e., Gentile Christianity) will claim to be Israel because they have the Torah, and the Jews will claim to be Israel because they have the Torah. How will God resolve the matter? He will in effect say: They are the true Israel who possess my mysteries. And what are God's "mysteries"? The Mishnah and the Oral Torah.

3.3.5. Intertextuality: The case of the Akedah

In parallel with the greater overt interest in Christianity in the Amoraic sources we also find more evidence of intertextuality, that is to say passages, usually in the Midrashim, where Christianity seems to be the hidden interlocutor. As we noted earlier, intertextuality of this kind is by definition hard to prove, and minimalists will always be inclined to argue that it is imagined, or that other explanations are possible for the alleged allusions. The minimum condition for asserting intertextuality must be that there is external evidence that the author could have known the text or tradition supposedly alluded to. That rabbinical

⁷²Cf. *Exodus Rabbah* 47.1; *b. Hag.* 13a; *b. Ketubbot* 111a.

Jews in the Amoraic period were aware of Christian doctrine and exegesis is well documented, so the minimum requirement can in this case be deemed to be met.

An interesting case of such intertextuality is the story of the Binding of Isaac (the Akedah: Gen 22:1–19). It is noticeable that in Amoraic sources Isaac takes on in certain Midrashim remarkably Christlike features. Some texts stress that his blood was actually shed (*Mekilta deRabbi Shim'on bar Yohai*⁷³)—a motif not found in the biblical story, which seems to go out of its way to deny that blood was drawn. In some traditions he is actually killed and brought back to life again (*Pirqe R. El.* 31). The wood which he carries to the altar becomes a cross (*Gen. Rab.* 56.3). He is transformed into an active player in the drama and the meritousness of his act atones for the sins of Israel and is invoked by Israel in prayer (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Gen 22:14).⁷⁴ The tradition-history is complex, and hotly contested. It would be wrong, I think, to suggest that these developments were solely due to Christian influence. The seeds of them lie far back in history before the Christian era. Arguably they are already found in the biblical text itself. The locating of the Akedah on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (implicit in Gen 22:14, and explicit in 2 Chr 3:1) has immense potential. It surely is intended to hint that the efficacy of the temple sacrifices lies in the fact that they are a sacramental re-enactment of the sacrifice of Isaac. It is Isaac's offering that atones, not, in itself, the slaughter of dumb animals. It is probable that sophisticated Jerusalem priests were already developing this line of thought in the Second Temple period as part of an attempt to provide a more spiritual understanding of the temple cult. It is entirely possible, as many have argued, that the early Christians took up some of these ideas and used them in their Christology. *Christ's* death was seen as atoning for the sins of Israel. It was *his* merit that availed. The animal sacrifices offered in the temple were understood not so much as looking back to

⁷³ Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial. On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah* (New York: Behrman House, 1979), 45–50.

⁷⁴ The classic study of the Akedah remains Spiegel, *The Last Trial*. See further: Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (StPB 4; 2d rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 193–227; P. R. Davies and B. D. Chilton, “The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 514–46. The debate with Christianity over the Akedah continued with even greater intensity into the Middle Ages, as the sources analysed by Spiegel clearly show. Note, e.g., the tenth century *Aggadat Bere’shit* 31 (ed. Buber 64): “When [Abraham] came to slay [Isaac], the Holy One immediately felt compassion and cried: *Do not lay your hand upon the lad* (Gen 22:12). R. Abin said in the name of R. Hilkiah: How foolish is the heart of the deceivers who say that the Holy One has a son. If in the case of Abraham’s son, when he saw that he came to slaughter him, he could not see him in pain, but at once cried out: *Do not lay your hand upon the lad*, [how much more], had he himself had a son, would he [not] have abandoned him, but would have overturned the world and reduced it to chaos [*tohubohu*]. Therefore Solomon says: *There is one and there is no second; he does not have a son or brother* (Eccl 4:8). It is only out of his love for Israel that he calls them ‘his sons,’ as it is stated: *Israel is my firstborn son* (Exod 4:22).” See Lieve M. Teugels, “The Background of the Anti-Christian Polemics in *Aggadat Bere’shit*,” *JSJ* 30 (1999): 178–208.

the sacrifice of Isaac as looking forward to the one, true effective offering of Christ, and the Akedah itself became a typological foreshadowing of the crucifixion. The rabbis reasserted the primacy of the sacrifice of *Isaac*. Whatever Christ was supposed to have done had already been done by Isaac. There was no need of another offering. To make this point, however, they had to assimilate Isaac to Christ. The intertwining of the Christian and the rabbinic traditions here is striking, but the fact remains that the Christlike Isaac seems to be confined to Amoraic rabbinic sources. It is only in the Amoraic period that the dialogue with Christianity reaches a level of intensity and engagement that makes such intertextuality possible. The question remains why some rabbis seem to have felt the need to develop a doctrine of the atoning offering of Isaac. Were they simply trying to score a debating point against the Christians? Were they seriously concerned that Jews would have been seduced by the Gospel? Did they feel that the doctrine of divine mercy and forgiveness in answer to repentance (on which their Tannaitic predecessors would have relied) was in some way inadequate and needed strengthening by a doctrine of the Akedah? It does not seem any longer possible to say.

4. General Conclusions

The classic rabbinic literature of the Talmudic period reveals less about the concrete details of Jewish Christianity than one might have hoped. More information can doubtless be squeezed out of the evidence that we have considered, if we correlate it fully and systematically with Christian sources, but this study has deliberately limited itself to the rabbinic texts. Yet even if we invoke the comparative material the yield of hard historical and social data is still likely to be meagre. We catch a glimpse here and there of Jewish Christians in Palestine living side-by-side with rabbinical Jews, socializing at various levels, attending the same synagogues in the early period, buying and selling, participating in the same communal occasions such as marriages, frequenting the same communal baths, discussing and arguing in the street about the interpretation of Torah. We hear of Christian healers who healed rabbinical Jews in the name of Jesus. But the picture remains fuzzy.

One reason for this, as we argued, was the deliberate decision of the rabbis to ignore Christianity as much as they could. From the Tannaitic period they adopted the strategy of trying to separate rabbinical Jews and Christians, to acknowledge as little as possible the existence of Christianity as a living movement in their environment. Nevertheless, the rabbinic evidence, such as it is, is vital for understanding the fate of Jewish Christianity. It shows how the rabbinic movement politically outmaneuvered Jewish Christianity within the Jewish communities, first in Palestine and then in the Diaspora, till by the fifth century Jewish Christianity seems virtually to have disappeared, and Rabbinism to have triumphed comprehensively. The rabbinic movement entered the post-70 period as

only one of a number of parties bidding for power in Israel. It set out to define itself as Jewish orthodoxy. It categorized the groups which opposed it, including the Jewish Christians, as heretical. By the beginning of the third century it probably had largely stamped its authority on the synagogues, on the law courts, on the educational system and more generally on Jewish society. Jewish Christianity, as a result, was increasingly marginalized.

Curiously, however, from the late third century onwards, just when the triumph of rabbinism was beginning to look assured, at least in Palestine, the rabbinic sources become more open about Christianity, more directly engaged with it. This may well be a measure of the rabbis' confidence, but it would also have become more and more difficult to ignore Christianity, especially after the time of Constantine, when the Roman empire "went over to *minut*." However, this engagement with Christianity was probably largely with *Gentile* Christianity, rather than with *Jewish* Christianity. Increasingly pressurized by rabbinic Judaism, effectively abandoned by the Gentile churches who doubted its orthodoxy, Jewish Christianity as an identifiable entity seems by the fifth century to have all but disappeared, at least in the main centers of Jewish population in the Mediterranean world and the Levant.

Archaeological Evidence of Jewish Believers?

James F. Strange

1. Previous Studies

One of the first names to gain international recognition for research into archaeological remains understood to be “Jewish Christian” was that of Charles Clermont-Ganneau. In 1883 Clermont-Ganneau published a brief article in the *Revue Archéologique* on the discovery of inscribed ossuaries from the Hill of Offence (Bâtn el-Hawa) in Jerusalem.¹ These ossuaries were inscribed with proper names in Hebrew and Greek (e.g., *Yehuda*, *Shim'on*, *Yeshua'*, *Shlomzion*, *Hedea*, *Iesous*, etc.), but some were also inscribed with equal armed crosses. Clermont-Ganneau interpreted the remains as evidence that an ancient Jewish family had embraced Christianity. Henri Leclercq popularized this interpretation among many scholars in the *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie* (1937).²

The subject matter continued to receive attention from a few scholars from time to time. For example in 1919 K. Schmalz wrote a description of the sacred caves of Bethlehem (birth), Nazareth (youth), and Jerusalem (burial), associating them with the earliest Christian (Jewish) generations.³ Albrecht Alt reported on an inscription from Tafas across the Jordan in 1929 (which mentioned a synagogue), calling it “a monument of Judeo-Christianity?”⁴ Others contributed studies of certain archaeological remains, such as Jean-Baptiste Frey in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum*, but without connecting them explicitly with something called “Jewish Christianity.”⁵

¹C. Clermont-Ganneau, “Epigraphes hébraïques et grecques sur des ossuaires juifs inédits,” *Revue d’assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* 3 (1883): 257–68.

²H. Leclercq, “Ossuaires,” *DACL* 13:1 (1937): 22–27.

³K. Schmalz, “Die drei ‘mystischen’ Christushöhlen der Geburt, der Jüngerweihe und des Grabes,” *ZDPV* 42 (1919): 132–65.

⁴Albrecht Alt, “Ein Denkmal des Judenchristentums im Ostjordanland?” *PJ* 25 (1929): 89–95.

⁵Jean-Baptiste Frey, *Asie-Afrique* (vol. 2 of *Corpus inscriptionum Iudaicarum: recueil des inscriptions juives qui vont du IIIe siècle avant Jésus-Christ au VIIe siècle de notre ère;*

Thus the subject matter remained undeveloped for many years until the publications of Bellarmino Bagatti, OFM, of the Studium Franciscanum Bibli-
cum in Jerusalem. Bagatti took up the task of publishing the putative remains of
Judeo-Christianity in more than a dozen articles and books from 1950 to the late
1970s. He was joined by other scholars of the same institution such as Virgilio
Corbo, Ignazio Mancini, Frédéric Manns, Sylvester Saller, but above all Em-
manuele Testa, and sometimes others.

Not everyone who examined archaeological evidences of ancient Judaism interpreted any of the remains as Jewish Christian. For example, in 1954 L.-H. Vincent reported on an ossuary decorated with a cross found while constructing L'Hôpital de St. Louis in Jerusalem. Vincent did not accept the conclusions of Clermont-Ganneau about the Jewish Christian origins of the ossuaries from The Hill of Offense, nor did he label his ossuary an instance of Jewish Christianity.⁶ Yet the literature on the alleged remains of Jewish Christianity became voluminous.

The interpretation of “Jewish Christian” or “Judeo-Christian” archaeological remains took a new turn with the publications of Jack Finegan (1969), Bargil Pixner (from 1976) and Joan E. Taylor (from 1987) treated below.⁷ Finegan’s work appeared to stand in a middle ground between skepticism and belief, accepting the possibility that some of these remains represented Christians of Jewish birth. Taylor’s work mainly took all the previous publications of these archeological remains to task and demanded new rigor in interpretation and rejection of the Jewish Christian hypothesis to account for these remains. Pixner knew Bagatti’s and Testa’s publications well, but he engaged in critical and historical analyses and broke new ground with his considerations of a possible Essene Quarter in Jerusalem and its possible connection with early Jewish Christianity .

2. Ossuary Inscriptions

2.1. *The Ossuaries of Bâtn el-Hawa, Bethphage, Talpioth, and Dominus Flevit*

Ossuaries are small boxes carved from soft limestone for the storage of human bones one year after Jewish inhumation. They range in length from 45–75 cm. These are well attested from the first century B.C.E. to the middle of the second century C.E. Many of them are inscribed with the name of the deceased in

Vatican: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1952); especially the remarks to nos. 1305–6, 1327, and 1325.

⁶L.-H. Vincent, *Archéologie de la ville* (vol. 1 of *Jérusalem de l'ancien testament: recherches d'archéologie et d'histoire*; Paris: Gabalda, 1954), 32.

⁷J. Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament*; Bargil Pixner, *Wege des Messias und Stätten der Urkirche: Jesus und das Judentchristentum im Licht neuer archäologischer Erkenntnisse* (ed. Rainer Riesner; Giessen: Brunnen, 1991); Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*.

Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic. Other symbols appear such as rosettes, palm trees, circles, columns, and so forth.⁸

2.1.1. Bâtn el-Hawa

Several of the ossuaries from the Hill of Offense or Le Mont du Scandale (Bâtn el-Hawa) in Jerusalem, which were discovered in 1873, bear names in Hebrew: Shlomzion daughter of Shim'on the Priest, Yehudah the Scribe, Yehudah bar El'azar the scribe, Shim'on bar Yeshua', El'azar bar Natai, Marta daughter of Pashai, and Salome wife of Yehudah.⁹ One Greek name was written in Hebrew characters: Kyrikos. Others bear names in Greek characters: Hēdēa, Iēsous, Kyrthas, Moschas, Mariados, and Nathanilos. There are also symbols that have seemed suggestive of Christianity, though some are simply enigmatic.¹⁰ One symbol advanced as likely Christian is a cross with two horizontal bars. An alternative interpretation is that this is a poorly executed menorah (fig. 1). Others less transparent to the interpreter include the six-pointed star (*) and something rather like a mushroom or parasol (twice, but once upside down to the other. For the parasol see coins of Agrippa I) (fig. 1). The least suggestive are the +s and ×s that really seem to show how to replace the lid correctly¹¹ or indicate the center of the side panel, perhaps for expected later decoration that was never added.¹² On the other hand the single ornament that caused the most comment is the deeply cut Latin cross above an equally deeply cut Greek *Eta* and *Delta* (fig. 1). Clermont-Ganneau proposed that, since another ossuary in the same group was engraved deeply in Greek ΗΔΗΑ (Hēdēa), the two letters on this ossuary may be an abbreviation for the same name (a name otherwise unattested).¹³ Clermont-Ganneau was convinced that this particular cross and the names from early Christian history were evidence that the owner of the ossuary was a

⁸Pau Figueras, *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries* (Documenta et monumenta orientis antiqui 20, Leiden: Brill, 1983); Ruth Jacoby, *The Synagogues of Bar'am: Jerusalem Ossuaries* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1987); L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries* (Jerusalem: The Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994). For a rebuttal, see Shimon Gibson and Gideon Avni, "The 'Jewish-Christian' Tomb from the Mount of Offence (Batn Al-Hawa') in Jerusalem Reconsidered," *RB* 115 (1998): 161–75.

⁹In Rahmani's *Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, the name Jesus appears ten times as Hebrew "Yeshu" and "Yeshua bar Yehoseph" (ישׁוּעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹסֵף, No. 9), "Yeshua bar Dostas" (ישׁוּעַ בֶּן־דוֹסָתָס, No. 121), "Yeshua" (ישׁוּעַ, No. 140), "Yehuda bar Yeshua" (יהוּדָה בֶּן־יְשׁוּעָה, No. 702), "Yeshua bar Yehoseph" (ישׁוּעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹסֵף, No. 704), Greek "Iēsous" (Ιησοῦς, No. 56), "Iēsous [son of] Ioudas" (Ιησοῦς τοῦ Ἰούδα, No. 113), Iēsous Aloth (Ιησοῦς Ἀλώθ, No. 114), and "Iēsous father of Simonides" (Ιησοῦς πατέρι Σιμωνίδου, No. 751).

¹⁰These can be found in Ignazio Mancini, *L'archéologie judéo-chrétienne: Notices Historiques* (trans. A. Storme; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1977), 712.

¹¹R. H. Smith, "The Cross Marks on Jewish Ossuaries," *PEQ* 106 (1974): 53–66; Jack Finegan, "Crosses in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BAR* 5 (1979): 40–49.

¹²Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 107, Ossuary 114.B.3.

¹³Clermont-Ganneau, "Epigraphes," 267; Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament*, 239–40.

Christian.¹⁴ Others have asserted to the contrary, namely, that the deeply engraved cross is a Byzantine Christian addition to an early Roman period ossuary.¹⁵ The question remains open. Under what conditions would a Byzantine Christian engrave a Latin cross and a name on an earlier ossuary?

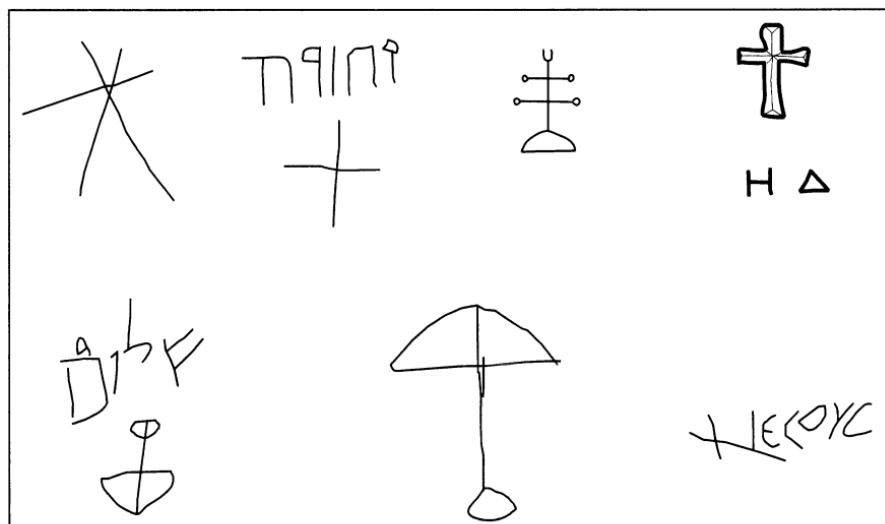


Figure 1: Inscriptions on Ossuaries from Bâtn el-Hawa,
from Clermont-Ganneau, 1883.¹⁶

2.1.2. *Bethphage*

In 1910 a tomb was found at Kfar et-Tur east of Jerusalem. The site is often identified with the Bethphage of the Gospel of John. An ossuary lid found in the tomb contained a list of twenty-seven names inscribed on the underside in Hebrew. Each name was followed by a number in Nabatean.¹⁷ The names are popular names mostly formed on the name of the person's father: Ben Ya'ir, ben Timna, ben Adda, ben Joseph Nazir, Ha-Gelili, ben Uria, ben Madar, Shim'on ben Shalom, ben Jehohanan, etc. Although Testa interpreted this list as one read aloud in a Jewish Christian ceremony of remembrance (as in the later Coptic

¹⁴ Clermont-Ganneau, "Epigraphes," 259: "[Les inscriptions] représent une série de générations, parmi lesquelles nous voyons, à un moment donné, apparaître et se développer le christianisme."

¹⁵ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*; J. P. Kane, "By No Means 'The Earliest Records of Christianity'—with an Emended Reading of the Talpioth Inscription IEΣΟΥΣ ΙΟΥ," *PEQ* 103 (1971): 103–8; J. P. Kane, "The Ossuary Inscriptions of Jerusalem," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 23 (1978): 268–82.

¹⁶ All figures in this chapter, except figure 7, are drawn by James F. Strange.

¹⁷ G. Orfali, "Un hypogée juif à Bethphagé," *RB* 32 (1923): 253–60; B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Judaeo-Christians* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971), 277–78 and fig. 138.

Church in Egypt), few other scholars have accepted this interpretation.¹⁸ The simplest interpretation may be that this is a list of tomb workers and their wages.

2.1.3. *Talpioth*

In 1945 fourteen ossuaries were brought to light from a tomb with loculi in the Talpioth neighborhood of Jerusalem. The archaeologist interpreted the Greek inscription in charcoal on the back of one as “Jesus, Woe!” and a second Greek inscription as another lamentation for Jesus (*Iēsou Aloθ!*). He understood these to be Jewish Christian lamentations over the death of Jesus of Nazareth. This interpretation has not gained acceptance. Now the two are read as “Jesus son of Judas” and “Jesus [nicknamed] Aloe.”¹⁹

2.1.4. *Dominus Flevit*

In 1953 the monks at the Latin property of Dominus Flevit on the western slopes of the Mt. of Olives discovered a hitherto unknown Roman and Byzantine cemetery when building a cloister wall. Excavations commenced immediately, and tombs dating to the first and second century C.E. were found. Beside them lay additional tombs of the third and fourth centuries C.E. (but used as late as 626 C.E.).²⁰

Names of the deceased appeared on the ossuaries from the early tombs, familiar names such as Judah, El’azar (Lazarus), John, Jonathan, Joseph, Judah, Martha, Miriam, Mattia (Matthew), Menahem, Sapphira, Simeon, Shlomzion, and Zechariah. But ornaments drawn on the ossuaries raised more questions. The parade example was a clear Chi-Rho on ossuary 21 from tomb 79, where fourteen ossuaries had been stored (fig. 2).

This Chi-Rho is accompanied on the left by an × superimposed on a +, forming a kind of monogram, an eight-pointed asterisk (*). Another monogram appears as a + with a B in the lower right quadrant and a stroke from upper right to lower left nearly through the intersection in the middle of the +.²¹ These are the only three monograms on the Dominus Flevit ossuaries, though there are also + and × signs on some of the sides or ends of the ossuaries and on the lids.

¹⁸ Emmanuele Testa, *Il Simbolismo dei giudeo-Cristiani* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1962; repr., 1981), 211–22. Contra Testa, for example, R. Dussaud, “Comptes d’ouvriers d’une entreprise funéraire juive,” *Syria* 4 (1923): 241–49. See discussion and bibliography in S. Saller, and E. Testa, eds., *The Archaeological Setting of the Shrine of Bethphage* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1961), 42–44 and n. 51.

¹⁹ E. L. Sukenik, “The Earliest Records of Christianity,” *AJA* 51 (1947): 351–65. Alternative reading: Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*, 106–7, notes 113–14. Summary in Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 9; Jacoby, *The Synagogues of Bar’am*, 168; Kane, “The Ossuary Inscriptions of Jerusalem,” 271–73.

²⁰ B. Bagatti, “Scoperta di un cimitero giudeo-cristiano al ‘Dominus Flevit’ (Monte Olivetto-Gerusalemme),” *Liber Annuus* 3 (1953): 149–84; B. Bagatti and J. Milik, *Gli Scavi del ‘Dominus Flevit,’ I: La necropolis del periodo romano* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1958); Jacoby, *The Synagogues of Bar’am*, 74.

²¹ Finegan, *Archaeology of the New Testament*, 249.

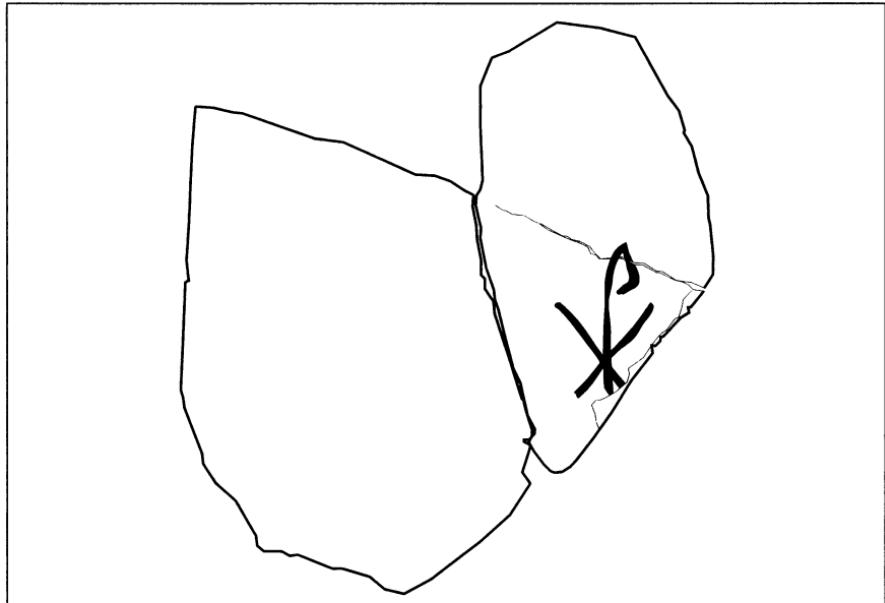


Figure 2: The “Chi-Rho” from an Ossuary of Dominus Flevit, from Bagatti, 1953.

From what we know of the development of Christian epigraphy, the chi-rho has no history as a uniquely Christian symbol before the fourth century C.E.²² In 1940 Avi-Yonah pointed out that the chi-rho is known in one inscription of 63 C.E. as an abbreviation for χρυσός or “gold.” His next example dated about 177–180 C.E. is a chi-rho as an abbreviation for ἑκατονάρχης or “Centurion.”²³ Colella has suggested that the chi-rho on an ossuary is an abbreviation for χαράσσω or one of its derivatives meaning “sealed.”²⁴ On the other hand, no ossuaries were actually sealed. Figueras has pointed out that the XP could be any Greek word that features a *chi* and a *rho* prominently.²⁵

The question arises how to interpret monograms and crosses as necessarily Christian, since the widespread and unequivocal use of the cross as a Christian symbol or of the Christogram as a Christian symbol is not clearly attested until the fourth century C.E. A second question is how to integrate names as Jewish *Christian* into the argument.

²² H. R. Seeliger, “Die Verwendung des Christogramms durch Konstantin im Jahre 312,” *ZKG* 100 (1989): 149–68; Kurt Aland, “Neutestamentliche Papyri II (NT Papyri II),” *NTS* 10 (1963): 62–79.

²³ M. Avi-Yonah, *Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions (The Near East, 200 B.C.–A.D. 1100)* (Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine Supplement 9; London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 112.

²⁴ P. Colella, “Les abbreviations è et [chi-rho] XP,” *RB* 80 (1973): 547–58.

²⁵ Figueras, *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries*, 49; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 11.

2.2. *The Tombs of the Sanhedriya, Dominus Flevit, Bethphage, Gethsemane (the Tomb of the Virgin Mary), and the Painted Tomb on the Mt. of Olives*

2.2.1. *Sanhedriya*

These twenty-one underground chambers hewn from the Jerusalem hills are attributed to the “Sanhedrin” only in popular imagination. J. Jotham-Rothshild published these tombs in 1952 and 1954.²⁶ The arrangement, cutting, and general morphology of the tombs are clearly the same as other Jewish tombs of the early centuries C.E. A splendid façade decorated with pomegranates, citrons, and acanthus leaves invites entry from the forecourt into the underground vestibule of the tomb complex. The only items that might signal early Christianity are three crosses cut into the rock to the left of the entrance of tomb X—one above the door of tomb XIII, and one above the door of tomb V, which leads to the central chamber.²⁷ There is as yet no satisfactory explanation for the crosses, and even a Christian explanation seems the less likely on the grounds that what we know of the development of the cross as a Christian symbol to date would seem to preclude this conclusion. Jotham-Rothshild accepts the crosses as Christian, not of Byzantine hermits, but of early “Hebrew-Christians.”

“... Early Christians, descendants of the Jewish owners of Tombs V, X, and XIII, and in possession of a title-deed inherited from their forefathers, had been buried in the family tomb, that the two (or more, now obliterated by weathering) crosses at the left of the portal of Tomb X mean that two (or more) Hebrew-Christians were laid to rest in the two (or more) *kokhim* at the left of the tomb-chamber and that, where a cross was carved in the center of the portal, as on Tombs XIII and V, all *kokhim* were occupied by Neo-Christians. A find which corroborates my assumption was made in Tomb V, where I found pieces of a small metal cross in one of the *kokhim*.²⁸

On the other hand, they may also be Byzantine Christian additions. If so, how are we to interpret them? How would Byzantine Christians know where to mark crosses? What would be the purpose in doing so?

2.2.2. *Dominus Flevit*

This extensive Roman and Byzantine cemetery delivered up about 500 burial places. The cutting, arrangement, and lack of decoration of these tombs are exactly what one would expect of tombs of the period anywhere in Jerusalem. The only data that might suggest Jewish Christianity are the names and ornaments found on some of the ossuaries (see above).²⁹

²⁶J. Jotham-Rothshild, “The Tombs of Sanhedria,” *PEQ* 84 (1952): 23–38 and 86 (1954): 16–22.

²⁷J. Jotham-Rothshild, “The Tombs of Sanhedria,” *PEQ* 86 (1954): pl. IV.1 (Crosses on Tomb X) and pl. IV.2 (cross on Tomb XIII) and p. 18.

²⁸Jotham-Rothshild, “The Tombs of Sanhedria” (1954), 20.

²⁹For other Jewish tombs in Jerusalem see G. Avni and Z. Greenhut, *The Akeldama Tombs: Three Burial Caves in the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1996).

2.2.3. Bethphage

The finds at Kfar et-Tur on the east flank of the Mount of Olives, otherwise known as Bethphage, include much more than the one tomb mentioned above. In all, about ten tombs have been reported from the Franciscan property, and there are likely others. The tombs represent four types, all represented in the repertory of tombs from Jerusalem: the bench-type (one tomb), the slot or *kokh*-type (three tombs), the trough-grave or single-inhumation graves cut into the floors of tombs, each of which originally had a stone cover (six examples), and the shaft grave, which also bore a stone slab cover (three graves together).³⁰

As in the case of the tombs found at Dominus Flevit, the cutting and arrangement of these tombs are precisely what one would expect of tombs of the period anywhere in Jerusalem. The data that Saller and Testa reported as Jewish Christian were the graffiti found in tomb 21 (see below). Other names and ornaments found on some of the ossuaries were also suggestive to them (see above).³¹

2.2.4. Gethsemane

The Tomb of the Virgin Mary, a site built and rebuilt over many generations, contains some tombs which possibly date to the first century C.E. The crypt of the modern church encloses a rock-cut chamber some 17 meters long that isolates centrally three benches from a putative first century tomb. In the middle of the crypt's north wall is an entrance into another tomb that is likely from the first century also. That the first tomb was isolated in the center of the Byzantine crypt suggests that Christians from the fourth or fifth century had a local tradition of the burial of Mary (or of a Mary) that accords well with the archaeological evidence of first century tombs. Yet there is nothing in the morphology of the tomb that suggests earlier Christian veneration. On the other hand, there is nothing to the cutting or arrangement of the tomb that forbids its fit with the tradition.³²

2.2.5. The Painted Tomb on the Mount of Olives

In 1974 municipal workers on the Mount of Olives accidentally opened an arcosolium-type tomb that was plastered and painted. There is little to say of the form and function of the tomb, which was completely ordinary. The paintings also, which featured realistically modeled birds in color, were relatively common in painted tombs. On the other hand, one decoration seemed to have two crosses. Their presence lead Bagatti to attribute the use of this tomb to Jewish Christians.³³

³⁰ Saller and Testa, *The Archaeological Setting of the Shrine of Bethphage*, 41.

³¹ Ibid., 84–120.

³² Bellarmino Bagatti, “Nuove scoperte all’ Tomba della Vergine a Getsemani,” *Liber Annus* 22 (1972): 236–90 and elsewhere; rebuttal in Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 202–5.

³³ Bellarmino Bagatti, “Ritrovamento di una tomba pitturata sull-Oliveto,” *Liber Annus* 24 (1974): 170–87.

The crosses depicted are indeed enigmatic and do not betray the same skill in execution as do the birds and floral motifs. For example, in figure 3 the plant stem with flower and leaves is more or less expertly executed with a fine brush, but the window-like feature with the cross is applied with a broad brush and no special care. The partial cross above has even less to commend it aesthetically. It is tempting to interpret these roughly vertical and horizontal strokes as more like graffiti than art from the day of their application.

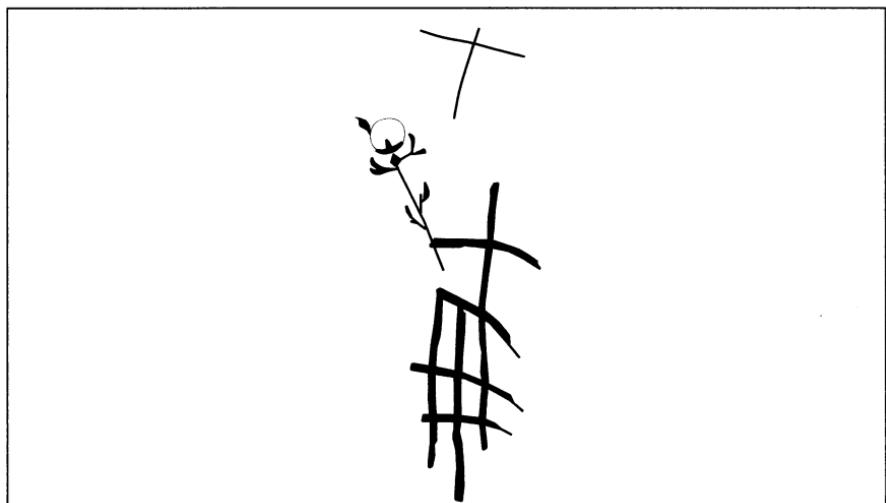


Figure 3: The Putative Crosses from the Painted Tomb on the Mount of Olives, from Finegan, 1978.

3. Inscriptions, Amulets, and the Bethphage Graffiti

This essay omits the curious stelae or stone amulets from Khirbet Kilkish, which recently have been reputed to be fraudulent.³⁴

3.1. Inscriptions

The inscription from Tafas in southern Syria has been mentioned already above. Alt opined that the inscription dated from the founding of a synagogue: “Jacob and Samuel and Clematios, their father, built [this] synagogue”: Ἰάκωβος καὶ Σεμούηλος καὶ Κλημάτιος πατήρ αὐτῶν τὴν συναγωγὴν οἰκοδόμησ(αν).³⁵ Alt noted that the father’s name, Clematios, contrasted with the “genuinely Jewish” names of the sons. Clematios seemed to be a Byzantine Greek name, but Alt

³⁴ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 12–16.

³⁵ Alt cites the finder as Fossey, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 21 (1897), 46f., No. 28, published without photograph or “originalgetreue Reproduktion,” Alt, “Ein Denkmal,” 93. The text appeared in S. Klein, *Jüdisch-palästinisches Corpus Inscriptionum* (1920), 104.

concluded that the father began the building and the sons completed it, rather like the generations of the inscription of Theodosius in Jerusalem. The building may well have been used by Jewish Christians because Tafas is only 20 km south-east of Kau-kab, which Epiphanius knew as an Ebionite village (*Pan.* 30.2 and 18, PG 41:408, 436). The Ebionites were known to call their assemblies “synagogues” and not “churches.”³⁶ This construction may be borne by the data, but it is not required.

3.2. Farj

The site of Farj in the Golan Heights has provided researchers with a reservoir of data indicating occupation by Christians and Jews, but not necessarily Jewish Christians. Dauphin has interpreted the epigraphic remains to mean that Jews lived in Farj and that Jewish and Christian populations interpenetrated during the early Byzantine period. In fact, she wonders whether the Christians might have been descendants of the Jews that first occupied the village.³⁷ Taylor, on the

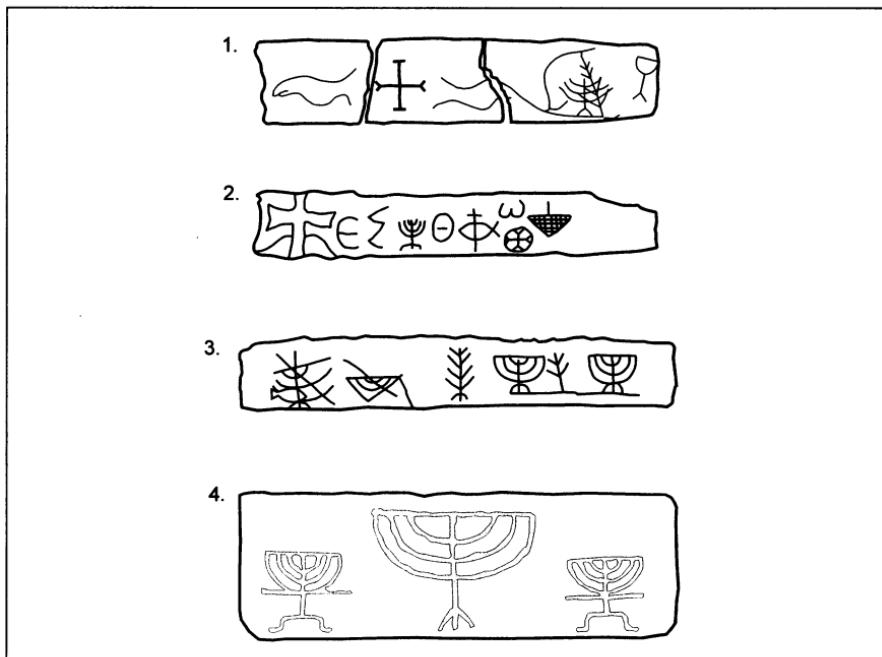


Figure 4: Four Menorahs from Farj in the Golan Heights, from Taylor, 1993.

³⁶ Alt, “Ein Denkmal,” 93; Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (StPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988).

³⁷ C. M. Dauphin, “Jewish and Christian Communities: A Study of Evidence from Archaeological Surveys,” *PEQ* 114 (1982): 129–42; C. M. Dauphin and J. J. Schonfield, “Settlements of the Roman and Byzantine Periods on the Golan Heights: Preliminary Report on Three Seasons of Survey (1979–1981),” *IEJ* 33 (1983): 189–206; C. M. Dauphin, “Farj en

other hand, concludes that at least those who cut the inscriptions in figure 4 had been “ethnic Jews” (sic) who converted to Christianity.³⁸

The evidence in question is comprised of lintel stones, apparently from synagogues and churches. In figure 4 one sees from top to bottom, and reading each stone from left to right: (1) a cross between wing-like forms, then a menorah with a palm branch superimposed, and perhaps a chalice, (2) from the church, a cross on a hill (Calvary?), ΕΣ, then a Menorah, a Θ, a Latin cross superimposed over a fish, Ω above a cross in a circle,³⁹ and a hatched triangle with a stem which resembles one of the icons from Bâtn el-Hawa (fig. 1), (3) a monogram formed of a menorah with an upper bar, a fish, and a superimposed stroke down and to the right, followed by a second similar but simplified monogram of a menorah without the vertical bar but with a similar stroke from upper left to lower right, then a palm branch, and finally two menorahs flanking a palm branch, and (4) two smaller menorahs with top bars flanking a large central menorah with a bar across the top.⁴⁰ The two smaller menorahs have a horizontal bar beneath the arms of the menorah. The second example is from a lintel of a Byzantine church that replaced an earlier synagogue.

Some of the Greek inscriptions of Farj have been published by Robert Gregg. These are unremarkable tombstones in Greek, except that at least three of the names are Greek forms of Hebrew and Aramaic names: John, Barnabas, and Alapha.⁴¹ Gregg comments that the evidence of the inscriptions of Farj is that Jews resided in villages in both the western and eastern Golan. Furthermore, Jews were willing to live alongside Christians at Farj.⁴² Whether these Christians were Ebionites, Nazoraeans, or Orthodox remains to be seen.

3.3. Inscriptions from East of the Jordan

Mancini has summarized some of the research by Franciscans and others who have understood certain inscriptions to be Judeo-Christian. For example, he records an inscription from Kerak in Jordan which records the first line as

Gaulanite: refuge judéo-Chrétien?,” *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 34 (1984): 233–45. Dauphin cites Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, 25. Dauphin’s interpretation is rejected by Z. Ma’oz, “Comments on Jewish and Christian Communities in Byzantine Palestine,” *PEQ* 117 (1985): 59–68.

³⁸ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 41.

³⁹ Is the Greek to be read as one Greek word, perhaps ἐσθῶ or “I eat”?

⁴⁰ Dauphin points out that G. Schumacher reported in 1888 on a menorah rather similar to that of Fig 4.4 found at Breikah. It has a horizontal bar below the branches, but not on top. See G. Schumacher, *The Jaulân: Surveyed for the German Society for the Exploration of the Holy Land* (London, 1888), 115. Schumacher also reports on two menorahs with horizontal bars on top carved on a lintel from Khan Bandâk on p. 183.

⁴¹ R. C. Gregg and D. Urman, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in the Golan Heights: Greek and Other Inscriptions of the Roman and Byzantine Eras* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1996), 166–71.

⁴² Gregg and Urman, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians*, 299.

follows: EN ΥΘΑ. In other words, an oversized Upsilon was inserted in the middle of the first line, which is part of the Greek word ἐνθάδε or “here.” The speculation is that for those “in the know,” the upsilon would stand for a Christian cross, signaling that the deceased was a Christian. According to Mancini, one of the features of these epitaphs is the insertion of letters and numbers, even in the text proper, that seem to have no rationale. Yet for certain “followers” (“adepts”) these are recognizable and rich with theological meaning.⁴³ Recognizing the evidence, in other words, rests upon proper interpretation of letters and numbers (which are also letters) that otherwise seem strange or oversized or out of place. That would seem to exclude modern scholars, who do not have said knowledge.

3.4. *Lamellae or Laminae as Amulets*

Lamellae or Laminae, thin sheets of copper, silver, or gold upon which one wrote magical formulas and symbols, are well known in the ancient world. They serve as magical amulets against disease and harm, to keep away evil spirits, and invoke the blessings of angels, demons, or God on the bearer. A few amulets of this type have appeared in the literature cited as archaeological material in support of the Judeo-Christian hypothesis.

For example, an instance in silver is known from Maccabean Emmaus (Amwas) and published in 1908.⁴⁴ Vincent classified this amulet as Jewish. In a later study E. Testa identified it as possibly Jewish Christian on the grounds that the amulet protects the bearer from the snares of the demon “Shamadel,” just as in the later Roman Rite one prayed for protection from the snares of demons.⁴⁵ Another amulet in silver found in Aleppo and inscribed in Aramaic is located in the Flagellation Museum in Jerusalem. Bagatti points out, following Testa, that line 8 mentions three seals, that of El (אֵל), that of Hay (חַי), and that of Jeshe (יְשָׁה).⁴⁶ It seems to follow for Bagatti that these names establish the Jewish Christian character of the amulet.

The best example of such Jewish Christian amulets,⁴⁷ at least according to the publishers, is a silver sheet upon which the text appears in Aramaic in *repoussé* technique. According to the Bedouin who found it, it came from the desert south of Jerusalem and was found with Herodian lamps, which may make it first or second century C.E. This amulet opens with words translated as “the Oil of Faith” or

⁴³ Mancini, *L'archéologie judéo-chrétienne*, 32–33. Mancini cites A. Canova, *Iscrizioni e monumenti protocristiani nel paese di Moab* (Sussidi allo studio delle antichità cristiane 4; Vatican: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1954).

⁴⁴ L.-H. Vincent, “Amulette judéo-araméenne,” *RB* 5 (1908): 382–94.

⁴⁵ Testa, *Il Simbolismo dei Giudeo-cristiani*, 64–66.

⁴⁶ Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, 272 and fig. 136; Testa, *Il Simbolismo dei Giudeo-cristiani*, 52–59.

⁴⁷ Mancini, *L'archéologie judéo-chrétienne*, 72–77. Other scholarly readings are given pp. 75–77.

“Oil of the Faithful” (שמן רוחן).⁴⁸ The line that is critical for interpreting the whole, according to Testa, is line 8. This line contains from left to right a +, a ligature of a + and an IH (which must be read from left to right, contrary to the rest of the amulet, which is read from right to left) as a kind of monogram, and a final +. The result is ++IH++. Testa believes that the monogram and the two equal-armed crosses establish that Jesus Christ is under discussion. In his commentary he calls the + a “cruciform tau” and explains the IH as the “seal of Yahweh” adopted by Christians from the saving *tau* of Ezekiel 9.4.⁴⁹

An alternative reading of the central monogram of line 8 is ++. That is, while it may bear the interpretation of a Greek Iota and Eta, it is not a necessary interpretation. This is an Aramaic amulet, and we expect a detailed explanation that takes into account an *Aramaic monogram* in an Aramaic document instead of a Greek monogram in an Aramaic document.⁵⁰

3.5. Graffiti

Certain putative Jewish Christian remains have already been mentioned at Bethphage. Bethphage tomb 21 contains sixteen graffiti incised into the wall near the entrance.⁵¹ These contain four examples of the + sign, two examples of the x sign, two palm leaves, the Greek letter *Pi*, and several composite signs. In addition one sees a row of Greek Uncial letters that yield no sense: ΦΥΟΤΧΠ with a second row underneath: NI•ΣHN, which also yields no sense. There is as well a sign that resembles the figure 8, a sign that may be formed of a T and Y together, perhaps a lyre, and a hatch formed of four horizontal lines and five vertical lines. (Testa reads this as a net with twelve squares or a “Dodecade” on p. 88. But the photograph on p. 91 shows 16 squares.)

Testa interprets these signs, letters, and ligatures as sure evidence for Jewish Christianity.⁵² The literature he uses to support his arguments, however, consists

⁴⁸ E. Testa, *L'huile de la Foi: L'Oncion des maladies sur une lamelle du 1er siècle* (trans. Omer Englebert; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1967); Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, 256.

⁴⁹ Testa, *L'huile de la Foi*, 39–40: “Les taw reproduisent le signe sauveur d’Ez 9,4, qui constituait une protection contre les six anges exterminateurs. Le Nom IH reproduit le ‘sceau de Yahvé’ qu’adoptèrent, en le christianisant, les chrétiens, dès le 1er siècle.” See also Finegan, *Archaeology of the New Testament*, 231.

⁵⁰ Other scholars have maintained a Jewish but not Jewish Christian interpretation of this amulet: J. T. Milik, “Une Amulette Judéo-araméenne,” *Bib* 48 (1967): 450–51; J. Starcky, “Le temple nabatéen de Khirbet Tannur: à propos d’un livre récent,” *RB* 75 (1968): 278–80. Other recent examples are in Roy Kotansky, “Two Inscribed Jewish Aramaic Amulets from Syria,” *IEJ* 41 (1991): 267–81, and Joseph Naveh, “An Ancient Amulet or a Modern Forgery?” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 282–84.

⁵¹ E. Testa, “Excursus: The Graffiti of Tomb 21 at Bethphage,” in *The Archaeological Setting of the Shrine of Bethphage* (ed. S. Saller and E. Testa; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1961), 84–119.

⁵² See note 49. The same material appears in Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 174–79.

mainly of ancient polemics of the church fathers against gnostic interpretations, not necessarily Jewish Christian, as Taylor has pointed out.⁵³ Although Testa outlines ancient millenarian views from 2 (Slavonic) Enoch, Jerome, Irenaeus, Justin, and others, these do not demonstrate a uniquely Jewish Christian view. Furthermore his interpretations of other signs seem to be mere speculation more than anything else and again raises the question of method. Finally, there is nothing in these graffiti that are distinctive except the old Hebrew "youth" (יַעֲנָה), which Testa read as "light" (יְמִינָה).⁵⁴ That is not enough to conclude Jewish Christianity in spite of the + signs.

4. Architectural Remains: Nazareth, Capernaum, Beth Ha-Shittah

4.1. Nazareth

Probably some of the most hotly debated architectural remains alleged to be related to Jewish believers are those from Nazareth, specifically the mosaics, walls, and cut bedrock from beneath the modern Latin Church of the Annunciation.

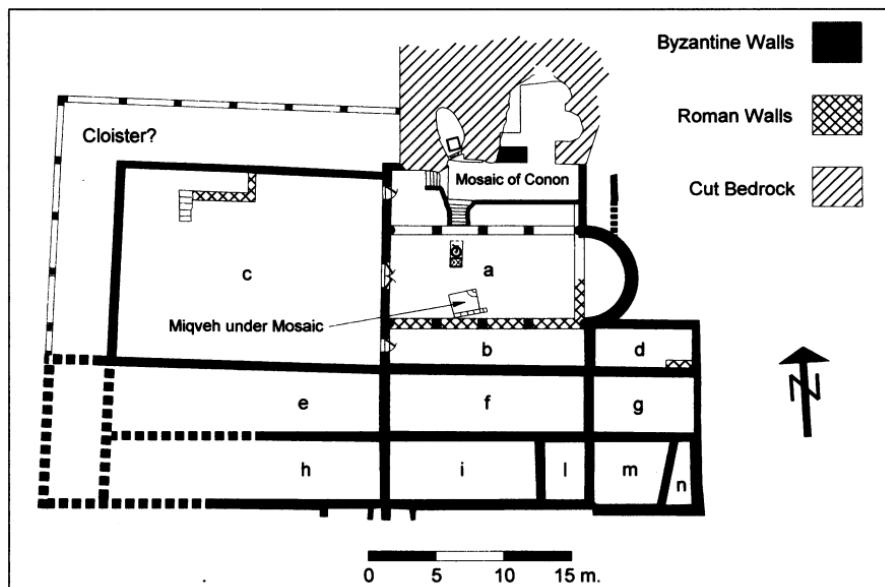


Figure 5: Nazareth Remains, Suggested Reconstruction. From Bagatti, 1969.

⁵³ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 174.

⁵⁴ Testa, "Excursus," 97. Taylor detected the misreading: Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 178.

The figure presents a proposed reconstruction of the floor plan of the fifth century basilica unearthed at Nazareth, which was part of a monastery.⁵⁵ The letter designations in the various rooms follow Bagatti. The proposed cloister is speculation, but enlarges on Bagatti's interpretation of certain remains. The north stylobate was not found in the excavations, but it is probably no accident that the staircase begins at the east-west line from the north end of the apse, which was found. The three doors from the atrium *c* into the nave and aisle of the basilica are based on parallels.⁵⁶ The worship space of the nave measures 6.2 x 13.6 m or about 85 sq. meters.

Two items of special interest in the plan are the caves to the north incorporated into the north aisle. The larger of the two is today termed the "Shrine of the Annunciation" and the smaller is called simply "the little grotto No. 29" or "the martyrium." The low area of the north aisle of the church is called "The Chapel of the Angel." One can see that part of the bedrock was hewn away to incorporate a hill and its two caves into the north aisle of a basilica church of the fifth century. The exact outlines of the hewn bedrock are today unclear on the west, north, and east sides, as the site was disturbed by extensive rock cutting for a Crusader Church of the Annunciation, which obscured much of the early remains.

The floor of the nave of the church was formed of a white mosaic of which only a small part remains. That small part includes a wreath in black tesserae, which the excavator called a "crown," within which is a cross monogram (or monogrammatic cross) formed of the Greek letter **P** and a superimposed Greek **T**. The same monogram appears at least seven times in the floors of the fifth century church at Evron north of Acco, but without the encircling wreath as at Nazareth.⁵⁷ A large cross in the floor is known from the sixth century Byzantine church at Shavei Zion near Evron, but not a cross-monogram.⁵⁸ However, what is more interesting is that the monogram is not centered on the nave on either axis, but its top points north toward a staircase down to the caves in the north aisle. Inside the smaller of the two caves or the martyrium northwest of the Mosaic of Conon lies a small, square mosaic. The same monogram appears in this mosaic inside and also points a little west of north.⁵⁹ That is, the orientation of these

⁵⁵ B. Bagatti, *From the Beginning Till the XII Century* (vol. 1 of *Excavations in Nazareth*; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1969). For a rebuttal of Bagatti's interpretations see Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 267.

⁵⁶ J. R. Strange, *The Emergence of the Christian Basilica in the Fourth Century* (Binghampton, N. Y.: International Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism, 2000).

⁵⁷ V. Tzaferis, "The Greek Inscriptions from the Early Christian Church at 'Evron,'" *Eretz-Israel* 19 (1987): 36–53, the monogrammatic cross pp. 51–52. A summary of the excavations appears in Michael Avi-Yonah, "Churches," *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. E. Stern; 4 vols.; Jerusalem, 1993), 1:310.

⁵⁸ Moshe W. Prausnitz, M. Avi-Yonah, and D. Barag, *Excavations at Shavei Zion: The Early Christian Church. Report of the Excavations Carried out by the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums* (Rome, 1967).

⁵⁹ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 187, fig. 146.

crosses shows that the orientation of the worshipper is to the north when the caves are the objects of veneration.

Bagatti unearthed mosaics in the south aisle of the church (*b*) and rooms *d*, *i*, and *l*. Bedding for mosaics also appeared in rooms *h*, *m*, and *n*. This suggests that the other rooms of the “convent” were also similarly paved. Bagatti terms room *d* the “sacistry” on the model of other Byzantine convents.⁶⁰ He also suggests that rooms *e*, *f*, and *g* may have been part of a cloister, since on the south side of rooms *f* and *g* the foundations were reinforced.⁶¹ West of the western wall of atrium *c* was a small fragment of a mosaic of very large tesserae. Bagatti calls the mosaic fragment “the fragment of the cloister.”⁶² Beneath the mosaics of the south aisle and room *h* were found coins of the fourth and fifth century C.E., confirming the date of the building from pottery remains.

Bagatti reported that finds of marble and hard limestone architectural fragments from time to time have given an idea of some of the furniture of the church. These include column bases and Byzantine capitals with crosses in relief and incised on the echinus, small marble posts for the altar, marble chancel screens, a small capital for a column 26 cm. in diameter, and a small column 22 cm. in diameter with straight fluting for 60 cm, then spiral fluting for more than 37 cm. (where it is broken), perhaps from an altar, and fragments of carefully-cut, Greek inscriptions.

Bagatti noticed that there were apparently earlier walls re-used in the Byzantine church. This is particularly the south stylobate, which separates the nave from the south aisle. Attached to the wall re-used as a stylobate was a wall turning north at the juncture of the later apse. Another short fragment of a pre-Byzantine wall appeared while excavating room *d*. Finally, a corner of a pre-Byzantine room or structure appeared in atrium *c*.

Furthermore, beneath the mosaics of room *i-h* were found a series of architectural fragments that appear to pre-date the Byzantine church. In form they resemble fragments from synagogue structures of the second to the fourth centuries C.E. The fragments included six column drums about 54–57 cm. in diameter, five column bases with plinths 56–60 cm. in diameter (two of them slotted for screens or transennae), two capitals 49 and 47 cm. in diameter at the bottom (but with scotias in place of toruses below the abacus), three imposts or springers for arches with a span of about 2.24 m., rounded and square cornices, two thresholds, four doorjambs, and several mouldings and building stones.⁶³ Some of these architectural fragments featured graffiti in Greek and one in unreadable Armenian. One small marble fragment bears Aramaic words on both sides.⁶⁴ Other

⁶⁰Ibid., 93.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 105.

⁶³Ibid., 140–46.

⁶⁴E. Testa, *Nazaret Giudeo-Cristiana: Riti, Iscrizioni, Simboli* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1969), 78–110 (Ch. III: “Il Targum di Isaia 55,1.13 e la teologia sui pozzi dell’acqua viva”).

adornments on the stones were crosses, a figure of a man in profile, and a figure of a man standing with a spear or standard and wearing scale armor.⁶⁵ Bagatti took the architectural fragments and graffiti as evidence that a Jewish Christian synagogue once stood on this site, which was demolished by the Byzantine engineers to build the church.

Bagatti argued that the builders of the pre-Byzantine building had to be Jewish Christians in part because a square basin found beneath the mosaic in nave *a*.⁶⁶ The basin measures 2.00 x 1.95 m. and is about 1.6 m. deep. A staircase of five steps inside the basin descends from the southeast. Two more steps appear on the outside of the basin, which suggests that the ancient ground level was about 20 cm. higher than the top of bedrock at the rim of the basin. On the floor outside the basin and next to the wall stood a heap of plaster fragments, many of which contained graffiti scratched into red or green paint. Other graffiti appeared on plaster fill in the basin. Presumably these plaster fragments found their way here in the destruction of the pre-church structures by the Byzantine builders. The graffiti are written mainly in Greek, but three are in Syriac. In addition were found representations of boats, ladders, possible nets, and other shapes, which Testa interpreted as without doubt Jewish Christian.⁶⁷ Bagatti therefore interpreted this basin as a Jewish Christian baptismal basin.⁶⁸

Taylor has argued that this basin is most satisfactorily interpreted as a vat for squeezing grapes. She points out that Bagatti found a knife for grape harvesting in a niche on the north side of the basin. Such knives are most economically interpreted as simple agricultural instruments not of cultic character.⁶⁹ On the other hand, one searches the published literature in vain for an oil vat or wine vat into which a stair has been cut.⁷⁰ The first century C.E. synagogue at Jericho also has a ritual bath equipped with an *otser* or collecting vat on its south side. The pool identified as a *miqveh* or ritual bath has a narrow stairway down on the north side. There is no stair in the vat used for collection of rain water, the *otser*.⁷¹ It is therefore not out of the question at all that this pool found beneath the mosaic of the Byzantine church (and the similar one found beneath the Church of St. Joseph in Nazareth) is in fact a ritual bath.

⁶⁵ Bagatti interpreted this as John the Baptist: Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 164. Taylor re-interprets the graffiti as a Roman soldier: Joan E. Taylor, "A Graffito Depicting John the Baptist in Nazareth?" *PEQ* 119 (1987): 142–48.

⁶⁶ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 119–23.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 123–31.

⁶⁸ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 123. Testa, *Nazaret Giudeo-Cristiana*, 56–78.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 244–53; Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, fig. 79, no. 31.

⁷⁰ R. Frankel, *Wine and Oil Production in Antiquity in Israel and Other Mediterranean Countries* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament/American Schools of Oriental Research Monograph Series 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

⁷¹ See the plan in E. Netzer, "Le Scoperte sotto il Palazzo di Erode," *Archeo* 14/7 (1998): 33.

It is true that the graffiti are so fragmentary and difficult to decipher that they hardly have definitive readings. For example, the famous graffito XE MAPIA in two lines may be scratched by two different hands. If so, then XE may be read plausibly as an abbreviation “Christ” (Χριστός) not “Hail” (χαῖρε).

On the other hand we must give an account of the architectural fragments that resemble those from synagogues and the marble fragment with Aramaic on both sides. That these items and the vats are fragments of the Jewish material culture of Nazareth hardly seems necessary to defend.

When Egeria (381–384 C.E.) spoke of “a big and very splendid cave in which [Mary] lived” at Nazareth she mentions no building, nor the Judaism of the inhabitants. She may have been speaking of today’s “Shrine of the Annunciation.”⁷² In like manner one cannot easily deduce the religious identify of those who visited the caves cut into bedrock before the advent of the monks and their building program in the fifth century C.E. It is a possible, but not necessary conclusion that they were Judeo-Christians.

4.2. Capernaum

Egeria reported also, “Moreover, in Capernaum the house of the prince of the apostles has been made into a church, with its original walls still standing.”⁷³ It appears that her statement tends to be corroborated by the excavations of Corbo and others beneath the floor of the octagonal church at Capernaum, which appears to have been built at the same time as the basilica church and the monastery at Nazareth.

The figure shows the plan of the pre-Byzantine stratum of Insula I at Capernaum as adapted from Corbo, that is, the fourth century building.⁷⁴ The Figure shows vertical hatching over the parts that this reconstruction proposes to have been roofed and follows Corbo’s terminology (the “Venerated Room” etc.). One sees that this is a roughly square area enclosed by a thick wall. One entered either from the north door or south door and proceeded to the atrium of a building which bore two stories over room 1 (also called the “domus ecclesia” and the “Venerated Room”). Room 1 was converted to public usage from an earlier room. The builders added an arch resting on two added piers to the north and south sides of room 1 so that it became as high as two stories. The interior was plastered with a thick, white plaster. Artists then painted the plastered walls with red panels, flowers, and other figures. Frequent visitors scratched names and other brief graffiti, mainly in Greek and Syriac, but also in Latin and Hebrew.

⁷²John Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land* (London: SPCK, 1971), 193. Egeria thought there was an altar inside the cave and that Mary’s Well flowed there. Wilkinson points out a possible confusion with the spring at St. Gabriel’s Church.

⁷³Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 194.

⁷⁴Virgilio Corbo, *Cafarnao I: Gli Edifici Della Città* (Publications of the studium biblicum Franciscanum 19; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975), Pl. VII.

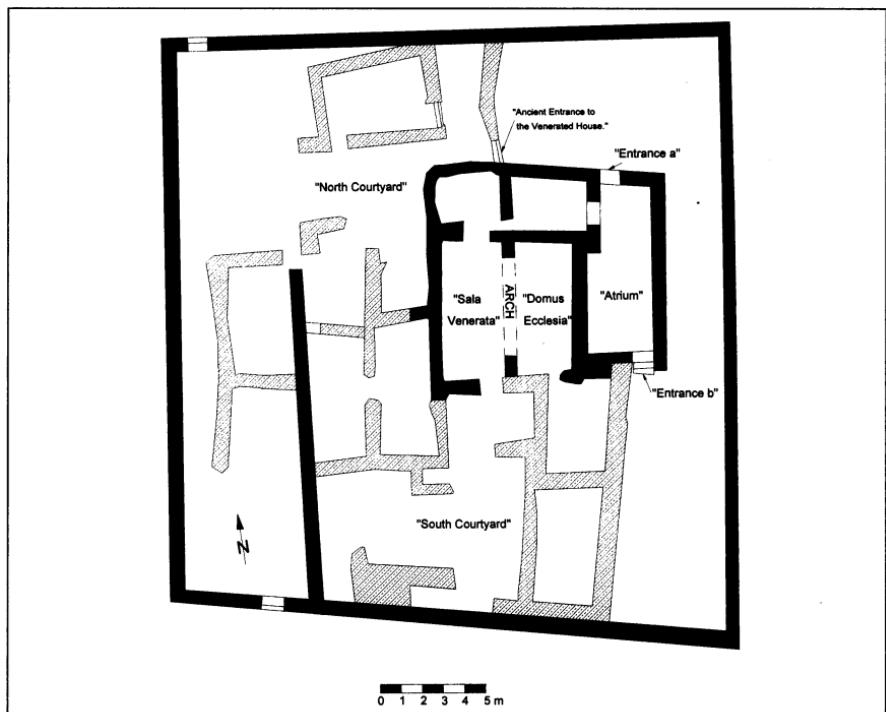


Figure 6: Plan of the “Domus Ecclesia” at Capernaum in its Precinct,
from Corbo, 1975.

When one entered the north door, one turned east to walk between room 15 and the main building. One then turned into entrance “a” and found himself in an “atrium,” which the builders had added to the earlier room mentioned above. The pilgrim or worshipper then walked through rooms 4 and 5 to get to room 1, which occupied 37.8 sq. meters. From room 1 the pilgrim had entry into unroofed space 8 and the “South Court,” which was about 253 sq. meters (areas 8, 19, and 20). This is nearly seven times larger than the original room 1. Room 1, in its fourth century configuration, is therefore less than half the space of the nave of the Nazareth church of 85 sq. meters.

In the figure we see that Insula I, as reconstructed here, features a very large room (Room 1, or the “venerated room.”), which is the particular room reconstructed as a church in the fourth century. This room measures about 6.1 x 6.7 m. or about 41 sq. meters. This is quite large by ancient standards, but otherwise there is little to distinguish this particular room or this set of rooms from any others at Capernaum.⁷⁵ Roofing for the room is most easily reconstructed as the

⁷⁵ Room 46/47 in the center of Insula 2 is divided into two spaces by a “pass through” or a series of windows set low in a dividing wall. The room is square, measuring 6.7 x 6.7 m. or about 47 sq. meters. Corbo, *Cafarnao I*, Pl. XIII.

usual Middle Eastern flat roof formed of logs or cut beams spanning the whole upon which were laid bundles of reeds and the whole covered liberally with a mixture of lime plaster and clay—more plaster than clay.⁷⁶

The argument that the house was St. Peter's House is based mainly upon an interpretation of the graffiti found in room 1 after construction of the “domus ecclesia.” Yet there are two other archaeological discoveries to consider: (1) the pottery wares in the house changed from normal house wares (cooking pots, plates, cups, bowls, pitchers, juglets, lamps, and jars) to primarily storage jars. (2) The whole of room 1 was improved by plastering the floor, walls, and ceilings. The two changes occur in the second half of the first century C.E. and combine to suggest that the use of the room changed from that of an ordinary house to a public use, perhaps for assemblies. If so, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that this may be the earliest Christian sanctuary known for the Jesus movement, and that it may indeed have been of Jewish Christian usage.⁷⁷

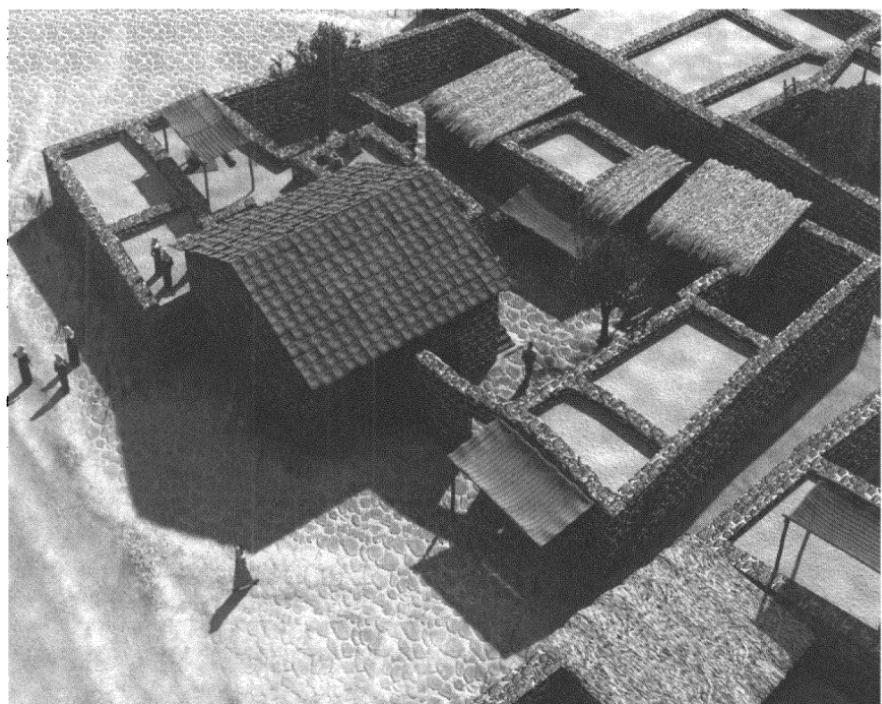


Figure 7: Reconstruction of Capernaum, Insula I, view to north,
courtesy of The Virtual Bible, Inc. Used with permission.

⁷⁶If this is the room referenced by Luke 5:19, it must be roofed with tiles: διὰ τῶν κεράμων καθῆκαν αὐτόν.

⁷⁷Corbo's argument depends on datable contents from the plaster floors, which he calls "beaten lime" floors ("battuto de calce"): Corbo, *Cafarnaum I*, 97–98. Taylor argues

We now turn to the painted plaster fragments found in room 1 and the graffiti incised upon them. The excavators chose Emmanuele Testa to write the volume on the graffiti, which appeared in 1972.⁷⁸ A detailed review appeared in *BASOR* in 1977 and another in *Biblica* that same year.⁷⁹ Joan E. Taylor reconsidered all the evidence for the Franciscan excavations at Capernaum in 1990 and later.⁸⁰

There seems to be strong evidence that the site of the church of the fourth century was an object of pilgrimage, even if some of the graffiti in Greek are very fragmentary and difficult to combine into sense units. But one, for example, contains an ordinary Byzantine Greek invocation (no. 89): “Lord Jesus Christ, help [your servant . . .] ion and Zi[. . .]” (ΚΕ ΙΣ ΧΕ ΒΟΗΘΙ[ΤΟΝ ΔΟΥΛΩΝ ΣΟΥ] . . . ΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΖΙ . . .). Another Greek prayer, No. 88, reads, “Christ have mercy!” (ΧΡΙ[ΣΤΟ]Υ ΣΤΕ ΕΛΕΗΣ[ΟΝ]). One graffito is fascinating as a possible allusion to Paul, namely, No. 85, which appears to read, “a clashing cymbal” (ΚΥΜΒ[ΑΛΟΝ ΕΛΑ[ΛΑΖΟΝ, sic, ἀλαλάζον], a phrase that appears in 1 Corinthians 13:1. Furthermore no. 47 appears to mention a certain Peter in the Genitive case: ΠΙΕΤΡΟΥ. (Is this a prayer addressed to Peter the Apostle or a visitor named Peter? The genitive case implies the latter.)

The graffiti in Syriac appear in the Estrangelo alphabet, but they are quite enigmatic and difficult to decipher. No. 110 in four lines yields little sense, but line 3 is “in the garden” (*bgn*) and line 4 reads “the spirit” (*ruh*). No. 105 appears to be the word for “officer” (*pqyd*). That Syriac-speaking Christians were at Capernaum as pilgrims is no surprise, as various ancient authors mention Syrian Christians on pilgrimage, including Egeria:

“In this province there are some people who know both Greek and Syriac, but others know only one or the other. The bishop may know Syriac, but he never uses it. He always speaks in Greek and has a presbyter beside him who translates the Greek into Syriac, so that everyone can understand what he means. Similarly the lessons read in church have to be read in Greek, but there is always someone in attendance to translate into Syriac so that the people understand.”⁸¹

that the lime floors may be as late as the fourth century C.E., despite the dozens of tiny fragments of Herodian lamps found in the plaster: Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 282–83. Taylor’s argument seems odd. It is simpler to argue that the lamp fragments date the plaster than to argue that the lamp fragments were kept around for two or even three centuries and then used in plaster.

⁷⁸E. Testa, *Cafarnao IV: I graffiti della casa de S. Pietro* (Publications of the studium biblicum Franciscanum 19; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1972).

⁷⁹J. F. Strange, “The Capernaum and Herodium Publications (Part I),” *BASOR* 226 (1977): 65–73; R. North, “Discoveries at Capernaum,” *Bib* 58 (1977): 424–31.

⁸⁰Joan E. Taylor, “Capernaum and its ‘Jewish Christians’: A Re-Examination of the Franciscan Excavations,” *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 10 (1990–1991): 7–28; Joan E. Taylor, “The Bagatti–Testa Hypothesis and Alleged Jewish-Christian Archaeological Remains,” *Mishkan* 13 (1990): 1–26; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 268–94.

⁸¹Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 146 (47.3–4).

More to the point are the few words in Hebrew letters. Testa understood these to be Aramaic, even when they were quotations from the Hebrew Bible. For example, Testa reads No. 103 as “Come near [and] I may touch you” (*אָמַשׁ אֶנְשֶׁה*), or Gen 27:21. Other words may identify the origin of a pilgrim, such as No. 100, which identifies someone as a “Sephorean” (*סֵפָרִיאֹן*).⁸² Taylor dismisses most of the Aramaic as mis-read Greek. That is possibly true—maybe even certainly true in a very few cases, but not for Nos. 100 and 103.

One must ask why Hebrew letters appear *at all*. The simplest response is that these are a few people for whom Hebrew and perhaps Aramaic are mother tongues. The presence of Hebrew or Aramaic graffiti tends to confirm the hypothesis of a Jewish Christian presence among the pilgrims at Capernaum. Therefore it seems premature to reject the hypothesis that Jewish Christians made pilgrimage to Capernaum in the Byzantine period.

4.3. Beth Ha-Shitta

In 1952 Israeli archaeologists discovered a Byzantine agricultural installation at Kibbutz Beth Ha-Shitta west of Beth Shean.⁸³ Two of the eight chambers of the installation were paved with mosaics. In the published plan one entered a small vestibule on its narrow side. This room measured only 4 x 4.9 m. and was paved with a mosaic showing a red Greek cross in a circle. A circle in the east corner and another in the west showed designs: an eight pointed asterisk (*) and something indecipherable. Four small crosses adorned the corners. This room opened to the southwest into a second room 3.25 x 4.9 m. in extent. This room was furnished with a mosaic 2.8 x 3.8 m. divided into a grid of squares, seven in the narrow dimension and ten in the long dimension for a total of seventy squares. The small squares contained simple geometric designs such as (☒, ☩, an ✕, concentric circles, and so forth. The two margins on opposite ends of the mosaic also included signs and symbols. One square contained Greek letters: KO-Σ, which Bagatti understood to be an abbreviation for κύριε σωτήρ (Lord, Savior). Other squares contained the letters Π, Μ, and perhaps a superimposition of Ι and Κ. These he understood to be abbreviations for πνεῦμα (Spirit), Μαρία (Mary), Ἰησοῦς (Jesus), and Χριστός (Christ). It is possible, of course, that these represent other Greek words.

Testa interpreted the whole in terms of a “sacred ladder” representing ten heavens and seven squares for each heaven. Testa used the Ascension of Isaiah, the

⁸²Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 284–88 where she treats the graffiti. Pixner, *Wege des Messias*.

⁸³Y. Aharoni, “Excavations at Beth-Hashittah,” *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society* (= *Yediot*) 18 (1954): 209–15. Aharoni gives the date as fifth or sixth century C.E. Avi-Yonah dates the complex after the Arab conquest: M. Avi-Yonah, “Christian Archaeology in Israel, 1948–54,” in *Actes du V^e Congrès international d’archéologie chrétienne, Aix-en-Provence 13–19 septembre 1954* (Studi di antichità cristiana 22; The Vatican: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1957), 122.

Testament of Levi, the Second Book of Enoch, the Third Book of Baruch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and others as sources for his interpretations. He also appealed to certain representations in Mesopotamian art.⁸⁴

As one may readily see, whether this mosaic floor is “Jewish Christian” or not depends on the correct interpretation of the symbols in the floor. There is nothing in the architecture to help in the interpretation. Furthermore, as yet there is no agreed upon methodology for interpreting such finds. The floor might represent any number of magical cults that were represented in the Byzantine Christian world. Magical practices in the nature of the case borrowed from one another, and borrowing from the Jewish world would not be impossible at all.⁸⁵ On the other hand, none of these symbols are unambiguously Jewish. No Hebrew or Aramaic words appear in the floor.

5. “Venerated Caves” in Nazareth and Bethany

Bagatti and Testa both take the position that Jewish Christians liked to engage in ritual in caves or “grottos.”⁸⁶ This is understood to be a continuation of a Jewish tradition, for example, praying at the grave site of a sage or saint.⁸⁷ Since certain scholars adduce a great deal of archaeological evidence to support this hypothesis, it seems appropriate to review some of the evidence here.⁸⁸

5.1. Nazareth

We have already seen that caves play an important role in the finds at Nazareth. The Byzantine Christian community went to some trouble to include the caves within the plan of the basilica of the fifth century. It is also reasonable to assume that these caves were isolated for veneration before that period. It needs to be said that nothing in the architecture built around the caves nor anything in the cutting of the caves suggest a Jewish Christian presence. That is, although Bagatti thought that the decoration on two marble columns found near the Byzantine convent revealed Jewish Christian motifs, nowhere does he justify such an interpretation.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Testa, *Il Simbolismo dei Giudeo-cristiani*, 84–92. Taylor refers to Beth Ha-Shittah only to document the use of crosses in floors: Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 241. See also Varda Sussmann, “The Beth Ha-Shittah Mosaic Floor: A New Perspective in the Light of Samaritan Lamps,” *Liber Annus* 54 (2004): 351–68.

⁸⁵ H. Maguire, ed., *Byzantine Magic* (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1955).

⁸⁶ I. Testa, “Le grotte mistiche dei Nazareni e i loro riti battesimali,” *Liber Annus* 12 (1962): 5–45; E. Testa, “Le ‘Grotte dei Misteri’ giudeo-cristiane,” *Liber Annus* 14 (1964): 65–144; Bagatti, *Church from the Circumcision*, 133–36.

⁸⁷ J. F. Strange, “Archaeology and the Religion of Judaism in Palestine,” *ANRWII.19.1*: 646–85; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 1993:166–67.

⁸⁸ Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, eds., *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1981), 137–39.

⁸⁹ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 169; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 257.

The small cave, the “martyrium” or No. 29 was first excavated and planned by Vlaminck in 1910.⁹⁰ Bagatti interpreted the cave as a martyrium dedicated to the memory of the Conon of the “Mosaic of Conon” just outside cave No. 29. The mosaic contains a Greek inscription at the entrance to the cave No. 29 which reads, “Gift (?) of Conon, Dea[con] of Jerusalem.” Bagatti understood this Conon to be either someone named for the early Martyr or the Martyr of Nazareth himself.⁹¹ Bagatti’s method of interpretation of the cave was to examine the graffiti in the several coats of plaster on the west and east walls. He was able to show that pilgrims visited the site very regularly and sometimes incised or painted Greek graffiti on some of the six coats of plaster.

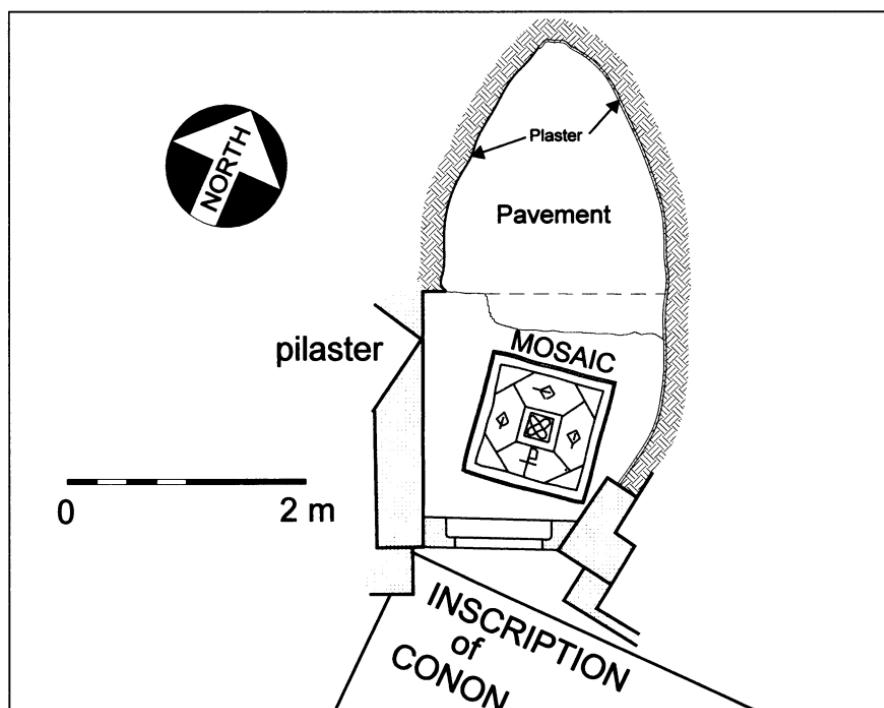


Figure 8: Plan of Cave 29 of the Shrine of the Annunciation,
from Bagatti, 1969.

The earliest coat of plaster was painted with flowers on the east wall. A Greek dipinto in red occupied the center of the flowers. Testa called the flowers a

⁹⁰ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 2, note 1 cites B. Vlaminck, *A Report of the Recent Excavations and Explorations Conducted at the Sanctuary of Nazareth* (Washington, 1900) as a report of five pages of text and three of illustrations.

⁹¹ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 16, 198–99, 218. Taylor thinks a Nazareth legend may have grown up because of the notices of this Conon in Africanus, the stories of the

representation of “Paradise.”⁹² The inscription contains a Greek cross with an ΑΩ twice in line 3. Otherwise it contains a typical formula in lines 4–5: “Lord Christ, save your se[rvant] Valeria” (ΚΥΡ ΧΡ ΣΩΣΟΝ [ΤΟΝ] ΔΩ[ΥΛΟ]Ν ΣΟΥ ΟΥΛΕΠΙΑΝ) followed by more words difficult to decipher, but including “I said” (ΕΙΤΙΑ). Bagatti thought Valeria was the one who built the original cave.⁹³ Line 5 reads, “And give her [unreadable]” (ΚΑΙ ΔΟΣ ΑΥΤΗ ΦΑ.ΟΝΦ.). It ends with the abbreviated words “in Christ” and adds “Amen” (.Ν ΧΡΙΣ ΑΜΗΝ).⁹⁴

To the right of the flowers and plants of the “Paradise” is a wreath in red and black, to the left of which are graffiti scratched into the plaster: “Jesus Christ, Son of God, help Genos and Elpisos, [save] the servants of Jesus . . . and Remember . . .” (ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΕ ΥΙΕ ΘΕΟΥ ΒΟΗΘΟ ΓΕΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΠΙΣΟΥ [ΣΩΣΟΝ] ΔΟΥΛΟΥΣ ΤΟΥ [Ι]ΗΣΟΥΜ ΚΑΙ ΜΝΗΣΘΟΤΙ . . .). Personal names follow at this point, four of which can be read: Achilles, Elpidius, Paulus, and Antonis.⁹⁵ The earliest plaster was covered by three more coats in successive renovations. The third coat contained a coin of Constantius II, so that particular coat could not have been applied before 337 C.E.⁹⁶

These Greek inscriptions reveal no particular interest in Jewish Christianity, nor do they bring to expression Jewish motifs or ideas. The cave itself is enigmatic at best and has been interpreted variously as a tomb,⁹⁷ a memorial to the martyr Conon,⁹⁸ and the tomb of Mary.⁹⁹ Taylor reports that Daniel the Abbot identified the cave as the tomb of Joseph, but contributes no interpretation of her own.¹⁰⁰ Therefore it seems simplest to interpret the cave and its paintings and graffiti as remnants of a Gentile Christian pilgrim presence, perhaps of the early fourth century or later, at least in its published form.¹⁰¹

grand-nephews of Jesus in Hegesippus, and this inscription. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 243.

⁹² Testa, *Nazaret Giudeo-Cristiana*, 112–23.

⁹³ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 196–99.

⁹⁴ Different translations as follows: Testa, *Nazaret Giudeo-Cristiana*, 64–70; Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 197; Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 260–61.

⁹⁵ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, 201.

⁹⁶ The coin is 15 mm. in diameter, therefore $\varnothing 4$ in type ($\varnothing 4$ means less than 17mm in diameter, a modern Roman coin convention). The obverse shows a head facing right with no inscription. The reverse shows Victory striding left. Bagatti read the mintmark of Antioch. See his illustration in *Excavations in Nazareth*, 210, though he identified the coin as one of Constantine. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 255.

⁹⁷ There is room for one or more bodies to the west of the mosaic floor of the cave, which occupies about half the available space. We do not know what existed to the west, as it was cut away for a modern floor in 1895. That is, the data may bear this interpretation, but it is not a necessary interpretation.

⁹⁸ See note 89.

⁹⁹ Clemens Kopp, *The Holy Places of the Gospels* (trans. R. Walls; New York: Herder, 1963), 64–65.

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 255.

¹⁰¹ A possible hypothesis is that Conon gave not only the mosaic that bears his name, but also the mosaic inside cave 29 and possibly its first plastering and decoration.

The other major cave at Nazareth is the “Shrine of the Annunciation,” otherwise designated No. 31 (see fig. 5). It betrays its ritual purpose by an apse cut into the bedrock on its east wall. The whole measures about 6.14 m. long and about 3.0 m. across, or barely 18.6 m². The full width of the cave is 5.5 m. from north to south. The ceiling is quite high at about 3.8 m.

Recovery of the morphology of the cave and certainly its decoration is a matter highly complicated by the renovations of the Byzantine, Crusader, and modern periods. We can probably hypothesize with some security that the Byzantine form of the cave included an apse with a mosaic, as Vlaminck reported. But does he mean that the Byzantines installed a mosaic on the floor, or actually a vertical mosaic within the apse itself? His prose seems ambiguous. In any case there is reason to believe that the whole was plastered, and it is probable that Greek inscriptions and perhaps other motifs adorned the walls. All that can be read now is ΦΕ in charcoal on the north and an incised XT on the third of four plaster layers.

It is impossible now to deduce any more than the apsidal form of the cave was a re-cutting of an underground room originally cut for ordinary domestic purposes. Presumably the Byzantine Christians were the first to re-cut and plaster the cave. There is no trace of a confirmed Jewish Christian presence.

5.2. Bethany

In 1951 Benoit and Boismard published a cistern from Bethany which had been reused as some kind of cultic site in the Byzantine period.¹⁰² According to Benoit and Boismard, the installation was at first simply a large, underground cavity for the storage of water measuring about 4.0 x 5.2 m. The floor was flat, and the ceiling extended upwards about 3.2 m. Sometime in the early Byzantine period workmen cut away the broad staircase that led down to the bottom in five steps from the door. This necessitated removing nearly seven cubic meters of limestone. Visitors to the cave left their names and Byzantine Christian invocations scratched into the plaster on the interior. Some of the inscriptions are dipinti in red paint.

Benoit and Boismard recorded sixty-seven Greek graffiti. In addition they recorded two in Latin, one in Syriac, and one they could not read, but guessed it was early Arabic or Syriac. Perhaps the most suggestive was found on the north wall in Greek and yields the following English: “Lord God, who raised Lazarus from the dead, think of your servant Asklepios and your [female] servant Chionion” (ΚΕ Ο ΘΣ Ο ΕΓΙΡΑΣ ΤΟΝ ΛΑΖΑΡΟΝ ΕΚ ΝΕΚΡΩΝ .ΑΝΗΣΘΟΤΙ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΑΣΚΛΕΠΙΟΥ ΚΕ ΧΙΟΝΙΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΔΟΥΛΗΣ ΣΟΥ). The other names are derived from Greek, Arabic, Aramaic, and perhaps Syriac, but the

¹⁰² P. Benoit and M. E. Boismard, “Un ancien sanctuaire chrétien à Bethanie,” *RB* (1951): 200–251. Joan E. Taylor, “The Bethany Cave: A Jewish-Christian Cult Site?” *RB* 97 (1990): 453–65.

reference to Lazarus suggests that this might be the Lazarum known by Egeria in the late fourth century to be at the second milestone from Jerusalem.¹⁰³

Yet, the morphology of the cavity resembles that of a Jewish ritual bath. (1) Originally there were two doors side by side, which suggests that one was for entrance and the other for egress. (2) An original staircase 5.4 m. broad beneath the water-line took up seven cubic meters better dedicated to water, if the cavity was intended to be a cistern. (3) There was a low divider on the stairs separating one side from the other exactly as one would expect in a *miqveh*, but not in a cistern. (4) There was no hole in the roof of the putative cistern for lowering a vessel to dip out water. (5) There was a small decanting basin near the steps that drained clean water into the staircase. And (6) this water originated in a cistern some eleven meters to the southwest which was connected to the decanting basin by a small canal, exactly as required.¹⁰⁴

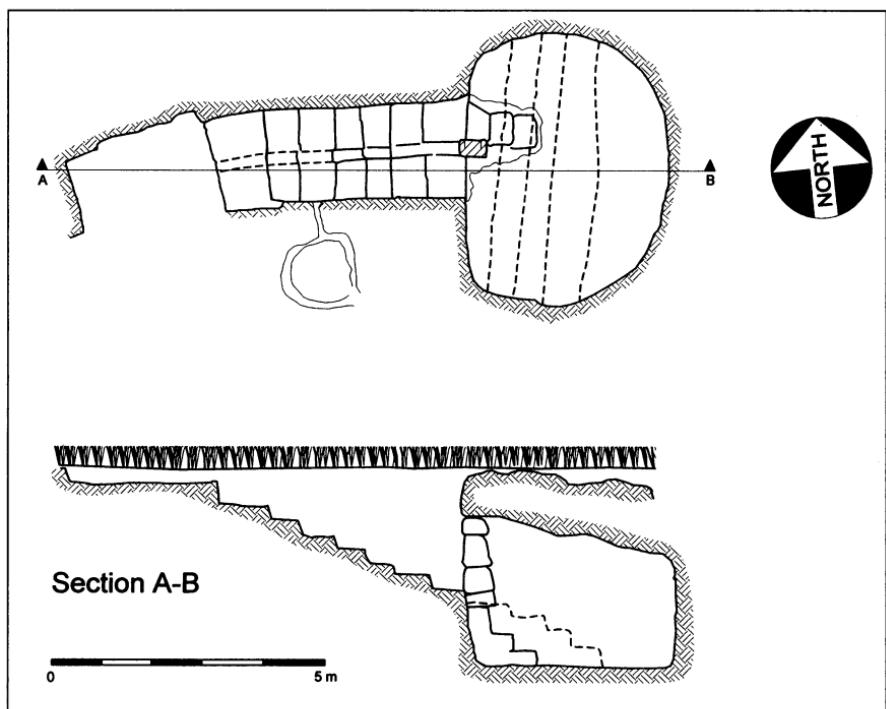


Figure 9: Plan and Section of the Bethany Cave. Adapted from Benoit and Boismard, 1951, with corrections from Taylor, 1987, and Pixner, 1991.

If this cavity at Bethany were a ritual bath or *miqveh*, it would tend to support the Jewish Christian hypothesis. That is, the water installation was origi-

¹⁰³ Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 55, 63.

¹⁰⁴ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 216–18.

nally simply Jewish, and eventually may have come into Jewish Christian hands. Over time, the site was passed to a clearly Byzantine Greek, Christian community, where it was altered for pilgrim usage. After this period it was abandoned, perhaps after the Muslim entry in 640 C.E. This scenario presupposes a local memory or oral tradition connecting this *miqveh* to the gospel stories of Bethany (Mark 11:11, 12 = Matt 21:17; cf. Luke 19:29; Mark 14:3 = Matt 26:6; John 11:1–44; John 12:1–8).

6. Jerusalem's "Essene Quarter" and Mt. Zion

A major advance in the discussion of archaeological remains that might connect us with Jewish Christianity came with the publications of Bargil Pixner, late of the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem. Pixner was more open to the analyses of Bagatti et al., but not as skeptical as Taylor. On the other hand Pixner practiced controlled critical method and had some field experience in archaeology. Yet much of Pixner's contribution are hypotheses that can and will be properly tested in field archeology and textual studies.

In 1976 Pixner published an essay on the possibility of an Essene Quarter on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ This essay appeared again in slightly revised version in 1991.¹⁰⁶ Pixner relied on a well known paragraph in Josephus that there was an Essene Gate in Jerusalem (*J.W.* 5.145). “But if we go the other way westward [from the west cloister of the temple], it [the first wall] began at the same place, and extended through a place called ‘Bethso’ to the gate of the Essenes . . .” [διὰ δὲ τοῦ Βησοῦ καλούμένου χώρου κατατείνον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἐσσηνῶν πύλην]. The wall continued to the Pool of Siloam. Pixner appeals to the Dead Sea Scrolls, specifically to 2QPs^a 22:1–4 to show that the Essenes had a strong love for Zion in Jerusalem. In addition he noted that CD 12.1 forbids a man to lie with a woman in the “Holy City.” This and the phrase in 1QM 3.10 (“the Congregation of Jerusalem”) imply that Essenes lived in the city of Jerusalem. Such a hypothesis tends to be confirmed, he believed, by 1 En. 26:1–5 and 27:1–3, which locates a “holy mountain” at the center of the earth, therefore in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁷

In any case the archaeological evidence he wishes to adduce as that of the “Essene Gate” is a gate first excavated by Bliss and Dickey between 1894–1897. It lay near the foot of the southwestern hill of Jerusalem known today as “Mt. Zion” or to archaeologists as “Zion 3.” Bliss and Dickey reported that this gate had four

¹⁰⁵ B. Pixner, “An Essene Quarter on Mt. Zion?” in *Studi archeologici* (vol. 1 of *Studia Hierosolymitana: in onore de P. Bellarmino Bagatti*; Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, collection major 22; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1976), 245–85.

¹⁰⁶ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 180–207.

¹⁰⁷ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 185. The “holy mountain” would be today’s Mt. Zion, or the southwest hill of Jerusalem, because there is flowing water “to the east,” which he takes to be Siloah.

thresholds or sills, one upon the other, and each corresponded to a specific period in its history. The three earlier thresholds were 8 feet, 10 inches wide (2.65 m.), or 10 inches (25.4 cm) wider than the last threshold.¹⁰⁸ Pixner points out that this threshold is almost exactly nine Roman feet long.¹⁰⁹

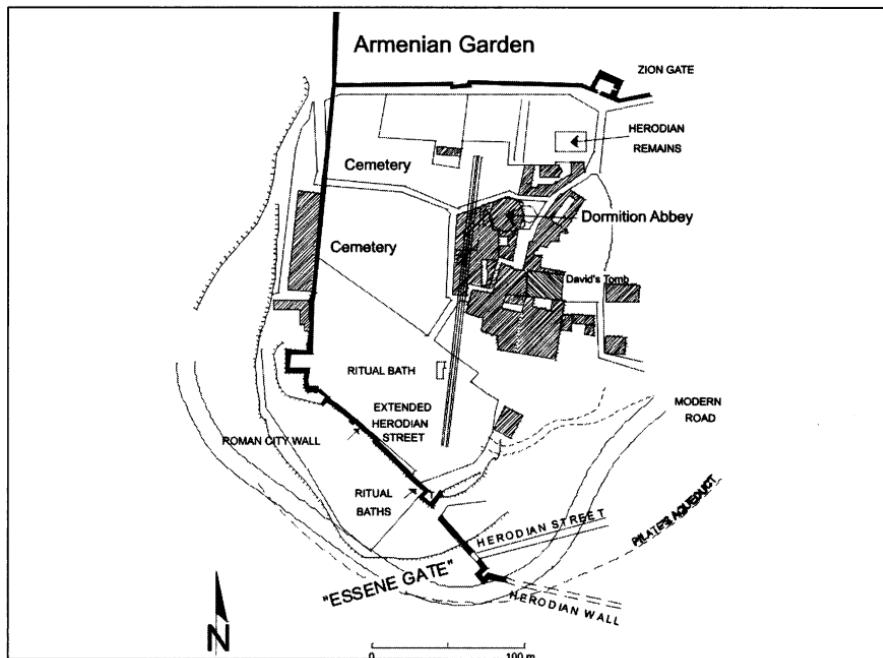


Figure 10: Plan of Mt. Zion and the “Essene Gate,” from Pixner, 1991, and Conder, 1875.

In 1977 Pixner received permission to re-excavate this gate. Pixner excavated with S. Margalit and D. Chen and found a tower and the gate exactly as Bliss and Dickie had reported it. Furthermore they were able to excavate those layers in the fill near the gate that corresponded to the several thresholds. In the earliest layers associated with the founding of the nearby tower they found Iron 2 pottery. This fixed the first occupation of this part of the hill to the 8th-7th centuries B.C.E., perhaps during the reign of Hezekiah. The second occupation corresponded to the founding of the wall, which contained Hasmonean pottery. The period of the first threshold they found to be securely dated by Herodian pottery, fixing the date of the first threshold to the period 37 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.¹¹⁰ The last threshold was of Byzantine date.

¹⁰⁸ F. J. Bliss and A. C. Dickey, *Excavations at Jerusalem 1894–1897* (London: Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1898), 19.

¹⁰⁹ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 192.

¹¹⁰ B. Pixner, D. Chen, and S. Margalit, “Mount Zion: The ‘Gate of the Essenes’ Re-excavated,” *ZDPV* 105 (1989): 85–95, pls. 6–16; Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 189–97. This find

Pixner had also noticed that at least three ritual baths were to be found on Mt. Zion. Two of them are found beneath the tower just south of the extension of the Herodian street found beneath the Dormition Abbey. The other is today covered by a steel, roofed structure just west of that street in the Greek Orthodox property south of the Dormition. The presence of these ritual baths, the first two of which resemble those found at Qumran, tends to confirm, in Pixner's view, that Mt. Zion was an Essene quarter in the Herodian Period.¹¹¹ Pixner believes that the "Bethso" in *Wars* V.145 quoted above refers to an Essene toilet built on the wall so that human waste fell outside the wall (therefore outside the holy city). Conder reported a ruined cistern or rock-cut, rectangular trough about where figure 9 has an arrow pointing to the "Roman city wall." Pixner found this feature again in his own exploration.¹¹² Finally, Pixner believes that the first three columns of the Copper Scroll indicate an Essene collective settlement at the southwest wall of Jerusalem.¹¹³

Let the reader be aware that in the Bible the gates of Jerusalem were named in at least three ways: (1) for the commodity sold there, (2) for a nearby feature, and (3) for the eventual destination when exiting the city. For gates named for the commodity one reads of the Fish Gate (2 Chr 33:14; Neh 3:3; 12:39; Zeph 1:10), the Sheep Gate (Neh 3:1, 32; 12:39; John 5:2), and the Horse Gate (2 Chr 23:15; Jer 31:40). For gates named for a nearby feature, we read of the Valley Gate (2 Chr 26:9; Neh 2:13, 15), the Water Gate (Neh 3:26; 8:1, 3; 12:37), the Corner Gate (2 Kgs 14:13; 2 Chr 25:23; 26:9; Jer 31:38; Zech 14:10), the Dung Gate (Neh 2:13; 3:13, 14; 12:31) and the Fountain Gate (Neh 2:14; 3:15; 12:37). For gates named for the eventual destination of the traveler from Jerusalem we find the Gate of Ephraim (2 Kgs 14:13; 2 Chr 25:23; Neh 8:16; 12:39) and the Gate of Benjamin (Jer 37:13; 38:7; Zech 14:10). On analogy with the Gate of Ephraim and the Gate of Benjamin, it may be argued that the gate excavated by Bliss and Dickie and then by Pixner led to Essenes *outside* Jerusalem.

The possibility of an Essene Quarter on Mt. Zion lays the groundwork for contextualizing several apostolic events or persons. According to Pixner, they are to be placed on Mt. Zion, that is, in Essene Judaism. These apostolic persons/events are the four "pious" men cited by Luke (Simeon in Luke 2:25, those who

confirmed Yadin's hypothesis in "The Gate of the Essenes and the Temple Scroll," in *Jerusalem Revealed, Archaeology in the Holy City 1968–1974* (ed. Y. Yadin; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 90–91.

¹¹¹ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 197–204. The third miqveh has no published plan, to my knowledge. It has been adapted to special worship by the Greek Orthodox Church, which owns the property.

¹¹² Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 203; C. R. Conder, "The Rock Scarp of Zion," Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement (1875): 84. Pixner proposes that the "Bethso" of Josephus corresponds to Hebrew "Beth Soah" (בֵּית סֹאָה) or "House of Filth."

¹¹³ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 204. The view that the hiding places of the Copper Scroll are in Jerusalem and elsewhere is repeated many times in the literature. G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Allen, 1997), 583–84.

buried Steven in Acts 8:2, Ananias of Damascus in Acts 22:12, and the Jews assembled in Jerusalem for Pentecost in Acts 2:5); the events of Acts 2:1–4; the social structure of the early congregation in Acts 2:45 and 4:35; and the obedient priests added to their number in Acts 6:7.¹¹⁴

As one can readily see, these interpretations might plausibly fit into the textual evidence of Acts and Luke, but in no way is such a contextualization in a hypothetical Essene quarter required. Pixner's arguments are perhaps testable hypotheses in some instances, and it may be that further excavation or chance finds may tend to confirm such hypotheses. In any case, Pixner's analyses are provocative and call for further investigation.

Other ideas of Pixner call for further excavation and testing of his hypotheses in the field. For example, Pixner has proposed that “Bethany beyond the Jordan” is to be located in Jordan near the Wadi Yabis and ancient Kokhaba, a site of John the Baptizer’s activity.¹¹⁵ Furthermore he proposes that today’s Tomb of David on Mt. Zion was an ancient synagogue of Judeo-Christian usage, and that the traditions of a Christian presence on Mt. Zion can be traced with some plausibility to apostolic times. His argument is far too detailed to treat here in brief.¹¹⁶

In any case Pixner’s publications are rich in detail and provocative in terms of their acceptance by a wider scholarly community.

7. Conclusion: The Problem of Method

The most vexing problem to face the researcher in this field is that of interpretation. By what criterion—or by what set of criteria—does one identify an element of material culture or archaeological evidence as an indicator for Jewish Christianity? One way would be to identify signs and symbols well known from the fourth century or later and attempt to work backwards chronologically to trace their ancestors in the archaeological evidence. The difficulty with this method is that there is no continuity, no chain of attestation in the material culture as one works backwards. In fact, no one can yet show with certainty that

¹¹⁴ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 328–33. Pixner argues Luke’s word εὐλαβεῖς (pious) is a word that the LXX uses to translate Hebrew “chasidim” (חִסְדִּים) and that the word “Essene” is therefore probably the Greek form of the Aramaic term “chassajja” (חַסָּאֵד). The four “Pious” people or groups whom Luke describes fit an Essene *Gestalt* very well, according to Pixner. For further elaboration of the “Essene Quarter” thesis, see Rainer Riesner, *Essener und Urgemeinde in Jerusalem: Neue Funde und Quellen* (2d ed.; Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1998).

¹¹⁵ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 166–79; Rainer Riesner, “Bethany and Beyond Jordan (John 1:28): Topography, Theology, and History in the Fourth Gospel,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 38 (1987): 29–63.

¹¹⁶ Pixner, *Wege des Messias*, 287–326. See also Bargil Pixner, “Archäologische Beobachtungen zum Jerusalemer Essener-Viertel und zur Urgemeinde,” in *Christen und Christliches im Qumran?* (ed. B. F. Meyer; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1992), 89–113.

Christianity, either in its early Gentile forms or its Jewish forms, developed a recognizable iconography before the fourth century.¹¹⁷

There has been a parallel problem in identifying certain remains as being Jewish or not. In this case we are fortunate that there is a kind of inchoate consensus that ritual baths and carved stone vessels in houses appear to identify the inhabitants as Jewish. In this case "Jewish" simply means those who practice ritual washing in *Miqva'oth* and who practice ritual purity with stone vessels.¹¹⁸ But, once we have identified a family as practicing Jews, how do we then find those who were identified with the new Jewish movement? There is no single answer.

One can see that it is probably no accident that the researchers in the 1970s and 1980s turned to inscriptions, graffiti, and symbols as the most articulate expression of Jewish Christianity. Yet the building of consensus among scholars was not successful, as can be seen from perusal of the literature. For example, although names like Jesus, Jude (Judas, etc.), Joseph, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and so on occur in the New Testament, there is nothing in the names recorded on ossuaries that makes them unambiguously the same people as the New Testament personages. That is why certain scholars have turned to symbols and other marks on ossuaries to provide evidence that the early followers of Jesus of Jewish birth scratched indicators for the family in addition to the name. These indicators were symbols or monograms or some other sign known to them and later recognizable as Jewish Christian, most noticeably various kinds of crosses. Yet, when presented with the signs and symbols that have been adduced as surely those very markers, closer examination presents us with two options: either they mean something else, or it is impossible to deduce precisely what they mean.

On the other hand there are evidences that Byzantine Christians developed shrines and even churches on sites where ritual baths have been found. This is true at Nazareth and Bethphage and perhaps elsewhere. There is also the case of Capernaum and its Hebrew graffiti, though no ritual baths were discovered there. In these cases we are left with working hypotheses more than developed theories, at least in part because of the failure of our methods in interpreting the evidence. On the other hand, that there is a continuity of veneration by Byzantine and likely Gentile Christians at sites with recognizably Jewish remains of the earliest centuries suggests that the hypothesized continuity of veneration tends to be confirmed. This is not to say that we are finished testing the hypotheses, and in the future more work will be done. It is probably critical to test the hypotheses of Bargil Pixner in the field first.

¹¹⁷G. F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1991; rev. ed. 2003).

¹¹⁸Of course in both cases we have voluminous ancient references to both practices in Jewish literature, as in the Mishnah, *Tractate Miqva'oth*.

P A R T S I X

Conclusion and Outlook



The History of Jewish Believers in the Early Centuries—Perspectives and Framework

Oskar Skarsaune

1. The Purpose and Approach of this Chapter

The different contributions of this volume may perhaps be likened to smaller and larger pieces of a fragmented and incompletely preserved historical jigsaw puzzle. This is no unusual situation for historical studies of antiquity. But in the case of Jewish believers in Jesus the preserved pieces are unusually few and scattered. In order to place them appropriately within a comprehensive picture of the whole, it may help a great deal to outline some basic features of the historical board on which we place the pieces. This is what I will attempt in this chapter.

Not a few features of this more comprehensive picture are known from other sources than those directly concerned with Jewish believers. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that mobilizing such wider perspectives in situating and interpreting the information on Jewish believers displayed in the different chapters of this volume can enrich and deepen our understanding of each piece. If we think in terms of the hermeneutical circle—seeing the parts in the perspective of the whole, and constructing the whole based on insight in the parts—this chapter will be an attempt at seeing some contours of that whole within which the parts can be seen more clearly.

The circumstances under which Jewish believers conducted their lives would vary in two dimensions. At one and the same point in time the circumstances would vary according to *where* they were living. Circumstances were different in different places. Let us call this the *synchronic* perspective. On the other hand, in one and the same place circumstances could vary with *time*. Let us call this the *diachronic* perspective, and let us reflect a little further on these two angles of view.

(1) First concerning the *synchronic* dimension: Jewish believers in Jesus at any given time would live in different settings, different milieus, and different

types of fellowship. I believe the significance of this has often been underestimated. Especially in studies of “Jewish Christianity,” a history of ideas approach has often been dominant, constructing an ideological entity that was studied as such. Quite apart from the fact that this entity had all the marks of being a modern scholarly construct based on similar constructs by the early Christian heresiologists, this Jewish Christianity was often constructed as a uniform entity. People belonging to Jewish Christianity believed such and such, and had a corresponding lifestyle, all of them. And it was assumed that their practice was determined by their theology. If, therefore, differences of practice were observed among the members of Jewish Christianity, this was also explained by differences in theology.

It is here, I believe, that this approach underestimates the significance of different settings, different milieus, and different situations. The history of ideas approach is too abstract, too bent on discerning cognitive systems as such, for the concrete historical constraints of human existence to appear clearly within its horizon. What I am going to argue in this essay is that different settings, different contexts, can explain more of the differences among Jewish believers regarding lifestyle than has often been thought. I will downplay theology as the main explanation of behavior and give increased emphasis to the significance of concrete social context. I shall ask quite concretely *where* and in *what social settings* we find the Jewish believers of antiquity. How far can the answers to these questions explain what we find about them in the few sources that we have?

(2) Second, concerning the *diachronic* dimension: Jewish believers in Jesus were not faced with the same problems and the same challenges throughout the first five centuries of their existence. It is especially this diachronic dimension that could not easily appear in the individual contributions of this volume. Accordingly, I take it as one of my main tasks in this chapter to supplement the former chapters by adding the diachronic perspective.

Conditions for all Jews living in the land of Israel changed radically during these centuries, and so did conditions for their Jewish compatriots in the Roman and Persian Diasporas. One could argue that the situation for Christians changed even more dramatically during and after what we usually call the Constantinian revolution. Again, the perceived change was not the same in all places. In a memorable phrase, William H. C. Frend once said that for the Donatist Christians of North Africa, “the [Christian] Empire was still Babylon and the Emperor had no call to meddle in Church affairs”—which he did to an alarming degree.¹

But if Constantine’s reconstruction and reconstitution of the unity of the Roman Empire had great consequences for all Jews and even greater consequences for all Christians, how and how much did it affect those who were, in a sense, both Jews and Christians, the Jewish believers?

¹ William H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961; repr. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), 554.

Mapping the varieties and pluriformity of Jewish Christian existence during the first five centuries of the Common Era is not without contemporary relevance. Discovering that Jewish believers in antiquity came in many varieties could be of significance to modern Jewish believers in Jesus, who are similarly various and pluriform.

2. Jewish Believers in Jesus—An Artificial Category?

Before I go into the subject matter proper of this chapter, I find it necessary to return to a question already broached in the first two chapters of this book, the question of definition. In two highly stimulating volumes, Daniel Boyarin has challenged established paradigms for handling the question of Jewish and Christian identity in antiquity.² Many traditional definitions of *Jewish Christians* have the two constituent terms of this double term as their point of departure. In order to define what makes a person a Jewish Christian, one must first have a definition of *Jewish* and *Christian*. These terms, in their turn, are defined by reference to what constitutes *Judaism* and *Christianity*.

With regard to this procedure, Boyarin argues that if we adopt the definitions of Judaism and Christianity offered us in the sources, we adopt the normative definitions launched by religious leaders on both sides, who by these definitions tried to *create* clear borders where none existed. But as historians we should not adopt normative definitions as if they were purely descriptive and factual. According to Boyarin, the great pioneer on the Christian side in this game of making clear borders was Justin, and on the Jewish side the late second century sages of the Mishnah, roughly contemporaries of Justin. One has to add that neither Justin nor the sages were able to have their border-making immediately recognized by each and every Jew or Christian, so that we have to look to the fourth century and the Constantinian epoch as the time when this border-making was made effective on the ground.

The relevant point in our context is that by defining Jewish Christians as human beings trying to combine two identities, Jewish and Christian, we take for granted that something existed that in fact did not exist, namely these two identities. Before Constantine, *Judaism* and *Christianity* were ideological constructions and little more. They were more virtual than real, and by defining a Jewish Christian as a person of double or split identity, we mistake these virtual identities for real ones. Talking about a Jewish Christian before Constantine is to make use of an artificial category, because the components of the term are artificial.

² *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (*Figurae: Reading Medieval Culture*; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); and *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (*Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion*; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

I think there are merits as well as problems in this argument. In my view its greatest merit is to pinpoint a category mistake historians should avoid, namely taking normative definitions as descriptive. Religious leaders were interested in defining their respective faiths and practices in such a way that they appeared *intrinsically* and *essentially* incompatible with the other's faith and the other's practices. But these definitions of the inner essences of Judaism and Christianity, along with the corresponding definitions of where Judaism ended and Christianity began (or vice versa), were *made by somebody*. They were not given facts. In adopting these definitions, the historian also adopts the normative perspective of religious leadership. This is often done among Jewish and Christian scholars, and I believe Boyarin is entirely correct in pointing this out. If one accepts the traditional normative definitions, Jewish Christians were marginal. One could perhaps state it even more strongly. They were trying to combine two incompatible identities. If this is a given, the historian feels no further need to explain why these people "disappeared" rather soon. No one can ride two horses very long. Boyarin's point is that until Constantine, at least, the two horses were to a great extent purely virtual, and that the picture of two distinct horses did not reflect realities on the ground.

This granted, I also see problems with Boyarin's alternative. He seems to envisage a continuum he calls Judeo-Christianity, a broad continuum within which sharp borders are hard to find. Accordingly, Jewish Christians disappear as a distinct category because they are impossible to define. They mingle, so to speak, within the Judeo-Christian continuum.

I believe this way of looking at things is too abstract. One overlooks actual border lines that were perceived to be realities by everyone in antiquity, and that are made no less real simply by the fact that we moderns think they were also social constructs. One fundamental border line of supreme importance for the subject of this book was the border between Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). One can see problems with defining this border line exactly and argue that it was far from razor-sharp, but one cannot make it disappear. One cannot even make its great significance disappear. This is because the evidence in our sources is far too obtrusive. It cannot be brushed aside.

In the ancient Christian sources a clear distinction is made between Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile believers in Jesus. The two groups were *not* distinguished from each other by anything that was believed or done by all within each group. It is evident that Jewish believers in Jesus disagreed among themselves on more than one question of faith and practice, and so did the Gentile believers. But their position on such questions was not what defined them as Jewish or Gentile believers. This was defined by their *ethnic background* and by this only. The border line between Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus was exactly as sharp and as blurred as the border line between Jews and Gentiles in general. One cannot do away with the one without eliminating the other, because basically they are one and the same.

It is in this *ethnic* sense, clearly attested in the ancient sources prior to any theological definition of different orthodoxies, that we use the term *Jewish believer in Jesus* in this volume. Accordingly, while agreeing to parts of Boyarin's criticism of conventional categories of "Jewish" and "Christian," I think the term *Jewish believer in Jesus* as defined and used in this book is not dissolved or made meaningless by anything argued by Boyarin. In antiquity, Christians and Jews knew who the Jewish believers in Jesus were with the same degree of precision as they knew in general who was Jewish and who was not. And they had the same criteria for who believed in Jesus and who did not with regard to Jews as with regard to other people.³

After this all too brief apology for the continued use of the main category of this volume—*Jewish believer in Jesus*—I turn to a second point of great significance to my present project, a point on which Boyarin's insights are highly relevant.

3. How Close Were Jews and Christians in Antiquity?

This is an important question in our context, since the answer to it determines how we envisage the social setting of traffic across the border between the two communities. It is also a question on which contemporary scholarship is remarkably split. On the one hand, some scholars prefer to regard the two communities as having little if any real contact, especially after the Bar Kokhba war. After this time, all literary evidence of dialogues, debates, and social contact is considered a purely literary phenomenon. The Jew of Christian polemics is a purely Christian invention, and the *adversus Iudeos* literature, including the so-called dialogues, was for internal Christian consumption only. It was all part of the project of Christian self-definition and had little if anything to do with real-life Jewish/Christian contact and controversy.⁴

On the other end of the scale we find Daniel Boyarin and others influenced by the new "the ways that never parted" paradigm.⁵ Here it is argued that the

³One could object to this that some Jewish believers conceived of Jesus as the Messiah in such adoptionist terms that Gentile Christians, like Justin, would not have recognized them as Christians. But in my view, this is not what we find Justin saying. He clearly knows Jewish believers of an Ebionite type, but he does not say they are non-Christians. What he clearly says is that their faith is less than perfect. See my chapter 17 of this book and also Skarsaune, "Heresy and the Pastoral Epistles," *Themelios* 20 (1994): 9–14.

⁴A recent high point in this trend is represented by Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (StPB 46; Leiden: Brill, 1995). See the reviews of this book by James Carleton Paget, "Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity," *ZAC* 1 (1997): 195–225; and Wolfram Kinzig, *JTS* 48 (1997): 643–49.

⁵See the different contributions in Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

border line between Jews and Christians was mostly a construct imposed on the historical realities by religious leaders on both sides. In reality, Jews and Christians made out a more or less coherent continuum before Constantine. As I have explained already, I think this model unduly downplays the significance of the *ethnic* distinction between Jews and Gentiles. But I also think it represents a healthy corrective to any model that separates Jews and Christians, to the point of claiming no contact between them at all.

The view that Jews and Christians were socially close and had much contact with each other in the Diaspora is strongly supported by archaeology. A close and surprisingly peaceful co-existence between Jews and Christians is the rule rather than the exception as far as the archaeological record is concerned. The special relevance of this is the fact that archaeology documents this most unambiguously for the Byzantine period.⁶ For the very period concerning which scholars concluded that there was no actual contact any more between the two parties, archaeology tells a completely different story. And once archaeology has presented its picture, one can find it confirmed in the literary documents as well, often against their declared polemical tendency. It is a well established rule of source criticism that sources often divulge the most reliable information in what they say unwillingly and sometimes unwittingly.

Imperial laws from the Byzantine period sometimes legislate against close socializing between Jews and Christians. It lies near to hand to conclude that such socializing actually took place. In a similar vein, decrees of church councils, like the one at Elvira in Spain 306, tell the same story of Jews and Christians living in proximity to one another. The socializing between Christians and Jewish lay-people and clergy (probably in the lower ranks) in Spain in the early fourth century was extensive enough as to worry religious leaders.⁷

⁶ See, e.g., Eric M. Meyers, "Early Judaism and Christianity in the Light of Archaeology," *BA* 51 (1988): 69–79; Leonard Victor Rutgers, "Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity," *AJA* 96 (1992): 101–18; John S. Crawford, "Multiculturalism at Sardis," *BAR* 22, no. 5 (1996): 38–47; Crawford, "Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in late-antique Sardis," in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period* (Baltimore Studies in the History of Judaism; ed. Steven Fine; London: Routledge, 1999), 190–200. Especially the evidence from Byzantine Sardis is striking indeed—the very scene of Melito's stark anti-Jewish polemic two centuries earlier.

⁷ The canons of Elvira are so eloquent a description of realities on the ground that I summarize them here:

Canon 16 forbids mixed marriages between Christians and Jews or heretics. The penalty for Christian parents who marry their daughter to a Jew or heretic is five years excommunication. It is obvious that the council here wanted to put an end to practice that was not at all uncommon. There were probably similar rulings on the Jewish side.

Canon 49 rules that Christians should not ask the local rabbi to bless the fruits of their fields. Again it appears this was not uncommon practice; probably Christian farmers had seen Jewish farmers practicing blessing ceremonies to which the Chris-

It is basically the same story that we meet in Syrian Antioch some eighty years later in the famous *Adversus Iudeos* sermons of John Chrysostom. All too often these sermons have been exploited as sources for only half of the story they tell—the part concerned with the development of anti-Jewish attitudes among church leaders. The other half of the story is as interesting in that the sermons imply extensive socializing between Jews and Christians in Antioch.⁸ It was this socializing that called forth the sermons in the first place. Chrysostom observed that all too many in his flock of Christians were doing things of which he intensely disapproved.⁹

tians had no parallel. By the time of the council the church had developed such, and the canon threatens that if you have a Jew bless your fields, the subsequent blessing by your own priest will be without effect.

Canon 50 says that clerics or laypeople who share meals with Jews are to be excommunicated. The interesting thing to note here is that even clerics socialized with Jews.

Canon 78 requires five years excommunication for a Christian husband who commits fornication with a Jewess or a pagan woman.

For text and comment on these canons, see Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.–11. Jh.)* (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 23: Theologie, Bd. 172; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982), 247–49. See also the comments in James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Anti-Semitism* (London: Soncino, 1934; repr. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 174–75.

⁸Greek text in PG 48:843–942. The translation I have used is that of Paul W. Harkins, *Saint John Chrysostom: Discourses against Judaizing Christians* (The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 68; Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1979). My references within parenthesis refer to Discourse, chapter, and paragraph.

⁹People were:

going to watch the [Jewish] festivals, and joining the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts (1.1.5).

taking part in the fast from New Year to Yom Kippur, and then joining the celebration of Tabernacles (1.1.5).

celebrating Passover according to Jewish calendar and custom (3 passim).

Chrysostom implores his audience to cease doing what they are now doing all the time:

“You observe with them [the Jews] the fellowship of the festivals, you go to their profane places, enter their unclean doors, share in the table of demons” (1.7.5).

“What is it that you are rushing to see in the synagogue?” (4.7.4).

“Many, I know, respect the Jews and think their present way of life is a venerable one” (1.3.1).

“These men consider the Jews as more trustworthy teachers than their own fathers” (3.6.6).

Christians preferred to swear solemn oaths in the synagogue before the rabbi, because “oaths sworn there were more to be feared” (1.3.5).

The literary evidence supports and confirms the archaeological evidence that there was extensive interaction between Christians and Jews.¹⁰ Not only were Christians and Jews often linked together in life but they sometimes also found fellowship in death. In one of the other starkly anti-Jewish Fathers, Ambrose, there is touching evidence of this. He mentions a curious episode that took place in Bologna. Local Jews were present when Ambrose and the local Christians exhumed two martyrs, Vitalis and Agricola, who had been buried in the local Jewish cemetery. Why were they buried there? One can think of two reasons. Either they were Jewish believers, and the local Jews recognized them as martyrs for the God of Israel; or, if they were Gentiles, the Jews gave them posthumous shelter during the heat of persecution. Jews giving Christians shelter in times of persecution was not uncommon.¹¹ Jews being impressed with Gentiles becoming martyrs for the God of Israel is also on record in our sources.¹² This is probably the setting which gives meaning to Ambrose's report. Ambrose himself seems surprised at the affection for the two martyrs that was evinced by the local Jews. Those, he said, who had dishonored the martyrs' master honored his disciples.¹³

It should also be noted that on more than one occasion Ambrose speaks about Jews who admire Christians and their churches, who engage in friendly conversation with Christians, and who themselves study their own scriptures day and night with such zeal that Christians fall far behind. Ambrose encourages preaching to Jews, and although most of them will not listen, there are a few who willingly listen and may believe and ask for baptism.¹⁴

I must content myself with these few scraps carved from a much broader evidence. The lesson to be learned, I believe, is that when church leaders argue that Christians should keep away from Jews at all costs because being a Jew is something contrary to being a Christian, they are arguing in the face of the reality that Christians were *not*, in fact, keeping away from Jews. It is true that they use "the Jews" as a necessary opposite in their own construction of Christian identity. But this in no way implies that the Jews they are talking about are purely literary in-

¹⁰ For further comment, see Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study 13; Ann Arbor, Mich.: Scholars Press, 1978), 25–36; Wolfram Kinzig, "'Non-Separation': Closeness and Co-Operation Between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century," *VC* 45 (1991): 27–53; and Skarsaune, "The Neglected Story of Christian Philo-Semitic in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *Mishkan* 21, no. 2 (1994): 40–51.

¹¹ In the *Martyrdom of Pionius*, ch. 13, Pionius warns against accepting such shelter when it was offered by Jews. Text and translation in Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (OECT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 152–53.

¹² Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine*, ch. 8. For translation, see Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John E. L. Oulton, *The Ecclesiastical History and The Martyrs of Palestine* (2 vols.; London: SPCK, 1927–28; repr. 1954), 1: 365. See the comments on this passage in Saul Lieberman, "The Martyrs of Caesarea," *Annuaire de l'institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves* 7 (1939–1944): 395–446.

¹³ Ambrose, *Exhortatio virginitatis* 1.6–8 (PL 16:353).

¹⁴ See Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 310.

ventions. To the contrary, these church fathers want to put an end to widespread socializing between Jews and Christians. That is why the anti-Jewish definition of Christian identity is so important to them.¹⁵

These considerations are relevant for our topic in that they present a new understanding of the border area between Judaism and Christianity. This border area used to be envisaged as a narrow, inhospitable, and practically uninhabitable place, a religious and social no-man's land where, with the exception of some rather marginal persons, few would want to settle. The new paradigm advocated by Boyarin and others portrays this border area quite differently. It was, at a grassroots level, a rather peaceful border in many places and most of the time. There was much border traffic, probably in both directions. Not a few border dwellers would regard themselves and their way of life as perfectly normal. Jewish believers in Jesus would think of themselves as good Jews, no less good because of the fact that they believed the Messiah of Israel had appeared. Many Jewish believers in Jesus may have conceived of themselves as, if anything, *more Jewish with* than without their faith in Jesus. They had no consciousness of crossing, or dwelling on, the border of the Jewish people, not to speak of "Judaism."

This is not something we posit on good *a priori* reasons only; it is borne out by some of their literary productions. There was also traffic in the opposite direction on the part of Christians of Gentile (non-Jewish) origin who *either* socialized with Jews (believers in Jesus or non-believers) and observed varying degrees of Jewish lifestyle, without "converting" to Judaism and without considering themselves Jewish, *or* who actually had themselves circumcised and considered themselves Jewish. Both of these categories of Gentile believers may have thought they became more biblical and therefore better Christians by this "Judaizing." As far as theological ideas are concerned, there might often have been little difference between these "Judaizers" and the Jewish believers who may have been their closest friends. The main difference between them would have been the one defined by ethnic origin.

In this way, "the ways that never parted" paradigm opens a window to the historical *ambience* of Jewish believers. It restores one of the most essential "circumstances" needed to understand their existence. Historically speaking, they did not by their existence challenge the essence of either religion. They did, however, challenge normative definitions advocated by religious leaders—but to varying degrees.

¹⁵I believe this also implies a credible scenario for the need for the Jewish/Christian dialogues that continue to be produced right up through the sixth century. It may be true that they were mainly intended for a Christian audience, but then for a Christian audience already engaged in everyday conversations with Jews. The main purpose of the dialogues may have been to educate Christians so that they could use these everyday opportunities better than the dialogues' authors thought they were doing. On the dialogues, see Lawrence Lahey's chapter 19 of this book.

4. Were Jewish Believers in Jesus to Be Found in Clearly Defined Sects?

Everything I have said so far would indicate a negative answer to this question. If we were to begin our quest for the early Jewish believers in Jesus in Epiphanius's *Panarion*, however, the answer to the above question would seem to be a resounding yes. According to Epiphanius, Jewish believers in Jesus belonged to one of the following sects: Ebionites, Nazoraeans, Elchasaites, Cerinthians, or Sampseans. Epiphanius's extensive descriptions of these sects appear well informed, and may rightly be seen as the crowning achievement at the end of a long row of predecessors. It is understandable that many modern histories of Jewish Christianity have taken Epiphanius and his predecessors as their starting point and have taken over his classification of the Jewish Christian sects. The result was often that relevant material found outside the heresiological descriptions of the sects was attributed to one of them.

This approach was, in my view, based on insufficient awareness of the highly speculative nature of Epiphanius's constructions. If any descriptions of heresies should be characterized as little more than theoretical constructs, Epiphanius's reports on the Jewish Christian sects are worthy candidates. In this volume we have effectively, I believe, deconstructed Epiphanius's reports (see chs. 14–16).

The Cerinthians probably never existed; no early source claims Cerinth himself was Jewish. The Sampseans may have been the same as the Elkesaites, or similar to them. The Book of Elxai, propagated by the Elkesaites, contained no clearly Christian elements, but apparently some Jewish. The author of this book was probably not Jewish and almost certainly not a believer in Jesus. When arriving in Rome, the sect propagating the book tried to win uncircumcised Christians. The sect was not made up of members who had been born Jewish. The same was probably true of the Sampseans, if they were a different sect.

This leaves us with the Ebionites and Nazoraeans as the only real Jewish believers among Epiphanius's sects. His portrait of the Ebionites is not based on firsthand knowledge of this group. It is a very mixed composite of every scrap of literary information Epiphanius thought he could ascribe to them. In making the Pseudo-Clementine novel his main source on Ebionites, Epiphanius was simply mistaken. As a consequence he attributed to them both Elkesaiter ideas and a harmonistic gospel that apparently had nothing to do with Ebionites.¹⁶ The only

¹⁶On the so-called Ebionite Gospel of Epiphanius, see now Oskar Skarsaune, "Jewish-Christian Gospels: Which and How Many?" in *Ancient Israel, Judaism, and Christianity in Contemporary Perspective: Essays in Memory of Karl-Johan Illman* (Studies in Judaism; ed. Jacob Neusner et al.; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2006), 393–408. On the Pseudo-Clementines, see Graham Stanton's chapter 11 of this book. Apart from Rec. 1.27–71, there are no clearly Jewish Christian sources to be discerned behind the Pseudo-Clementine writings. The fiction of the novel requires Peter and the other Jewish characters to speak and behave like Jewish believers. But this fiction often breaks down and betrays an author who thinks in ways utterly uncharacteristic of Jewish

reliable information on Ebionites that has come down to us is the picture preserved in Irenaeus and his immediate followers, and thereafter in Origen. A reasonable interpretation of the evidence is that Irenaeus's Ebionites were a group of Jewish believers who put such emphasis on Jesus' royal descent from David that they claimed Joseph was his biological father. They also seem to have used the gospel of Matthew only, and to have required Gentiles who joined their ranks to get themselves circumcised and to keep all the Mosaic commandments. But Irenaeus may have been wrong in assuming that *ebionaioi* was a name peculiar to this group of Jewish believers. It may originally have been a self-designation used by many Aramaic/Syriac-speaking Jewish believers in the land of Israel, the Transjordan, and in Syria. In Origen we find clear evidence that he knew from good sources that not all who called themselves Ebionites shared the doctrines attributed to them by Irenaeus et al. Origen says, in fact, that Jewish believers in general are called Ebionites. Calling a certain type of Jewish believers by this name and interpreting the name as meaning "followers of Ebion," is probably another example of the construction of a named sect by ecclesiastical heresiologists.

Another example of this process of sect-making may be the Nazoraeans. This name was probably the common name for Christians, or "followers of the Nazoraean," in Aramaic- and Syriac-speaking areas. Epiphanius knew there were Jewish believers in Syria who practiced a Jewish lifestyle, but apart from that he had little reliable information about them. In Jerome, the same believers come out as quite orthodox in their theology, in that the only heresy they are guilty of is practicing a Jewish lifestyle. Since none of the writings of our two church fathers had any ready sect-name for these Jewish believers, they used by default the common name for Christians in Syria as a name of the supposed sect.

If the above is anything near the truth, it means that historians of Jewish believers in Jesus should leave behind the category system of the heresiologists, and approach the ancient sources independent of it. What this means in concrete terms will become apparent as we proceed.

I now turn to the task of establishing some synchronic and diachronic parameters of the history of Jewish believers in Jesus in the first five centuries of our era. These parameters will be brought into play throughout.

5. Where Do We Find the Jewish Believers?

We should expect to find Jewish believers in those geographical locations where Jews were to be found *in significant numbers* in the first place. In my view, the evidence bears out this expectation. I will arrange this subchapter accordingly.

believers, e.g., concerning interpolated pericopes in the Torah and all the Prophets being false. I plan to follow this up in a forthcoming article.

5.1. Jewish Believers in the Land of Israel

It goes without saying that the Jewish heartlands within the land of Israel—Jerusalem itself, Judea, the coastal plain, and the Galilee with Transjordan north and south of the Sea of Galilee—were the first and most important recruitment bases for Jewish believers in Jesus. Within this area significant political and demographic changes took place during our period.¹⁷ The two Jewish wars had far-reaching consequences. After 70 C.E. the proto-rabbinic movement left Jerusalem for good, never to return to the city and never again to make it their seat of authority. Recent archaeology clearly indicates that Jewish settlement in Jerusalem came to an almost complete end already with the first Jewish war. There are no Jewish burials to be found there for the period between the wars, whereas the archaeological remains of the Tenth Roman Legion Fretensis are abundant.¹⁸ This implies that the majority of the Jerusalem Jews who survived the war later moved to other parts of the land of Israel as well as probably the Transjordan.

This must be true also for those Jewish believers who survived the war, unless there is some reality behind Eusebius's report that, alerted by a prophecy, they left the city before the war.¹⁹ Whether the one alternative or the other is true,

¹⁷ For the following, see in particular the instructive reviews of Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Judaism to the Mishnah: 135–200 C.E.," in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development* (ed. Hershel Shanks; Washington, D. C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992), 195–223; and Isaiah M. Gafni, "The World of the Talmud: From the Mishnah to the Arab Conquest," in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, 225–65.

¹⁸ See Hillel Geva, "Searching for Roman Jerusalem," *BAR* 23, no. 6 (1997): 34–45; 72–73; and Jodi Magness, "In the footsteps of the Tenth Roman Legion in Judea," in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology* (ed. A. M. Berlin and J. A. Overman; New York: Routledge, 2002), 189–212.

¹⁹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.2–3. There is an extensive bibliography on this passage; see, e.g., S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church: A Study of the Effects of the Jewish Overthrow of A.D. 70 on Christianity* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1957), 167–84; *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (New York: Scribner, 1967), 208–17; Marcel Simon, "La Migration à Pella—Légende ou réalité?" *RSR* 60 (1972): 37–54 (repr. in Simon, *Le Christianisme antique et son contexte religieux: Scripta Varia* (2 vols.; WUNT 23; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981), 2:477–94; Gerd Lüdemann, "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition," in *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (ed. E.P. Sanders; vol. 1 of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 161–73; Ray A. Pritz, "The Historicity of the Pella Tradition," in Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (SPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 122–27; Jozef Verheyden, *De Vlucht van de Christenen naar Pella: Onderzoek van het Getuigenis van Eusebius en Epiphanius* (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren Jaargang 50, 127; Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1988); Craig Koester, "The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 90–106; Jürgen Wehnert: "Die Auswanderung der Jerusalemer Christen nach Pella—historisches Faktum oder theologische Konstruktion?" *ZKG* 102 (1991): 231–55; Francois Blanchetière and Ray A. Pritz, "La migration des 'nazréens' à Pella," in *Aux origines juives du christianisme* (ed. F. Blanchetière and M. D. Herr; Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 93–110; P. H. R. van Houwelingen, "Fleeing Forward: The Departure of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 181–200.

Eusebius's story of the flight to Pella may encapsulate a historical truth. After the war, we no longer find a resident community of Jewish believers in Jerusalem, at least not a large one. Eusebius's list of fifteen Jewish "bishops" in Jerusalem may have been leaders in exile for a community in exile, or may have been resident leaders of a community mostly in exile.²⁰

This means that the Jerusalem community of believers in Jesus was literally dissolved after the war. This, more than anything else, explains why this community seems to have lost all significance after 70 C.E. It is superfluous and unwarranted to assume it developed in a sectarian direction and ended up as a "heretical" backwater. There may be substance in the claim of Jewish believers in other places that they represented the continuation of the traditions of this community. A case in point could well be a writer like Aristo of Pella.

After the Bar Kokhba rebellion of 132–135, the loss of Jerusalem became permanent. Not only was Jerusalem emptied of its Jews, there soon followed a general migration of Jews from the territory of Judea into Galilee. In Aelia Capitolina—Hadrian's name for Jerusalem—we now find Gentiles, the Roman army and its officers, and all the people necessary to sustain the infrastructure. Apart from Aelia, we also find substantial Gentile populations in the large coastal cities, Caesarea in particular, and also in some of the larger Hellenized cities inland, like Scythopolis. The Jewish leadership, on the other hand, seems to have shunned the big Romanized cities. They took part in the general drift of Jews towards Galilee, but in the beginning they established their academies in the small villages of rural Galilee like Ussha, not in Sepphoris or Tiberias.

This sets the scene for the story of Jewish believers in Galilee in the second half of the second century and far into the third. Two significant changes came with the early third century. (1) Rabbinic leadership established the Patriarchate with Judah the Prince.²¹ This meant a certain amount of Jewish home-rule. (2) Rabbinic leadership was urbanized to a great extent, the new centers of rabbinical learning became Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Caesarea.

In the Jewish Galilee of the second and third centuries we find the Jewish believers living closely together with their non-believing Jewish neighbors. This is the world in which many of the rabbinic stories about encounters between Jewish believers and leading rabbis so vividly described by Philip Alexander in chapter 21 are set. Other literary remains originating in this Galilean milieu may include the fragments of a commentary on Isaiah preserved in Jerome.²² Since the Galilee of the second century was to a great extent bilingual, there are also Greek fragments preserved in some Greek Fathers that are likely to have Jewish believers in Galilee—or at least in the land of Israel—as their authors or originators, e.g., the

²⁰ See Richard Bauckham's chapter 3 of this book and further bibliography there.

²¹ The standard monograph now is Martin Jacobs, *Die Institution des jüdischen Patriarchen: Eine quellen- und traditionskritische Studie zur Geschichte der Juden in der Spätantike* (TSAJ 52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

²² See chapter 15 by Wolfram Kinzig and my chapter 12 of this book.

traditions of the Elders in Papias and Irenaeus, along with some of the traditions rendered by Hegesippus and Africanus.²³ In the same milieu one should probably also place works like the *Controversy of Aristo of Pella*,²⁴ the *Apocalypse of Peter*,²⁵ and some of the so-called Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.²⁶ I have also argued that some of the traditions used by Justin Martyr had their origin in the land of Israel.²⁷

In the land of Israel, possibly more than anywhere else, Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus were living apart from each other. There were probably not many mixed communities in the land. The most dramatic illustration of this is found in the story of the Jerusalem community. As we have seen, this community was probably entirely Jewish until its actual dissolving after 70 C.E. Whatever remained of it between the wars, whether in the city itself or in some other localities, appears also to have been entirely Jewish. From 135 onwards, this community was replaced by an entirely new one made up exclusively of Gentiles, since Jewish believers were as much excluded from Aelia Capitolina as other Jews. On the other hand, village life in Galilee seems to have been segregated as well, with some Jewish and some Gentile villages and towns. Even some larger cities were almost entirely Jewish. Epiphanius attests this situation as late as in the fourth century. He says that in the cities of Tiberias, Sepphoris, Nazareth, and Capernaum “neither Greek nor Samaritan nor Christian is in their [the Jews’] midst,” and “the [Jewish] inhabitants guard lest there be a resident Gentile.”²⁸ This would probably be an exaggeration for Sepphoris, but is entirely plausible for the other towns mentioned, and even more so for the villages.

I stress this point because I believe the situation here described goes a long way toward explaining how the Jewish believers of Galilee were conducting their lives, and how they appear in the sources. Socially they were well integrated among their fellow Jews. The general tendency of the rabbinic stories is to warn against them for precisely this reason. Unlike the Gentiles, they are not conspicuously different.²⁹ Not living in mixed Christian communities, the Jewish believers of Galilee had no reason to accommodate their Jewish lifestyle so as to make community fellowship with Gentiles possible. The practical compromises necessary in mixed communities, like the one at Antioch already in the first century, were not required here. But this also means there is no compelling reason to think

²³ See section 1.1 of my chapter 12 of this book.

²⁴ On this writing, see Lawrence Lahey’s chapter 19 of this book.

²⁵ See in particular Richard Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba,” in Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 160–258.

²⁶ See Torleif Elgvin’s chapter 10 of this book.

²⁷ See my chapter 13 of this book.

²⁸ *Panarion*, 30.11.9–10; translation according to G. A. Koch, “A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius’ Knowledge of the Ebionites: A Translation and Critical Discussion of *Panarion* 30” (PhD diss.; University of Pennsylvania, 1976), 135.

²⁹ See Philip S. Alexander’s chapter 21 of this book.

that these Jewish believers in Galilee were all that different theologically from Jewish believers in Antioch. The sources clearly indicate that at least many of Galilean believers had a high Christology, appearing in the rabbinical sources as the doctrine of “two [divine] powers in heaven.” Some of them, at least, recognized the ministry of Paul as legitimate, and acknowledged the right of Gentile Christians to remain non-Jews (i.e., not observe the Mosaic commandments). When we say they had a Jewish lifestyle, we should not imply that they were rabbinical Jews in the sense that they obeyed the rabbinical halakah. On the contrary, they appear quite critical towards the emerging rabbinical movement, and the rabbis would certainly have regarded them part of the *Am Ha’arets* rather than among their own *haverim*.³⁰

The only geographical scene on which Gentile and Jewish believers would meet frequently, and where they would have a reason to seek together in mixed communities, would have been the large Hellenistic cities on the coastal plain, like Caesarea, and a few inland, like Scythopolis. The one who attests to this state of affairs in the third century is Origen in Caesarea. When Origen preached in the community at Caesarea on Sunday, some of his Christian listeners had visited the synagogue on Saturday, which could indicate that they were Jewish.³¹ Origen also says he has had conversations of an exegetical nature with some Jewish believer.³² None of this makes it certain that the Christian community of Caesarea was a mixed one, but it could well be the case.

In the fourth century the land of Israel was again affected by a major political revolution. In rabbinical sources it is described as “the kingdom turning to *minuth*,” i.e., Christianity. The watershed figure is Constantine. This is an event of such paramount importance that I will devote a separate section to it below. Here I am content to point out how it affected the outward appearance of the land of Israel and the demographic consequences it had.

The main catchword here is no doubt *Christianization*. It had several aspects, some of them quite visible and even conspicuous. First of all, less than a hundred years after Constantine, the land of Israel had already become the Holy Land of Christendom. The land of Israel was literally dotted with large and small churches and other ecclesiastical compounds, not a few of them monasteries.³³ With these building activities came new immigrants, and gradually also an increasing flow of pilgrims who had catering needs. Philip Alexander calls this

³⁰ See my chapter 12 of this book.

³¹ *Hom. Lev.* 5.8 (GCS 6, p. 349). See the comment in N. R. M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, 25; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 86.

³² See my chapter 12 of this book.

³³ It should be noted, however, that churches were, from the beginning, carefully placed outside or on the outskirts of Jewish villages, so as not to provoke local sentiments unnecessarily, and that the imperial program of Christianization was, on the whole, implemented cautiously and over a long period. See in particular Doron Bar, “The Christianization of Rural Palestine during Late Antiquity,” *JEH* 54 (2003): 401–21.

process “the Christian spiritual colonization” of the land of Israel. He adds that rabbinical Jews “must have felt that their spiritual patrimony was being usurped before their very eyes.”³⁴ The spiritual colonization had very concrete manifestations.

And it had consequences for the Jewish believers in the land. With the great influx of Gentile Christians, who were unfamiliar with the type of life practiced by the native Jewish believers of the land, the situation of the latter could often become more difficult. “Indeed, the Christian ‘invasion’ of the Holy Land proved in many ways as threatening to Jewish Christianity as to rabbinic Judaism.”³⁵ One could say, perhaps, that under and after Constantine the Jewish believers of the land of Israel became polarized into two types. We meet both types in Epiphanius’s Count Joseph stories.³⁶ On the one hand we have Joseph of Tiberias and a fellow Jewish believer in Scythopolis. They are Nicene or “Imperial” Christians, and would have had no difficulty in living fully integrated as members of the mainly Gentile Christian community of the city. As it happened, they lived apart because the community of Scythopolis had an Arian bishop! On the other hand we have Jews who Epiphanius portrays as fully integrated among other Jews, but who nevertheless invoke the name of Jesus when they are in need. Epiphanius interprets this as “secret” belief in Jesus among the Jews, but in fact these people could be of the same type as the well-known Jacob who came to heal rabbi Eleazar ben Damah in the second century, “in the name of Yeshua ben Pandira.”³⁷ Part of the difficulty for Jewish believers in the land of Israel in the fourth and fifth centuries may have been an increased rejection from other Jews. They probably turned in on themselves to a greater degree and may have lived together in villages of their own, as is perhaps attested on the Golan.³⁸ They may even have sought refuge further east. Perhaps the “Nazoraeans,” whom Jerome attests for Syrian Berea in the late fourth century, were such people.

This completes my very sketchy survey of the geographical scene for Jewish believers in the land of Israel. Let me only add at this point that the surprisingly rich literary heritage attested for the Jewish believers of the land of Israel, and the serious attention they receive in the rabbinical sources, tell against considering them extremely marginal. In the fourth and fifth centuries they may have become increasingly marginalized, but one should probably not project this situation back to the second and third centuries.

5.2. Jewish Believers in the Diaspora

There were two extensive Jewish Diasporas, the Roman and the Persian. This division into two Diasporas was a reality mainly in political-imperial terms.

³⁴ See Philip S. Alexander’s chapter 21 of this book.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ For the following, see my chapter 17 of this book.

³⁷ See Philip S. Alexander’s chapter 21 of this book.

³⁸ See Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 39–41.

From a cultural and linguistic point of view, that part of the Roman Diaspora that belonged to the old Persian/Seleucid empire was one piece with the Persian Diaspora. It was mainly on the Mediterranean coast and in the ancient Syrian capital of Antioch that Greek was the first language, otherwise Aramean-Syriac was the first language of most people all the way to the Persian Gulf. In this way the Syriac-speaking Diaspora was also linguistically connected to the land of Israel. Aramaic-speaking Jews from the land of Israel could probably make themselves understood very far east, all the way to Persia proper. The imperial border followed a rough north-south trajectory, beginning in the north near the eastern end of the Black Sea, and ending in the south in the Gulf of Aqaba. In the middle of this trajectory it split in two and left some open space for the buffer state of Osrhoene with capital Edessa. In 216 C.E., however, Osrhoene was annexed by Rome, and the eastern border of the Roman Empire now went near Nisibis at its most eastern extension.

If we look at the Roman Diaspora first, we find the most substantial Jewish colonies nearest to the land of Israel. Egypt and Cyrenaica had many Jews, first and foremost on the Mediterranean coast, and here above all in the capitals of Cyrene and Alexandria. Moving east and north, we come to the Syrian coast and the capital of Antioch. Antioch had an old and strong Jewish colony in the days of the apostles, and it is not by accident that Antioch stands forth already in the New Testament as the most important Christian center outside the land of Israel. Within the orbit of Antioch we find not only the Syrian coastline, but also Cyprus, which had a quite substantial Jewish colony.³⁹

Further, parts of Asia Minor were part of the Seleucid Empire in a period in which the Seleucid kings conducted a planned colonization policy. Jews were invited to settle in Asia Minor, along the coast and also in the interior, especially in Phrygia. This resulted in an unusually strong Jewish presence in Asia Minor.⁴⁰ The same, although to a lesser degree, was true of some cities in Macedonia and Greece. Going further west, we find a substantial Jewish colony in the imperial capital of Rome. Apart from this, Jewish settlement in mainland Italy, Gaul, and Spain was probably very thin at the beginning of our era, and limited to the main cities. On the southern Mediterranean coast Carthage certainly had a Jewish colony, evidenced by the Jewish cemetery outside the city.

This would lead us, as far as the Roman Diaspora is concerned, to expect evidence of Jewish believers mainly in Egypt/Cyrenaica, in Roman Syria, on Cyprus and in Asia Minor, to some extent in Macedonia and Greece, and in Rome and Carthage. And this corresponds to the actual evidence with one important modification, which has a simple explanation. When evidence of Jewish believers is

³⁹ For this and the following, see in particular the magisterial review of John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora From Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

⁴⁰ Paul Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

forthcoming in the second century and later for all the areas mentioned, evidence from Alexandria, Cyrene, and Cyprus is non-existent. This has to do with the catastrophic results of the Jewish revolt against Rome in precisely these areas in 115–117 C.E.⁴¹ In Cyrene, Alexandria, and on Cyprus the entire Jewish population was either massacred or expelled. This had long-lasting effects. It did not mean that after several decades there were absolutely no Jews who carefully began re-entering these former centers of Jewish life. But it did mean that in these locations Jewish life never regained the strength it once had, at least not within our period. This affected the Jewish believers in Jesus in exactly the same way as it affected other Jews. Early Christianity in these places after 117 C.E. was destined to be a purely Gentile Christianity for many decades to come. And when Jewish believers reappear in the sources, they are not present in any strength.⁴²

This means that in the Roman Diaspora it was Asia Minor and Roman Syria that were the Jewish heartlands of the second through the fourth centuries. This corresponds to what we have found of literary evidence for a strong presence and continued influence of Jewish believers in the different contributions of this volume.⁴³

Turning to the old Persian Diaspora, it is first and foremost in Edessa and further southeast in Mesopotamia that we have to seek the Jewish colonies that were the bridgeheads of the early Christian mission eastwards. When I imply that the mission eastwards followed the same pattern as in the west (the one Luke attributes to Paul in Acts—beginning at each new place with preaching in the assemblies of the Jews), this is not without foundation in the sparse evidence that

⁴¹ On which, see Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 78–81; and the important study of William Horbury, “The Beginnings of the Jewish Revolt under Trajan,” in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, and P. Schäfer; 3 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 1: 283–304.

⁴² To some extent a similar mechanism may have been at work in Rome, though in a far less dramatic way. The expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius in 49 was in no way comparable to the events of 115–117, and apparently had only a short-term effect. But for the Christian communities in Rome the effects may have been more far-reaching. For a few years after 49 the Roman communities were almost entirely made up of Gentile believers, and had to develop a self-understanding that could accommodate this fact. In Christian texts originating in Rome of the late first and early second century, Jews and Judaism are almost non-existent as rivals and competitors, while at the same time the Christianity of the Gentile authors is strikingly imbued with Jewish traditions and concepts. It is a kind of non-polemical supersessionism. Gentile Christians regard themselves as the sole inheritors of old Israel, and the contemporary Jews are made invisible. When Jewish believers re-entered Rome from the late 50s on, they were probably absorbed by a Gentile Christian community sure of itself and its own identity. The “stronger” absorbed the “weaker,” and the Jewish believers were probably more alienated from their non-believing Jewish compatriots in Rome than in most other places. On this see Reidar Hvalvik’s chapter 7 of this book.

⁴³ For Roman Syria, see below. For Asia Minor, see the evidence for a long-lasting tradition of celebrating Easter simultaneously with, or as near as possible to, the Jewish Passover in this region, in my chapter 17 of this book.

we have. According to the admittedly very legendary *Doctrine of Addai*, local Jewish merchants were among the first converts in Edessa.⁴⁴ Much more significant than this is the recognized fact that Syrian and Mesopotamian Christianity exhibit remarkably Jewish features.⁴⁵ There is therefore no reason to believe that the Jewish colonies in these areas were less of a recruitment base for early believers in Jesus than they were in the Roman Diaspora, especially in Roman Syria. For the latter province, we have in the succession of *Didache*, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and *The Apostolic Constitutions* clear evidence of a continued influence and rather strong presence of Jewish believers through the fourth century.⁴⁶

Having, in this summary fashion, placed on the map the most important locations for Jewish believers of the Diaspora, a second question claims our attention. What characteristics of Diaspora Jews and Diaspora synagogues are of relevance in explaining the conditions of life for Jewish believers in Jesus in the Diaspora? In particular, how were these conditions different from those prevailing in the land of Israel?

Literary as well as archaeological evidence points to the fact that many Diaspora synagogues had a mixed attendance. There was an inner circle of Jews who assembled in their synagogue on a more or less regular basis for daily or weekly worship, and who celebrated the annual festivals as communal events. But there was also an outer circle of sympathizing Gentiles, sometimes called Godfearers, who socialized with the Jews, visited them in their homes, attended synagogue worship, and even took part in their festivals. These people did not take the last

⁴⁴ See F. Crawford Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity: St. Margaret's Lectures 1904 on The Syriac-Speaking Church* (London: John Murray, 1904), 11–19; Han J. W. Drijvers, “Edessa und das jüdische Christentum,” VC 24 (1970): 4–33, especially 10.

⁴⁵ Based on a comparison between some of the earliest written products of Syriac Christianity (e.g., *The Odes of Solomon*) and the Qumran writings, some scholars have postulated that it was believers in Jesus with a background in the Qumran community who founded the Edessene Church. See Kurt Rudolph, “Wer der Verfasser der Oden Salomos ein ‘Qumran-Christ’? Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um die Anfänge der Gnosis,” *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* (1964): 523–55; John C. L. Gibson, “From Qumran to Edessa or the Aramaic Speaking Church before and after 70 A.D.” (*The Annual of Leeds Oriental Society* 5; 1963–1965; Leiden: Brill, 1966), 24–39; Leslie W. Barnard, “The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.,” VC 22 (1968): 161–75. For a critical evaluation of this theory, see Drijvers, “Edessa und das jüdische Christentum.” In my view, the study of Gerard Rouwhorst, “Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity,” VC 51 (1997): 72–93, demonstrates the Jewishness of Syriac Christianity according to a more solid methodology than the above studies. See also chapter 18 of this book. Here, Sten Hidal demonstrates that much Christian literature of a Syrian provenance is “Jewish” in ideas and method, more than in direct literary borrowings from Jewish sources. Jacob Neusner has made the same point specifically concerning Aphrahat: his method is very Jewish, but he comments on other texts than those most central to the contemporary rabbis. See Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (StPB19; 2d ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1971; 2d ed.; South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 205; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ See Anders Ekenberg’s chapter 20 of this book.

step of full conversion, and may have practiced only a very select few of the ritual commandments of the law, if any at all. But they believed in the God of Israel, they admired the moral commandments of the law and tried to conduct their own lives according to them. As far as they were able, they would shun everything that had to do with idolatry, but some would probably also have to make painful compromises. The necessity of the latter would depend very much on what they did for a living.⁴⁷

The necessity of practical compromises would not, however, be a problem for the Gentile Godfearers only. It was also a problem the Diaspora Jews had to face all the time, and to which they found different and flexible solutions. This was not only made necessary by their close social fellowship with the Gentile Godfearers—here the question of table fellowship would be a permanent test of mutual flexibility.⁴⁸ But also the Jews' participation in the commercial and social life of the larger pagan community around them required the willingness of practical compromise. This is indicated in some of the literary evidence, but even more so in the archaeological evidence.⁴⁹ It is sometimes remarkable to observe how far some Jews were willing to go, if it meant great advantages of social integration. On the other hand, there are also clear signs that this willingness to compromise was not boundless. In some way or other, most Jews were able and willing to find those points on which they clearly marked and identified themselves as Jews, faithful to the God of Israel. It is also evident that in doing so, they emphasized other markers than those used by the rabbinical Jews of the land of Israel in order to set themselves apart from the non-rabbinical Jews, the *Am Ha'arets*.

One has every reason to believe that from the beginning the Christian mission had these Godfearing Gentiles associated with the synagogue as its prime target among the non-Jews. In a certain sense, the mission to the Gentiles was an inevitable spin-off of the mission to the Diaspora Jews. The typical scene would be the one clearly depicted in Acts 13:14–43. In addressing the community gathered in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, Paul addressed a twofold audience—on the one hand the “Israelites,” the “descendants of Abraham’s family,” the Jews; on the other hand “the others who fear God” (13:16, 26). Present in the synagogue were not only the local Jews, but also the local Gentile Godfearers. And

⁴⁷ On Gentile Godfearers, see Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century* (WUNT 2:82; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 249–67, with extensive bibliography.

⁴⁸ See in particular Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 434–37.

⁴⁹ See Tessa Rajak, “The Jewish Community and its Boundaries,” in *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (ed. J. Lieu, J. North, and T. Rajak; London: Routledge, 1992), 9–28; Leonard Victor Rutgers, “Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity,” *AJA* 96 (1992): 101–18; Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 177–269.

when Paul faces opposition from the Jews of the synagogue and announces that “we are now turning to the Gentiles,” it is certainly to *these* Gentiles of the synagogue that he turns.

This situation was certainly not peculiar to Pisidian Antioch. I think one should rather consider it typical of many Diaspora synagogue communities in Asia Minor and elsewhere. We have archaeological confirmation of this in Aphrodisias,⁵⁰ and literary evidence in Acts for many other cities. In Paul’s letters there is the indirect evidence of the amount of Bible knowledge Paul presupposes in quite fresh Gentile believers in Jesus. How could this be possible unless these Gentile believers already had some Bible grounding prior to their Christian belief?

The Christian communities resulting from this type of mission would be mixed ones, comprising both Jewish and Gentile believers right from their beginning. And the usual problems of how to make close community life between Jews and Gentiles friction-free would impose themselves even more urgently within these communities. That friction could easily occur was demonstrated in the other Antioch of Christian mission, Syrian Antioch (Gal 2:11–14). Similar friction is also attested for Rome by Rom 14.

The situation outlined here should be sufficient to show that Jewish believers throughout the Diaspora faced challenges that were, in part, quite different from those faced by Jewish believers in the land of Israel. This was more or less bound to cause friction also between the Christian Diaspora communities and those within the land of Israel.

Once the message about Jesus the Messiah had gained a footing in the synagogues of the Diaspora, a new “problem” was to make itself felt rather rapidly. Some of the Gentile Godfearers showed themselves to be more receptive to the new message than the local Jews. Some of them became believers in Jesus—with time, many of them.

According to Luke, the spearhead in this development was the community in Antioch. And the Antioch community may also have been a pioneer in experiencing the problems that a large influx of Gentile believers represented. The Gentile believers probably had an acute identity problem themselves, joining a Jewish movement without being Jews, claiming some Jewish privileges—like exemption from the duty to sacrifice to the Roman gods—but as non-Jews not being entitled to these privileges.

But if these believers had an identity problem themselves, they also represented a problem to the Jewish believers. The problem was double. The Jewish believers, whose authoritative leadership still resided in Jerusalem, were split among themselves as to what strategy to adopt concerning the Gentile believers. And they had a problem with regard to their own relationship with their non-believing

⁵⁰ See Joyce Reynolds and Robert Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions With Commentary* (Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 12; Cambridge: The Cambridge Philological Society, 1987).

fellow Jews. If the gates were flung wide open for Gentiles to join the Jesus community without becoming Jews in the process, the Jewish identity of the Jewish believers themselves could come in jeopardy—especially if the mission among the Gentiles were to be such a success that the Jewish believers became the minority.

To these questions no one single answer was given during the first centuries, except that there seems to have been a rather widespread consensus on the main point: Gentiles who joined the communities of believers in Jesus did not have to become Jews in the process. There were Jewish believers who disagreed on this point, but they seem to have been in the minority, and a rapidly shrinking one at that. But even where the main issue was agreed upon, at least in practice, several of the problems mentioned above remained, precisely because Jewish and law-observant believers were living closely together with non-circumcised and non-observant Gentile believers. Perhaps most acute were the questions of *kashrut* and table fellowship. We observe Paul addressing these problems repeatedly in Romans and 1 Corinthians, and Paul (Galatians) and Luke (Acts) reporting how this created conflict. Paul's formula may perhaps be summarized as mutual tolerance—and far-reaching accommodation for his own part: to the Gentiles a “Gentile,” to the Jews a Jew (1 Cor 9:20–21). The apostolic council (James in particular?) advocated practical compromise: the Gentiles should observe the commandments enjoined on Gentiles living in the midst of Israel in Lev 17 and 18.⁵¹ In the *Didache*, the Gentile members are simply recommended to do as much as they can: “Concerning food, *observe as much as you can bear*, but keep strictly from that which is offered to idols” (6:3).⁵² Other possible areas of conflict would be questions of calendar and Sabbath. In the letters of Ignatius we can see how *Gentile* believers urging other Gentile believers to practice “Judaism” is the only problem Ignatius addresses, as far as Judaism is concerned. He does not specify which Jewish practices these people advocate, but once mentions Sabbath versus Sunday as one area of conflict.

This list of differing positions could easily be prolonged with second and third century evidence. The available sources are not such that we can reconstruct in any detail exactly which different solutions were found in order to enable full

⁵¹ The Decree (Acts 15:19–21 and 23–29) was addressed to the communities in “Antioch, Syria and Cilicia”; these areas were often regarded as belonging to greater Israel. Markus Bockmuehl has interestingly suggested that this may be the premise for subjecting the Gentiles to the regulations of Lev 17–18, because these regulations were meant to prohibit pollution of the land of Israel by Gentiles living within it. See Markus Bockmuehl, “Antioch and James the Just,” in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NovTSup 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 155–98.

⁵² The conflict between Peter and Paul in Antioch, which Paul reports in Gal 2:11–14, probably had to do with disagreements on this point. But it should be noted that the disagreement on principles and practice was not between Peter and Paul. Paul implies that before “certain men from James” came, Peter, like himself, had been a “Gentile” to the Gentiles, and had eaten with them. But after the men from James arrived, Peter changed his practice to please them. Peter acted as he did, not because he had changed his opinion, but because he lacked the courage to stick to it.

table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers in the mixed communities of the Diaspora. But the very fact that such fellowship was sought, and for the most part realized, has much to tell us concerning the attitude of the majority of Jewish believers in the Diaspora communities.

For the typical Diaspora community this means that there was no physical separation of “Jewish Christianity” from “Gentile Christianity.” Jewish and Gentile believers were living closely together, striving at unity in the communal practices. This was the situation that prevailed from the very beginning of these communities, and it makes the construction of clearly separated units like “Jewish Christianity” and “Gentile Christianity” very problematic.

6. How Many Jewish Believers in Jesus Were There?

Conventional wisdom would lead us to respond that a tiny, often an infinitesimal, fraction of the “normal” Christian community was made up of Jewish believers, at least after the middle of the second century. And the purely Jewish Christian groups, like Ebionites and Nazoraeans, dwindled to insignificant numbers after this time, at least when compared with the remarkable growth of the predominantly Gentile “Great Church.”

In a fascinating study of the growth rate and growth mechanisms of the early church, sociologist of religion Rodney Stark has challenged this conventional picture by some interesting speculations based on modern analogies (mostly the growth rate and the growth mechanisms of modern Mormonism and new cults).⁵³ It should be emphasized right from the start that Stark is speaking all the time of the typical situation in the *Roman* Diaspora, and first and foremost in the pre-Constantinian epoch, although he surmises that his arguments have some validity also for the first half of the fourth century.⁵⁴ First, he makes a rough estimate of the growth rate of the church, based on the assumption that at the year 40 C.E. there were a total of one thousand Christians, and in the year 300 C.E. a total of approximately 10 percent of the total sixty million inhabitants of the Roman Empire. This would indicate an average growth rate for the whole intervening period of 40 percent per decade, an average growth rate similar to that of the Mormons during their first 100 years. If, instead, one calculates with a growth rate of 30 percent per decade, the resulting number of Christians in 300 C.E. is

⁵³ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 49–71.

⁵⁴ For discussion of Stark’s theories, see Todd E. Klutz, “The Rhetoric of Science in The Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark’s Sociological Account of Christianization,” *JECS* 6 (1998), 162–84; Keith Hopkins, “Christian Number and Its Implications,” *JECS* 6 (1998), 185–226; Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Gender, Theory and The Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark,” *JECS* 6 (1998), 227–57; with Stark’s rejoinder to these comments, “E Contrario,” *JECS* 6 (1998), 259–67.

ca. 920,000, certainly too low. If one assumes a growth rate of 50 percent, the number of Christians in 300 C.E. becomes nearly forty million, certainly much too high. In this way, and by checking his figures for 40 percent growth with independent scholarly estimates of the number of Christians for specific localities and dates, Stark succeeds in establishing that as an average for the whole period, 40 percent growth should not be widely off the mark.⁵⁵

Next, Stark considers the situation of the great majority of Diaspora Jews in the Empire. He pictures them as trying to straddle two cultures, the Jewish and the Greco-Roman, and argues that this implied living with a lot of unresolved tensions and conflicts, and in an uneasy marginal position. By non-Jews they would not have been fully recognized as "normal" citizens; by fellow Jews they would have been condemned if they made too big concessions to obtain such recognition. Some Jews would have responded to this by making a clear-cut choice: either choosing a high Jewish profile and paying the price of a certain social isolation from their Gentile neighbors, or assimilating fully into Gentile surroundings and paying the price of loss of Jewish identity (and of solidarity with fellow Jews). But the Jews who made this choice would have been in the minority. According to Stark, most Diaspora Jews would have looked for a third solution to their dilemma. Their "problem" would have been very similar to the dilemma of European Jews during the European Enlightenment. Their religion could in many ways be seen as the very essence of religion on Enlightenment terms, had it not been for the many irrational commandments of the Torah. Many successfully emancipated Jews discovered that observing all the commandments of the Torah outside the Jewish communal life in the ghetto was not only very inconvenient, it was practically impossible. The solution found by many assimilated Jews began as the Jewish Enlightenment movement, the *Haskalah*, and continued in European "Liberal" and American "Reform" Judaism. The main point here was to discard the dated parts of the Torah and to modernize Judaism in a way which made it possible to live as a fully assimilated Jew and at the same time keep the religious tenets of Judaism vibrant and alive. Stark suggests that the dilemma to which "Reform" Judaism was the answer was essentially the same as the dilemma of successfully integrated Diaspora Jews in the Greco-Roman cities, and that the equivalent to "Reform" Judaism in those days was Christianity!⁵⁶

Stark bolsters this reasoning with three other arguments taken from sociology of religion. *First*, religions growing at such a high rate as early Christianity, usually grow by spreading through pre-existing networks (family, close friends, colleagues). The centers of the local network used by the early Christians were the local Jewish communities. *Second*, these networks should be very receptive to the Christian alternative, not only because Christianity offered a solution to the religious-social dilemma of Diaspora Jews, but also because it did so at "minimum cost." Again Stark refers to the Mormons. Part of the secret of their success

⁵⁵ Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 3–27.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 51–61.

is that Mormonism is not too unlike the Christianity most of the Mormons came from. Mormonism could plausibly present itself as the “fulfillment” of old Christianity, its more perfect and completed version. People more easily accept a new creed if it is not too unlike their old creed and their former values in life. Mormons recruit much better among Christians than among non-Christians, because for Christians the mental change is not too great. One has to rid oneself of little of one’s religious baggage. For Jews to embrace Christianity was a less drastic change than for Gentiles to embrace Christianity, with all its Jewish characteristics. *Third*, those members of an established religion who are most receptive to a new and “better” version of their religion are those whose religious commitment has slackened due to different circumstances. Stark thinks this accurately describes the situation of many Diaspora Jews. Due to the many troubles their religion caused them, their commitment to a fully halakic lifestyle—and thereby to Judaism as such—may have eroded to greater or lesser degrees. And here came Christianity, solving the problem of impossible Torah observance and at the same time infusing its adherents with new religious enthusiasm.⁵⁷

Stark is fully aware that much of what he has said here will coincide with many established and quite traditional descriptions of church growth until the Bar Kokhba war. But then, according to established wisdom, the links to Judaism were so severely broken that these mechanisms no longer functioned and Christianity lost its recruitment base among the Jews. Stark thinks otherwise. In the Diaspora, the Bar Kokhba war and its aftermath were of little consequence. There is nothing in the sources to indicate that everything changed from then on. Accordingly, Stark feels certain that the social mechanisms he describes would still have been operative well into the Christian era, that is, well into the fourth century. By then, the Jewish recruitment base would have become too small to sustain the Christian growth rate of the first three centuries. But he finds it relevant to note that if there were one million Christians in the year 250 C.E. and five million Diaspora Jews, only every fifth Jew had to convert to fill up the whole church with Jewish members only—of course a conscious contrary-to-fact assessment.⁵⁸

Stark frankly admits that the literary and archaeological source material that directly confirms his picture of considerable influx of Jewish believers into the church for the entire pre-Constantinian period is “thin.”⁵⁹ One could hold against him the almost unanimous judgment contained in the church fathers and the church historians from Justin to Sozomen that while Gentiles, individuals, and whole nations became believers to an amazing degree, the Jews were the one nation that showed itself utterly imperceptive to the Christian message. For Justin in the 150s, this is as it were part of his “creed.” Sozomen in the 440s finds this fact significant enough to open his *Church History* by commenting on it: “My mind has been often exercised in inquiring how it is that other men are very ready to

⁵⁷ Ibid., 54–68.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 69–70.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 69.

believe in God the Word, while the Jews are so incredulous . . ." (*Hist. eccl.* 1.1, the very first sentence).⁶⁰ One should not overlook, however, that this picture was, in itself, a stereotype, a theological statement that was part and parcel of ecclesiastical anti-Judaism in which the Jews were held to be an unbelieving people, unbelieving by nature. If the (great) majority of Jews did not believe, this was sufficient to sustain the theological stereotype of the unbelieving Jew. The stereotype does, in itself, say something about the proportions of believers versus non-believers in the Jewish people. It does not, however, say much in terms of absolute numbers of Jewish believers.

We do have a way of arriving at some estimates. The following are not, of course, presented as anything like well-founded quantitative estimates. They are rather meant as experimental "think of a number" games, very much like Stark's own. Paul in his letter to the Romans sometimes speaks as if the Jews *in toto* have rejected the gospel. On another occasion he compares the believers within the people to the seven thousand faithful Israelites at the time of Elijah. Translated into numbers, the latter analogy would mean that the Jewish believers in Paul's time were a very small minority within Israel. But this does not mean they have to be a small minority within the Christian communities as well. If we look at the Jewish believers listed in the greetings in Rom 16, and compare that number with the total number of names, we have a very rough estimate that about 30 percent of the Christian community in Rome were Jewish believers.⁶¹ If we allow for the possibility that Paul, being a Jewish believer himself, may have had more acquaintances among the Jewish believers than among the Gentile ones, we should probably lower the figure somewhat. But even if we say that only 10–20 percent of the believers in Rome were Jewish, this is a quite significant figure.⁶² If we make a bold extrapolation and take only 10 percent as a representative ratio, it would still mean that around 250 C.E. there would, within the limits of the Roman Empire, be 100,000 Jewish believers.⁶³ Of a total Jewish population of five million, this would be 2 percent. There is nothing in this figure to strike one as unrealistic. At the same time it easily explains why the theological stereotype about the unbelieving Jews could thrive among ecclesiastical writers. There is one important proviso to be made, however. Stark is thinking and calculating in very general terms, having the entire Roman Diaspora as his geographical area of reference. But as we have seen already, the Jewish population was by no means evenly dis-

⁶⁰ Translation according to *NPNF* 2:239.

⁶¹ See Reidar Hvalvik's chapter 7 in the present volume.

⁶² Especially when one considers that Romans was written only some ten years after Claudius's expulsion of the Jews from Rome. See Reidar Hvalvik's chapter 7 in this volume.

⁶³ Adolf von Harnack accords considerable significance to Origen's estimate of the number of Jewish believers in the 230s: ". . . the number of believers is small who belong to Israel according to the flesh; one might venture to assert that they would not nearly make up the number of 144,000 [cf. Rev 14:1]" (*Comm. Jo.* 1.2; *ANF* 10:298); cf. Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (4th ed.; 2 vols.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924) 2:538 and 549.

tributed within this area. A supposed statistical average of 10 percent Jewish believers in mixed communities could have been a rather unusual proportion within any single community, many communities having none at all, whereas in Syria and Asia Minor the ratio could have been much higher.

There is one more factor that must be remembered here. In Stark's model of church growth, natural reproduction of church members is included. For Jewish believers well integrated in mixed Christian communities of the Diaspora, assimilation into an "ordinary," non-Jewish identity for the children or grandchildren of Jewish believers would have been a very likely prospect. In other words, the Jewish-Christian part of mixed communities would have been "leaking" into the Gentile Christian part all the time, and consequently would have been more dependent upon "fresh" recruitment from the outside than the Gentile believers were, in order simply to maintain their ratio among the total of believers.⁶⁴

One final point concerning numbers, a point made by Keith Hopkins, should be mentioned here. Based on Stark's rough estimate of the number of Christians in antiquity and on scholarly estimates of the ratio of literate people in any population, Hopkins tries to calculate *expected literary output* from the early Christians. He assumes that between 10 and 20 percent of the adult male population of the Roman Empire were literate to some extent, and that 10 percent of these literates were capable to author works of literature. If we take it that Christians, Gentile or Jewish, were at the upper scale of literacy, and that around the year 100 there was a total of 7,500 Christian people (Stark's estimate), a third of these being adult males, this results in some forty Christian persons within the whole Empire being able to author literary works at that point in time. "[T]he part of Christianity which is preserved and transmitted in the sacred texts . . . was composed, explained and developed by a tiny group of specialists, very thinly spread across the eastern and central Mediterranean basin."⁶⁵ The implications of this in our present context are highly relevant. The first is that when so little is preserved of Christian literature written in the first and early second century, this does not necessarily mean that only a tiny fraction of the total output has come down to us. There was probably not that much written in the first place. The second implication is that the percentage of preserved or known Christian works authored by Jewish believers could be representative of the percentage of Jewish believers within the communities in general. If one combines this with the suggestions made in this volume for Jewish Christian authorship of some of the Christianly

⁶⁴This could be seen as a special case of the general rule, argued by Gideon Bohak, that there was in the Jewish Diaspora *a substantial loss of members through assimilation all the time*, and in places and periods in which the Diaspora communities maintained their numbers, this was due to constant influx of new immigrants. See Gideon Bohak, "Ethnic Continuity in the Jewish Diaspora in Antiquity," in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (ed. J.R. Bartlett; New York: Routledge, 2002), 175–92.

⁶⁵Hopkins, "Christian Number," 212.

redacted Pseudepigrapha⁶⁶ and some other well-known early Christian works,⁶⁷ the ratio of Jewish believers among early Christian authors tallies well with the estimated ratios of Jewish believers in the areas of origin of these works.

All the above applies to the Roman Diaspora. What about the eastern Diaspora? I find it very difficult to go much beyond the general assumption that here Jewish believers should be relatively more numerous than in the West. The reason for this assumption is as general and imprecise as the assumption itself: Syriac Christianity strikes one as in general more Jewish than its counterpart in the Roman Diaspora. And if the Constantinian revolution was counterproductive rather than the opposite with regard to recruitment of Jewish believers, it is relevant to note the absence of a similar revolution in the Persian Diaspora. Here the pre-Constantinian mechanisms of church growth among Jews could continue unabated into the fourth and fifth centuries.⁶⁸

7. The Significance of the Constantinian Revolution

The one event that put its imprint on the whole period treated here, and beyond, was the Constantinian revolution in the 310s and 320s. From 303 to 325, a little more than twenty years, the church experienced a total change. During the first ten years of this period, the most severe persecution until then broke out. The Roman Empire mobilized all its strength to crush the subversive sect of the Christians once and for all—and failed. During the next twelve years the church was first given complete freedom and compensation for losses during the persecution, and then, increasingly, a favored position as the religion of the Emperor.⁶⁹ It was not yet made the official religion of the Empire, however. That came later, with Theodosius's decree 380 *Cunctos populos*.⁷⁰ After this decree, public worship of pagan deities became illegal. This was made explicit in a decree of 391: "No

⁶⁶ See Torleif Elgvin's chapter 10 of this book.

⁶⁷ See on Polycarp, Melito, and Polycrates of Ephesus in section 4 of my chapter 17 of this book; and Aphrahat, section 2 of Sten Hidal's chapter 18 of this book.

⁶⁸ Cf. Adam H. Becker, "Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*: Questioning the 'Parting of the Ways' Outside the Roman Empire," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. A. H. Becker and A.Y. Reed; TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 373–92.

⁶⁹ See A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); Gerhard Ruhbach, ed., *Die Kirche angesichts der Konstantinischen Wende* (Wege der Forschung 306; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976); Timothy D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Hans A. Pohlsander, *The Emperor Constantine* (London: Routledge, 1996); Bill Leadbetter, "Constantine," in *The Early Christian World* (ed. Philip F. Esler; 2 vols.; London: Routledge, 2000), 1:1069–87.

⁷⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 16.1.2; trans. in J. Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents illustrating the History of the Church AD 337–461* (rev. ed. W. H. C. Frend; London: SPCK, 1989), 150.

person shall pollute himself with sacrificial animals; no person shall slaughter an innocent victim; no person shall approach the shrines, shall wander through the temples, or revere the images formed by mortal labor, lest he become guilty by divine and human laws.”⁷¹ Just as the pagan emperors had not allowed any public display of contempt for the gods of the empire, so now the Christian emperors did not allow any public display of contempt for the one True God. The God of the Christians was now the protector of the Roman Empire.

The process that now began is most properly called “Christianization.” In some ways, it was a continuation of the mission of the pre-Constantinian church; in other ways, it was something quite different. The most decisive change happened in the legal sphere. All forms of paganism had been legal if they were traditional. Christianity had not been legal, for two reasons: (1) It was not traditional; and (2) it claimed a Jewish privilege without being Jewish. The Jews, and Jews only, had been granted an exemption from participation in worship of the emperor’s genius and of the Roman gods. The Christians had never been granted this exemption, but refused to take part anyway. Now there was a complete reversal. Paganism became illegal; Christianity was made the religion of the empire. But just as the empire had, most of the time, been lenient in enforcing compulsory participation in the official cult by reluctant Christians, so now it was rather lenient in punishing reluctant pagans—much too lenient in the view of some ecclesiastical leaders. The emperors had more things to consider than did zealous bishops. They were wary of alienating the populations of areas that might apostatize from the emperor and join his enemies, e.g., the Sassanian Empire to the east. With only mild pressure, wise diplomacy, and the help of time, much could be accomplished that otherwise could result in bloodshed and rebellion. The latter was not always avoided, but it was often zealous ecclesiastics who created situations that forced the empire to intervene on their behalf. Dramatic events in Alexandria and Gaza are examples of this. But by and large, the process of Christianization was slow and relatively undramatic, and it lasted much longer than historians used to think, because they based their narratives mainly on legal sources.⁷²

The propagation of Christian faith and life proceeded as previously, by way of personal contacts through existing networks, by way of teaching and preaching by catechists, priests, and bishops, by way of diaconal work in the communities, by way of mixed marriages, etc. But in the new situation, some new strategies were added. First and foremost, the new situation itself made a big difference as far as the prestige and standing of the Christian faith was concerned. There had

⁷¹ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.10; trans. Stevenson, *Creeds*, 151.

⁷² For this and the following, see now the groundbreaking study of Frank B. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370–529* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 115.1–2; 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1993–94); and also Pierre Chauvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans* (trans. B. A. Archer; Revealing Antiquity 4; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

been much “horizontal” social mobility among Christians, now “vertical” mobility was added. Being a Christian was no longer a hindrance for ambitious people climbing the most important social ladder in late Roman society—the power pyramid of imperial officials. It was rather the other way round. Also they who preferred to devote their life to serving God in the church—either as local ministers, or as monks and nuns in the monastic movement which blossomed forth during the fourth and fifth centuries—had new opportunities opened for them. In many places enormous basilicas attracted great crowds who had only the most elementary notions about the contents of the new religion, and whom the local ministers could teach and instruct to the best of their ability.

The bulwarks of old paganism were the temples. Here it was marauding bands of monks who found ways to deal with pagan sanctuaries. They occupied them, burned them, tore them down, or converted them into churches. One might think of these actions as mere shows of physical force under imperial protection, but probably there was more to it, of a more religious nature. When Christian monks occupied the temples of the pagan deities, put an end to their cult, and came away from this unharmed, many pagans would have seriously questioned the efficacy of their gods and could often regard this as valid proof of the superiority of the God of the monks. Sometimes this resulted in spectacular mass conversions.

Where are the Jews in this picture? The Jewish nation had been given special treatment by the old pagan empire. For example, they, and they alone, were exempt from participating in the official religion of the empire. In spite of this special treatment, limits were placed on Jews as well. For example, there were laws that limited Jewish participation in higher official duties, as well as laws (e.g., those forbidding Jewish masters to circumcise their slaves) that were intended to limit Jewish proselytizing (e.g., through the circumcision of slaves by their Jewish owners). Roughly speaking, the Christian empire continued this legislation. Judaism was still a *religio licita*, now the only legal religion outside the imperial church. As such the Jews had considerable legal protection. It was, for example, against the law to disturb their worship or to loot or destroy their synagogues. Jews continued to be limited in their ability to serve in high official positions, but one should keep in mind that such positions were also heavy burdens, avoided by many.⁷³

What was said above concerning the slow “Christianization” of the pagan population is not without relevance for the relationship between the church and the Jews. There is no doubt that the Jews were much more resistant to the normal mechanisms of the general Christianization process than ordinary pagans. But it would probably be unrealistic to assume that they were completely resistant. To

⁷³ There are many studies on this, and while older works used to argue a serious aggravation of the conditions of Jews under the Christian Emperors, recent studies tend to downplay this and emphasize a basic continuity from pagan to Christian legislation. See, e.g., Jeremy Cohen, “Roman Imperial Policy Toward the Jews from Constantine Until the End of the Palestinian Patriarchate (ca. 429),” *Byzantine Studies* 3 (1976): 1–29; Amnon Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

put it another way, in environments that encourage Jews to assimilate to the majority culture around them, there has always been a certain amount of assimilation, great or small. Some Jews become assimilated to such an extent that their Jewish identity gets lost in the process, at least in the sense that their children no longer regard themselves as Jewish.⁷⁴ This was probably often the case with mixed marriages, and we do know that mixed marriages were by no means uncommon among the Diaspora Jews of antiquity. Every religious leader has to acknowledge that most conversions to a religion are those of spouses in mixed marriages. The “sincerity” of motives in such cases has always been a question, often also a problem, to the religious leadership. But, if one disqualifies religious faith which has been acquired as part of a cultural assimilation process as by definition insincere, there is very little “sincere” faith around at any time or in any place.

Conversion for obviously opportunistic reasons was sometimes a problem in antiquity. We know from rabbinic sources that this was a problem for the rabbis, and they tried to deal with it and to fend off opportunists. It was also a problem for church leaders, and they tried the same, although perhaps not as wholeheartedly as the rabbis. Socrates the church historian tells about a Jew who had made good business of being baptized in one Christian church after the other, until he was recognized and exposed.⁷⁵ The problem was even treated in imperial legislation.⁷⁶

[W]e have learned that convicts of the Jewish religion want to join the community of the church in order to escape their crimes and out of various necessities. This is done not from devotion to the faith, but as a false simulation. . . . [O]ur laws are to be obeyed in such a way that those people whom [the judges] shall observe as not adhering to this [Christian] cult in the constancy of their religious profession, nor to be imbued with the faith and mysteries of the venerable baptism, are to be allowed to return to their own law, for it is of greater benefit to Christianity.

The law here deals with obvious cases, as a law must. But it shows that the problem of conversion for insincere reasons was not unknown in the ancient world. The point I have argued here is that conversion for “purely” religious reasons is not the only alternative to such opportunistic conversions. The “normal” conversion had more than one motive, in antiquity as now, and was no less sincere for that reason.

When Jewish conversions to Christianity happened as part of the general “Christianization” process, they would often result in the Jewish convert downplaying his or her Jewish identity, precisely because this was also an *assimilation process*. But such converts would practice a non-Jewish lifestyle with less conscious motivation than Jewish believers in the previous centuries. The latter

⁷⁴ Cf. the literature listed in notes 49 and 64 above.

⁷⁵ See for references section 8 of my chapter 17 of this book.

⁷⁶ First in *Cod. Theod.* 9.45.2, a law given by Arcadius in 397 (Linder, *Jews in Roman Legislation*, 199–201); then in the law partly quoted in the text above: *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.23, given by Honorius in 416 (Linder, 275–76).

had—at least sometimes—done this out of theological considerations, like those of Paul or similar to his. To many of the post-Constantinian converts, assimilation was the primary goal, and Christian faith was part of the assimilation package. They hardly felt the need for deep theological justifications.

I want to make one more point of some relevance here. To many people, perhaps to most, the numerical, social, political strength of a religion is by no means irrelevant to the question of its credibility as a faith. Even most modern Christians find considerable comfort in the fact that Christianity is the “greatest” world religion in terms of adherents. For men and women in antiquity, this aspect was of even greater significance. This was so because they made no very clear distinction between different forms of power. When monks were able to occupy the temples of pagan gods and turn them into churches—successfully and unharmed by men as well as by gods—this was, no doubt, a manifestation of different types of power, but certainly also of *spiritual* power. The power-struggle in the world of gods and spirits was by no means unrelated to the political power-struggle between rulers, nations, and empires.

It often happens—as it happened during the “Christianization” of my country, Norway—that adherents of the “old” faith have premonitions of the change that is coming. They sense that the balance of spiritual, cultural, and political power is in the process of changing. Premonitions like these may manifest themselves in dreams and visions. Examples of this abound in many histories of Christianization. And they also occur in stories of Jewish conversions in the wake of the Constantinian revolution. Again I want to “normalize” a not uncommon feature of ancient tales of conversion. The stories of Joseph of Tiberias in the fourth century and the Jews on Minorca early in the fifth are cases in point. Especially when the “magic” of the new faith is effective—i.e., when the adherents of the new faith manifest greater miracles than the followers of the old one—such feelings of a stronger power approaching are destined to become prominent and widespread.

I have so far tried to “normalize” the phenomenon of Jewish participation in the Christianization process that went on within the Roman Empire during the fourth, fifth, and in some places into the sixth century. There is a great *a priori* probability that some Jews became part of this process. But as I have said, I will not claim they were numerous. Jews have shown greater resistance to such processes than most other peoples or groups. And there were significant factors in the Constantinian revolution that would have diminished rather than increased the number of Jewish converts. From a purely quantitative point of view, the relative proportion of Jewish believers in the Christian communities simply had to go down, in part quite drastically, for two reasons. First, the increase of church membership naturally soared after Constantine. By the end of the sixth century there were only Christians and Jews left within the borders of the Empire; there were no pagans any more. If we estimate that the number of Christians increased from about 10 percent (maximum) around 300 to nearly 90 percent of the total population around 550, the Jewish recruitment base did not increase. By sheer

mathematical necessity, the Jewish believers had to become a tiny minority in most Christian communities, especially if one adds the very likely fact that many of them assimilated *away* from their Jewish identity. There may have been a constant influx of Jewish believers, but there was certainly all the time a “leak” at the other end, Jewish believers being absorbed and vanishing into the great majority of Gentile Christians.

Second, with Christianity being the religion of the Roman Empire, conversion by Jews to Christianity would, to a much greater degree than before, have been conceived as national defection, as apostasy. Hardly anyone doubts—not even the most convinced spokespersons for the new paradigm of “The Ways that Never Parted”—that religious leadership on both sides had an easier task in building and patrolling the fences between the two faith communities in the Constantinian epoch. Even now, however, they were not entirely successful, as evidenced for example in John Chrysostom’s homilies against the Judaizers.

And when fanatical monks and bishops resorted to the strategy that had been so successful with their pagan neighbors—burning down or converting their temples—with their Jewish neighbors as well, this must have done little to further amicable relations between Jews and Christians. No wonder Jews regarded it as apostasy if any of their own joined those who had burned down their synagogue. Arson on synagogues was not the order of the day at any time, but the relatively few cases that took place were well publicized and certainly well known throughout the Jewish Diaspora. To burn or loot synagogues was against the laws of the Christian empire, but ecclesiastical dignitaries all too often succeeded in making the imperial authorities turn a blind eye.

What has been said above represents a kind of geographical average, but the different factors mentioned were not evenly distributed all over the Empire, and especially not beyond. The eastern Jewish Diaspora was for a great part settled east of the Roman border in the lands of the Persian Sassanian Empire. For Jews and Christians in these areas the Constantinian revolution had little or no effect. In general, the eastern Jewish Disapora was stronger and more numerous than the western, especially if we look at Jewish presence outside the biggest cities of the Empire. This would lead to the natural conclusion that Jewish believers were more numerous, relatively and absolutely, in the east than in the west, and this is borne out by the scanty evidence we have. Roughly speaking, and a few notable exceptions aside, Jewish believers seem in fact to have been more numerous and more influential the further east we get. And this seems to be even truer after Constantine than before.

8. Concluding Remarks

Ferdinand Christian Baur was not the first to accord “Jewish Christianity” a major role in the formation of the “early Catholic” Christianity of the late second century. But there is no doubt that Baur gave this thesis its classic form. The

sweep and energy of his essay from 1831—“Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde”—is even today able to spellbind its reader.⁷⁷ There is an elegance and simplicity to his thesis that makes it difficult to resist. Early Catholic Christianity was created as a synthesis of two opposing and contrary Christianities that existed side by side in the first century and well into the second: a Pauline Gentile Christianity, universalistic in its outlook, discarding the national narrowness of the law, proclaiming free grace instead of merit by the law; and a nationalistic “Jewish Christianity,” bound by the law and Jewish traditionalism, differing from Judaism only by its faith in Jesus as the Messiah. The latter kind of Christianity contributed quite substantively to the formation of Catholic Christianity, not least by giving it structure, organization, and a unifying ethos. Pauline Christianity also contributed something important, first and foremost the typically Christian universalism. It is not difficult to recognize a Hegelian pattern in this—the thesis of Jewish Christianity was opposed by the Pauline antithesis, but both were united in the Catholic synthesis—except that Baur was sufficiently Lutheran to have qualms about the legitimacy of this synthesis. In the Catholic synthesis the “real” Paul was muted.

It is no great exaggeration to say that all later research on Jewish Christianity has been influenced by Baur and his school. Baur has had critics and followers. On one point he has left a legacy that remains a standing challenge to later scholarship: what significance should be attributed to the role played by Jewish Christianity in the history of the early church?

In the present volume, Baur’s question has been addressed once more, but not in exactly the same terms as he stated it. We have addressed another, but not unrelated question: what role was played by Jewish believers in Jesus in the first five centuries of the church? As is evident, this group is defined by ethnicity, not theology. The first and most obvious consequence of this, compared with Baur’s concept, is that Jewish believers are well represented on the Pauline side of Baur’s equation. Paul himself was a Jewish believer, and about one third of his closest co-workers were Jewish. When we pool together the names of those whose ethnic identity can be ascertained, we get the same proportion for the Pauline and other communities of the Diaspora. From the beginning, roughly one third of the believers were Jewish.⁷⁸ Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, but his mission was a mission to Jews and Gentiles, and the fruits of his mission were Jewish and Gentile believers. This may also have been the normal situation in the other Diaspora communities not founded by Paul.⁷⁹

On the other side of Baur’s equation there were probably not only Jewish believers, but also some Gentile ones. We know for a fact that some Jewish believers advocated the circumcision of Gentile converts, hence we have every reason to as-

⁷⁷ For full title and reference, see chapter 2, footnote 37.

⁷⁸ For this proportion, see the prosopographic review in section 1 of Reidar Hvalvik’s chapter 6 above.

⁷⁹ See, for Rome, section 2.1. of Reidar Hvalvik’s chapter 6 of this book.

sume that some Gentile believers were in fact circumcised. These may have been the most zealous propagators of this option among other Gentile believers, and should therefore be included in Baur's Jewish Christianity.

There is nothing wrong in defining a certain set of theological ideas and a certain way of life as "Jewish," and to characterize believers in Jesus as "Jewish Christians" if they adhere to these ideas and this way of life, regardless of their ethnic origin. But one has to keep in mind that the "Jewish Christianity" defined in this way is and remains a modern construct, especially so when one defines this entity as a unified and monolithic one. If anything has come through with great clarity in the different studies of this volume, it is the great pluriuniformity and variety of *all* kinds of Christianity in the first centuries, "Jewish Christianities" included.

Instead of saying, as Baur did, that "Jewish Christianity" was one of the two dominant forces in shaping Catholic Christianity, I would prefer to say that Jewish believers of many stripes contributed significantly, often decisively, to the shaping of different types of Christianity, *including*, not least, the "*proto-orthodox*" Christianity that we are used to calling the "Great Church," or the precursor of the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church. Paul is not the one and singular example of this; nor is the "Peter" of Christian tradition. The "Paul," the "Peter," the "John," and the "Matthew" of the New Testament writings represent together different types and models of Jewish Christian ways of life and faith, and they all contributed to the shaping of early "mainstream" Christianity. What distinguishes the canon of New Testament writings of the "Great Church," compared with the several alternative canons around in the second century, was its comprehensiveness, not its narrowness. Most of the competing alternatives were much narrower.

By saying that the Christianity of the first centuries was a pluriuniform phenomenon, we say nothing new. By saying that the Judaism of the first centuries of the common era was a pluriuniform phenomenon, we say nothing radically new either. It is becoming increasingly clear that the rabbinic leadership—not fully unified in itself—had to *conquer* the position as leaders of all Jews in a slow and difficult process, never fully accomplished. In the beginning (after 70 C.E.) they were little more than a sect. Early Judaism was not uniformly rabbinic.⁸⁰

But there was not only an "internal" pluralism *within* the two communities of Jews and Christians. There was also, in most places and most of the time, a not incon siderable segment of the two communities that overlapped. And the pluriuniformity was not less here. The Gentile Judaizers came in different degrees and different forms. The Jewish believers in Jesus did the same. Some of the latter remained within the social borders of the Jewish community, and were, as seen by outsiders, just "ordinary" Jews who happened to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Some of them were part of mixed communities—Jewish believers and Gentile

⁸⁰ See the most recent statement of this view in Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), esp. 103–76.

believers in Jesus joined together—and were often not well looked-upon in the local Jewish community because of their close fellowship with Gentiles. But even this may have varied. Many Jewish Diaspora communities were used to close social contact with non-Jews and may have reacted quite tolerantly to those of their members who socialized intimately with the Gentile believers in Jesus. After all, Gentile believers in Jesus were not the worst non-Jews when it came to morals and even purity, some of them practicing the apostolic decree, which may have been more than was done by many non-Christian Godfearers. When it came to abstaining from anything associated with idolatry, like watching the public games in the arenas, many Gentile Christians were stricter than well-assimilated Jews. Christian martyrdoms may often have won the admiration of Jews. We know for a fact that they sometimes did. At the same time they may have been a political and social problem for the local Jewish community. The carefully crafted equilibrium between the Jewish community and the pagan society around them, including local and central authorities, could easily become unsettled by Christian zealotry. And why should a Jew jeopardize his or her social status by joining the non-recognized sect of the Christians? (I am here, of course, speaking of the pre-Constantinian era.) There were therefore different factors pulling in different directions for all those who represented the overlapping sector of the two communities, and also for others within them. It comes as no surprise that this resulted in a quite nuanced picture, and more than one preferred solution. To put it bluntly, I believe that almost every branch of modern messianic Judaism can find ancestors in the early centuries.

In this complex landscape, religious leadership exerted itself, among other ways, in the will to impose stricter borderlines and having these respected. The need to repeat and tighten up such measures all through the period treated in this volume is eloquent testimony that realities on the ground were a lot fuzzier. Indeed, when describing them as “fuzzy” we more or less adopt the normative self-definitions of religious leadership, and use them as if they were descriptive, not normative categories. Traditionally, scholars have been doing this all the time. Christian scholars have used normative self-definitions of Christianity as if they were objective definitions of the essence of Christianity, and have accordingly branded people who did not follow these definitions as deviants and hybrids. Jewish scholars have often done the same, only from the other side.

Allow me to end these comments on a personal note. I am not presenting the view that the scholar, instead of sharing the normative condemnations of Jewish believers and Gentile Judaizers as deviants, should turn into their apologist and advocate. But as often happens, it is my experience that the scholar naturally develops a kind of basic sympathy for the objects of his or her research. That I, as a Christian believer, feel much sympathy for the Jewish believers, will come as no surprise to anyone—just as I am not surprised that Jewish scholars evince sympathy for converts to Judaism. This is perhaps to be expected. But I also feel great sympathy for the Gentile Judaizers. When I read the invectives of Chrysostom against the Christian Judaizers of Antioch, I cannot help but become interested in

these people. I even find it quite easy to sympathize with them—much easier than feeling any sympathy at all with Chrysostom's invectives. It is a pity that these Judaizers have not left us writings that would allow a reconstruction of their thinking, their reasons for acting the way they did. I believe there is nothing wrong in a natural scholarly sympathy for minority groups that were not destined to be history's winners. Many such groups have been made visible and given a voice in recent scholarship. In that respect, the Jewish believers in Jesus have had to wait longer than most.



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