Speaking as the Other:
Late Ancient Jewish and Christian Multivocal Texts and the Creation of Religious Legitimacy

by

Michail Kitsos

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Near Eastern Studies)
in the University of Michigan
2020

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Ellen Muehlberger, Co-Chair
Associate Professor Rachel Rafael Neis, Co-Chair
Dr. Raʿanan S. Boustan, Princeton University
Associate Professor Jay Crisostomo
Dr. Andrew S. Jacobs, Harvard Divinity School
Associate Professor Ryan Szpiech

Michail Kitsos

mkitsos@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-0992-2752

Τὸ δὲ ζητούμενον ἁλωτὸν, ἐκφεύγει δὲ τἀμελούμενον...

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my co-advisors and mentors, Professor Ellen Muehlberger and Professor Rachel Rafael Neis whose support and contribution were instrumental for me to complete this dissertation. They guided me and taught me throughout this academic journey with generosity and selflessness, and with their feedback and stature, they set up for me an example of what it means to be an academic and on how to strive to improve academically. Their advice during these years added up to an invaluable treasure for me. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for playing an instrumental role in my graduate studies, in my academic forging, and in my dissertation. I also want to express my warmest gratitude to the rest of my dissertation committee, Professor Raʿanan S. Boustan, Professor Jay Crisostomo, Professor Andrew S. Jacobs, and Professor Ryan W. Szpiech, whose academic excellence, compassion, and guidance enriched my academic life during the composition of my dissertation and whose help often extended beyond their call of duty as committee members.

From my previous academic education in Greece, I would like to thank Professor Dionysios Benetos, my now closest friend from my native country, who transmitted to me his love for philology and the search of meanings in the ancient words, and for his belief in me. I am indebted to him for all his guidance.

I would also like to extend my gratefulness to particular people who in one way or another had a specific contribution in my academic life. Dr. Deborah Forger, my close friend who supported me intellectually and spiritually during all the stages of my dissertation writing. Professor Micah Auerback for listening to me and for being a great sounding board. In particular,

Mrs. Pecky Witonsky and her husband Mr. Karl Witonsky whose support and love were immeasurable and whose confidence in me gave me courage in difficult moments away from home. Also, Mrs. Selene Negrette, Mrs. Meghan Hough, and Mrs. Wendy Burr who helped and supported me in many ways. Additionally, the various committee members at the Department of Middle East Studies and the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan who so graciously approved grants during my graduate studies to support my academic training and to allow me to participate in conferences where I presented my work.

And now that my journey to "Ithaca" reached its end, I feel deeply the need to dedicate this project to three persons. My father, Chrēstos Kitsos, of blessed memory, who taught me that dignity is above all, and who never stopped living up to his ideals. My mother, Vasilikē Kitsou, a true Spartan woman, who bestowed upon me the duty to never give up, setting up herself first as a model to me. And my partner, Mathew Stange, who has witnessed my hills and valleys during this academic journey, who has joined me in endless intellectual conversations on my project that enlightened my thinking, and whose unconditional love and patience kept me going in the most challenging moments.

To all the aforementioned people I say, *Εὐχαριστῶ, πάντων ἕνεκεν.*

Table of Contents

Abstract

This dissertation considers *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic multivocal narratives side by side and investigates how and why the anonymous authors of these texts deployed "other" characters and "other" narratives, constructing around them a plot of realistically portrayed encounters. Scholars of late antique Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism have examined separately these works that portray two or more interlocutors discussing with each other on topics that concerned their authors. Their scholarship has interpreted the function of these compositions, seeing them as ways of providing self-definition or opinion making (in the case of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues), or as demonstrating internalization of and anxiety over others' criticisms, or as parodies (in the case of selected rabbinic multivocal narratives). These two kinds of texts, however, have not often been studied in tandem, nor has the purposeful deployment of "other" interlocutors or "other" narratives in them.

Specifically, this study examines the reasons for the deployment of contrasting characters and narratives in texts where interlocutors discuss topics of belief and practice with each other. From the corpus of the Christian *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, this study analyzes excerpts written in Greek, Syriac, and Latin between the early fifth to the tenth centuries CE; from the corpus of rabbinic literature, it analyzes multivocal narratives from works written in Mishnaic Hebrew and Babylonian Aramaic between the early third and the early eighth centuries CE. The topics in the excerpts from both corpora are conceptually similar, pertaining to icons, idols, and idolatry (Chapters 2 and 3) and the divinity of Jesus, his virgin birth, and his origins (Chapters 4 and 5).

The analysis draws on the literary concept of foil which allows one to interpret by means of contrast the qualities of characters and stories.

This study argues that the anonymous Christian and rabbinic authors deployed the "other" (whether a character or a narrative) as a foil to another character or narrative, respectively, to claim legitimacy of opinion on matters of practice and belief. By weaving contrasting opinions between discussants and between narratives in the context of dialogues, these texts propose an authoritative stance towards the interlocutors' opinions and attitudes, predisposing what the correct or legitimate view, attitude, or teaching is according to them. Comprehending the role of foil characters and foil narratives in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic multivocal narratives allows us to understand how "others" were an integral component in the rhetoric used by the authors of these works.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation lies in the intersection of the study of the history of Judaism and Christianity in late antiquity (roughly between the second and eighth centuries CE). It examines Christian and rabbinic dialectical multivocal texts side by side. From the corpus of Christian literature, this study analyzes a selection of *Adversus* or *Contra Iudaeos* dialogues (dialogues against Jews) that were written between the early fifth and the tenth centuries CE, and, from the rabbinic corpus, it analyzes a selection of multivocal dialectical narratives from Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic sources that are dated between the third and the early eighth centuries CE. The question which concerns this study is not why Christians and Rabbis used the rhetorical format of dialogue to write their particular literary corpora, which by and large has been explored by studies that highlight the rhetorical effect of dialogue as a pedagogical tool (although still much can be written on the topic), but instead *how* and *why* Rabbis and Christians deployed in their works "others," whether those are characters or narratives, in a way that portrays lively conversations and contacts between groups in order to discuss certain topics concerning their practices and beliefs.

The *Adversus Iudaeos* Dialogues in Late Antiquity

In the vast corpus of Christian literature from late antiquity, the *Adversus* or *Contra Iudaeos* dialogues comprise a particular group of mostly anonymously authored texts. The *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues are a large body of multitopic and usually lengthy conversations between a "Christian" and a "Jew" who are portrayed to meet to discuss matters of Christian belief and

practice. The dialogue authors present the "Jews" in these texts to challenge the Christian faith, whereas the same authors depict the "Christian" disputants as giving expositions of their religious beliefs.[1] These dialogues speak a more straightforward theological language than the convoluted theological terminology of the Church Fathers' dogmatic compositions.[2] The "Jews" in these dialogues are usually attacked for their lack of understanding and stubbornness (qualities that the dialogue authors portray these "Jews" to have) in holding to the precepts of their religion, while the Christians are shown by the same authors to attempt to persuade their "Jewish" discussants of the truth of their Christianity and the disuse of the "Jews'" religion or of the emptiness of their attacks. These portrayed encounters present synopses of the basic principles of the Christian faith of their authors regarding, for example, Christology, Soteriology, or Mariology, affording their readers a glimpse of the teachings that are presented to be rejected by the "Jewish" interlocutors.

Some *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues feature other debaters in addition to a single Jew and a single Christian,[3] while in others a state official supervises these encounters, with a "Christian" and a "Jewish" audience to retain a semi-active role.[4] In other *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the

[1] Throughout this dissertation, I place the nouns "Christian" and "Jew" inside quotation marks to denote that these are not real characters and we cannot really know whether they represent real characters. Furthermore, throughout this dissertation I will be subscribing to the "Jew" and the "Christian" the male gender because all the authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues use masculine endings when they refer to these characters.

[2] Compare, for example, the discussion on the Monothelitism in the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis A΄ 420-428 (ed. Berger) with Maximus the Confessor's discussion on the same theological topic, Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica ad Marinum* (PG 91:153c-184c and 184c-212a). See also Jean-Claude Larchet and Emmauel Ponsoye, trans., *Maxime le Confesseur: Opuscules théologique et polémique* (Paris: Cerf, 1998).

[3] See, for example, Arthur Cushman McGiffert, ed., *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew Entitled* ΑΝΤΙΒΟΛΗ ΠΑΠΙΣΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΩΝΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΝ ΤΙΝΑ (Ph.D. diss. University of Marburg; New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889); and Gustave Bardy, ed., "Les trophées de Damas: controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII^{e} siècle," *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 (1920): 173-274.

[4] For example, in Albrecht Berger, ed., "Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban a Jew" in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); and R. G. Robertson, ed., *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: A Critical Text, Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationships* (Th.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1986).

conversations between the "Jew" and the "Christian" give the impression that they occur in public, although they typically do not provide specific information about the settings.[5] The outcomes of the dialogues vary, but not dramatically. The *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues' authors present the "Jew" as either recognizing the supremacy of the Christian faith by accepting baptism, or remaining faithful to their religion, even when they are portrayed to acknowledge the importance of the author's Christianity or, in some cases, to admit the superiority of the authors' Christianity.

One question that scholars have attempted to answer regarding the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues is to what degree these dialogue texts represent or even record real encounters between Christians and Jews. Whereas hardly any scholar has claimed that these dialogues are word-for-word real, scholars' opinions regarding these texts fluctuate between them not reflecting a historical reality and them representing a situation where Christians and Jews were in competition with each other.

Scholars such as Adolf Harnack, David Rokeah, and Miriam Taylor, to name but few, have opposed the possibility that the *Adversus Iudaeos* treatises[6] were based on real events of Jewish-Christian confrontations. Adolph Harnack was the first to argue that the *Contra Iudaeos* treatises, in general—and the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, in particular—are imaginary, suggesting that

[5] Among the few examples that include information regarding the place where a debate takes place are: The *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati* (ed. Déroche) = Vincent Déroche, ed., "Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 47-229, where the discussions between a newly converted "Christian" and a "Jew" supposedly occur in Carthage (V.20); and the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban a Jew* in which the debate supposedly happens in southern Arabia in Negra, modern-day Najran, or in Constantinople. Albrecht Berger, ed., "The Dialexis," in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation*, ed. Albrecht Berger (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 94.

[6] Prior research has considered the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues as part of the *Adversus Iudaeos* treatises despite the former's distinctive rhetorical format.

these texts were composed for catechetical purposes and for purposes of self-definition.[7] David Rokeah, following Harnack, roughly a century later, argued that the *Adversus Iudaeos* literature, which did not comprise a series of polemical treatises against the Jews, was composed to address intra-Christian needs.[8] And for Miriam Taylor, who revitalized Harnack's thesis, the *Adversus Iudaeos* treatises were merely rhetorical and did not represent a historical reality in which the Christians attacked the Jews.[9] These studies, important in their own right because they attempt to deviate from a positivist reading of the literary works of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, go to the opposite end where they reject even the possibility that these texts, although imaginary as they are, still reflect a situation of competition between late antique Christians and Jews, taking into consideration the fact that Christians and Jews lived in a discursive environment where contact was inevitable. What it seems these studies have not considered is the polemical tone of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the monolithic deployment of the Jew as an interlocutor in combination with the Christian dialogue authors' reasons to choose as a discussant someone from an extra-Christian group (i.e., a Jew). Nonetheless, it is apparent that the Christian discussant in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues emerges in contrast to the Jew and vice versa. This aspect of the relationship of the two characters in these works already raises the question about why these Christian authors made such a contrast, which is what I am addressing in this dissertation.

Whereas one may not find an unequivocal admission to the claim that *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues could have been based on real events or could have reflected a situation in which Jews

[7] Adolph Harnack, ed., *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani, nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlinchen Literatur (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883).

[8] David Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in Conflict* (Leiden: Brill, 1982).

[9] Miriam Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

and Christians were in competition, this is a position that several scholars have more recently adopted when it comes to discussing the degree of representation by the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues of a religious situation between Jews and Christians in late antiquity.[10] Indicatively, Vincent Déroche has argued that Jews and Christians in late antiquity could have been in confrontation with each other when he writes that "The indubitable fact that, at the time, the confrontation between Jews and Christians cannot, by and large, have taken the shape of the court hearing that our texts seem to ascribe to it does not imply that there was no confrontation."[11] Déroche cautions that "The atmosphere of unreality that surrounds the anti-Jewish polemical texts of our period is misleading and for the most part comes quite simply from our ignorance of the actual contemporary situations, which then leads us to judge as unreal what we find unlikely -- a highly dangerous method, as we know."[12] Déroche does not assert that the Christian anti-Jewish texts transmit precisely what they narrate, but that they reflect a general situation of that time. Déroche's observations give more flexibility in the study of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues by disengaging the fear of falling into a positivist reading while studying them and raising a possibility of the dialogues reflecting a historical situation of Jewish-Christian confrontation even if they are reflected as literary constructs.

---

[10] This is the case when Vincent Déroche writes that "Since real debates between Christians and Jews are well documented (but mostly just by fleeting mentions in other texts), one understands why J. Juster, A. L. Williams, and M. Simon prefer to consider that literature as a more or less distorted echo of a real confrontation with contemporary Judaism. Indeed, various forms of public confrontation between different religious groups or within one of them were not bizarre exceptions, but rather the rule of Late Antiquity." Vincent Déroche, "Forms and Functions of Anti-Jewish Polemics: Polymorphy, Polysémy," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil, Oded Irshai, Guy G. Stroumsa, and Rina Talgam (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 537. See also Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain : leur condition politique, économique et sociale*, 2 vols. (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1914); A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Iudaeos: A Bird's Eye View of Christian Apologies until the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1935); and Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire, AD 135-425*, trans. H. McKeaning (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986).

[11] Vincent Déroche, "Anti-Jewish Polemic and the Emergence of Islam," in *Doctrine and Debate in the East Christian World, 300-1500*, ed. Averil Cameron and Robert Hoyland (Ashgate Variorum: Farnham, 2011), 88.

[12] Déroche, "Anti-Jewish Polemic and the Emergence of Islam," 88.

Sébastien Morlet, likewise, raises the issue of the ambiguity about whether we can use *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues to reconstruct Jewish-Christian controversy of the time but he does not omit to bring one's attention to three parameters, "…la réalité des débats oraux, l'existence de la pratique sténographique, et d' un autre côté les relations indéniables que ces textes entretiennent avec d' autres textes."[13] Similar to Vincent Déroche, Sebastien Morlet's remarks release scholars from the fear of approaching these works from a stance that considers as plausible the possibility that they reflect a situation where Christians and Jews could have been engaging in dialogue with each other. At the same time, both scholars' observances reveal something else that I have taken into consideration in this dissertation: the riskiness of using these works alone to talk about Jewish-Christian dialogues in late antiquity or to talk about the dialogues between a Christian and a Jew as if they did happen when the evidence we can gather cannot reveal a definitive answer but only a suggestive one.

The discussions on the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and their relation to reality have been tied inevitably to discussions on the reality of the Jews portrayed in these texts, in particular, and in the *Adversus Iudaeos* treatises, in general. For Harnack, the Jew in these works is a straw person

[13] Sébastien Morlet. "Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : Origine, Caractéristiques, Référentialité," in *Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : Permanences et mutations d'une tradition polémique. Actes du colloque international organizé les 7 et 8 décembre 2011 à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne*, éd. Sébastien Morlet, Olivier Munnich et Bernard Pouderon (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2013), 42 : "On ne peut pas exclure que certains de ces textes aient été de purs comptes rendus sténographiques - mais cela paraît peu probable dans le cas des textes conservés ; on ne peut pas exclure non plus que certains ne soient *que* des constructions littéraires (c'est sans doute le cas du *Dialogue Declerck* et de l'*Altercatio Ecclesiae et Synagogae*); mais en général, nous avons probablement affaire à une réalité textuelle complexe et il faut résister aux tentations de simplification. Nous devons garder à l'esprit la réalité des débats oraux, l'existence de la pratique sténographique, et d'un autre côté les relations indéniables que ces textes entretiennent avec d'autres textes. Nous ne savons pas si nous pouvons répondre à la question de savoir si ces textes, ou du moins si certains de ces textes sont des documents pour reconstituer le contenu et les formes de la polémique a l'instant T et en un lieu particulier. Ce que nous pouvons faire en revanche, c'est poursuivre la recherche des sources et I' analyse littéraire, qui constituent un préalable obligatoire à l'exploitation historique de ces textes."

and these texts were not intended for Jews,[14] and Rokeah argued that actual Jews were not a party to these polemics.[15] As for Taylor, she contended that the Jews who appear in these compositions should not be interpreted as historical figures, for they were merely imaginary.[16] Similarly, David Olster argued that "Byzantine authors constructed an image of the Jew to meet contemporary social needs, and that these needs were not inspired by Jewish—Christian theological debate or social relations,"[17] suggesting the unreality of the "Jew" as an image in these works and contending that these "Jews" did not represent real persons. Whereas it is true that the Jew in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues is not a real person, in that the Jew does not refer to an actual Jew who had an actual debate with an actual Christian and their particular conversation was not recorded as a dialogue text, the monolithic deployment of the Jew as an image demonstrates the importance of this character and it raises the question of why Christians throughout late antiquity (and even beyond) had recourse to this character. This is a question that modern scholars have not adequately addressed. At the same time, the fact that Christians and Jews lived in the same discursive environment has also not been given adequate attention by these scholars.

To the scholarly opinion that the Jew in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues is not real, it has been counterargued that the Jews in the *Adversus Iudaeos* treatises in general and the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, in particular, depict real Jews, an idea that is not new either. Jean Juster

---

[14] Adolph Harnack, ed., *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani, nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlinchen Literatur (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883).

[15] Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in Conflict*, 53.

[16] Miriam Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

[17] David M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 19.

defended the reading of the *Contra Iudaeos* treatises as portraying real Jews,[18] and Marcel Simon supported the view that a strong Jewish-Christian antagonism is illustrated in these compositions.[19] Such readings lead again to a positivist approach to the study of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and by extension of the image of the Jew in these texts, from which this dissertation refrains.

More recently, scholars have not rejected the hypothesis that the Jews in these texts reflect a historical reality, however, they distinguish between the Jews of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, whom they recognize as literary constructs, and real Jews upon whom these literary constructs could have been based, without arguing that the Jews in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues are real.[20] Pierluigi Lafranchi considers this parameter, and although he does not claim that the Jews of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues are real Jews, and by extension that these works "étaient des transcriptions ou des élaborations littéraires de disputes réelles,"[21] he argues, nevertheless, that parallels between the content of some of Isidore of Pelusium's letters (in which the ecclesiastical writer advises what one should respond to a Jew on certain topics) and topics in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues suggests a reality of debates between Christians and Jews, when he writes "Les parallèles entre les lettres d'Isidore et nos dialogues montrent que certains sujets faisaient réellement l'objet

[18] Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain : leur condition politique, économique et sociale*, 2 vols. (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1914).

[19] Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire, AD 135-425*, trans. H. McKeaning (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986).

[20] On the topic, very informative is a collection of articles in French by Sébastien Morlet, Olivier Munnich et Bernard Pouderon, eds., *Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : Permanences et mutations d'une tradition polémique. Actes du colloque international organizé les 7 et 8 décembre 2011 à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2013). This is an approach I also favor, although I avoid considering the reality or not of the Jews in favor of focusing on explaining their importance as contrasting their Christian interlocutors.

[21] Pierluigi Lanfranchi, "L'image du judaïsm dans les dialogues aduersus Iudaeos," in *Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : Permanences et mutations d'une tradition polémique. Actes du colloque international organizé les 7 et 8 décembre 2011 à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne*, éd. Sébastien Morlet, Olivier Munnich et Bernard Pouderon (Paris : Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2013), 235.

de discussion dans les débats entre juifs et chrétiens."[22] Lafranchi's suggestion implies that even though the Jews in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues are not real, they seem to represent a situation where being engaged in discussions with Christians should not be dismissed altogether. For this reason, he concludes that the image of the Jew and Judaism in these works could not have been created in a vacuum.[23]

Taking into consideration Lafranchi's suggestion, through comparative examination of the image of Christians and Jews discussing with each other on certain topics in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, with information from extra-*Adversus Iudaeos* dialogue texts that contain instructions on what to respond to certain Jewish challenges allows one to see a certain Christian author's need to justify their views in relation to the views of their "Jewish" discussant. The question that raises from Lafranchi's observation is the following: If Christian authors knew that their beliefs were different from those of the Jews, why did they choose in particular a Jew to discuss the most important topics of Christian concern? And, what did the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues seek by portraying defeating a Jew in a swift crosstalk beyond mere antagonism with someone who, at the end, did not pose any threat? If, as Lafranchi has argued, topics from the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues resemble topics on which Ecclesiastical authors instruct how to cover in conversations with Jews, even though Lafranchi's suggestion is still somewhat speculative, then

[22] Lanfranchi, "L'image du judaïsm dans les dialogues aduersus Iudaeos," 235.

[23] Lanfranchi, "L'image du judaïsm dans les dialogues aduersus Iudaeos," 236 : "L'image du judaïsme que nous trouvons dans les dialogues *aduersus Iudaeos* est un exemple de la création de la part des auteurs chrétiens d'un adversaire qui est en même temps un partenaire culturel. Sur la base de cette image du judaïsme, de plus en plus figée et stéréotypée, à la fois étrangère et familière, les chrétiens ont continué à dialoguer avec et contre les juifs pendant l'Antiquité tardive. Même si elle a été construite avec les outils de la rhétorique, même si elle est virtuelle et abstraite, même si elle a pour nous une nature essentiellement textuelle, cette image n'a pas été créée dans le vide, mais dans une société vive. La voix de l'altérité juive, bien enfouie et dissimulée dans les textes, résiste à la force totalisante du discours chrétien et parfois se fait entendre, si l'on veut et si l'on sait l'écouter."

it could be proposed that the Jew in the dialogues emerges as the opposite to the Christian and should be studied as such, which is what I undertake in this dissertation.

Andrew Jacobs in his study on Christ's circumcision examines among other sources *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and adds an important parameter with respect to the deployment of the Jew by the Christian authors of these compositions. From his analysis I keep his observation that the Christian authors of the dialogues he considered "conveyed the Christian desire to speak, at times, in the voice of the other: to sound like "the Jew" or "the pagan" (or, in Origen's case, both)."[24] I suggest that Jacobs's argument applies to the other dialogues I examine in this dissertation and I agree with him when he writes that the "externalized dialogues of difference…are deliberately and productively heteroglossic in their articulation of Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism"[25] and that "for all of this literary invention and artifice, Christians were drawn to elaborate the image of the Jew as their troubling interlocutor. The dialogic imagination of early Christians did not erase and silence those Jewish voices, but preserved them."[26] The findings of this dissertation build on Jacobs's remarks, for it puts to the center of its analysis the rhetorical construction of the image of the Jew and of the "other" in general as the "troubling interlocutor" whose voice denotes legitimacy to the Christian and rabbinic authors of their respective dialogues, as I argue.

The discussions on the reality or not of conversations between Christians and Jews as portrayed in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues or on the reality of the Jews in these works touch broadly on the well-studied topic of Jewish-Christian contacts in late antiquity with scholars taking

[24] Andrew S. Jacobs, *Christ Circumcised: A Study in Early Christian History and Difference* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 59.

[25] Jacobs, *Christ Circumcised*, 59.

[26] Jacobs, *Christ Circumcised*, 60.

a range of positions with respect to this issue: Some argue for a lack of contacts between Jews and Christians after the second century CE, while others stress the continuation of these relations up to the fourth or the fifth century CE. This discussion engulfs the major question of the "Parting of the Ways," which is still ongoing, and which implies a further discussion about the creation of borders between the two communities by using the discourse of the "other."[27]

A series of influential articles posit that the "parting of the ways" was a complex process, and that the cultural contacts between Judaism and Christianity seem to suggest a blurring of the boundaries, with variance by area and time.[28] However, this image is further complicated by the continued existence of some Christians who always felt a special attraction toward Judaism, the so-called "Judaizers." These Judaizers seem to continue to have troubled the church authorities well into the Middle Ages. Thus, for scholars who study the "Parting of the Ways," it seems almost impossible to pin down a definitive date when the Jews and Christians stopped interacting with each other and established clear-cut boundaries, as Adam Becker pointedly concluded when he argued that Jewish and Christian communities continued interaction with each other "in certain ways in certain times."[29]

---

[27] In the aforementioned scholarly foci, we should include the research on the textual influence of Christianity over Judaism, which has divided scholars between those who simply find a large number of literary parallels and those who see an extreme dependency of rabbinic literature upon Christian sources. This last debate has shifted the focus away from the questions of Jewish-Christian contacts and the "Parting of the Ways" towards the study of the cultural contacts between Judaism and Christianity. The study of such contacts has either focused upon polemics, influence, and textual parallels, or upon literary borrowings, giving rise to voices that advocate for the independent development of Judaism and Christianity. All these scholarly discussions fall under the general topic of Jewish-Christian relations, which remains a contested issue.

[28] Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

[29] 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. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 373-392.

Most recently, new research sees the topic of the "parting of the ways" from the perspective that the parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism had been a continuous process and that "…Christianity's eventual distinction from Judaism was messy and multiform, occurring at different paces in diverse geographies with varied literary resources, theological commitments, historical happenstance, and political maneuvering."[30] The question on the "parting of the ways" is a fascinating one and the answer to it can be as elusive as it can get. My examination of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues in tandem with rabbinic multivocal narratives in this dissertation started off as an attempt to respond to the question of the "parting of the ways." However, it no longer concerns this question. Nevertheless, the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues might be used as another source to discuss this topic.[31]

The above-mentioned analysis shows that scholarly discussions on the Jewish-Christian relations in late antiquity have raised many questions about their nature, duration, and importance. The discussions have elevated cultural concerns over questions of social contacts. A plethora of primary sources, predominantly of exegetical and doctrinal nature, have been studied extensively. The scholarly discussions on the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues touch upon a vast array of topics and issues that are intertwined. Among them, understanding the contrasting value of the Jew in relation to his Christian interlocutor in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, as I do in the present work, adds another perspective that has not been adequately considered so far by modern scholars.

[30] Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen, eds., "Introduction," in *The Ways that Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 2.

[31] This is research that I plan to undertake in the future, that is considering the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues to examine the question of the "Parting of the Ways."

Rabbinic Multivocal Narratives and "Others"

Dialectical narratives that depict two or more interlocutors discussing with each other were not composed only by the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues. When one delves into the texts of the Palestinian and Babylonian Rabbis, they will also notice that the dialogue format exists in rabbinic literature. Rabbinic authors produced dialectical narratives in which Rabbis are portrayed to discuss either with each other or with non-rabbinic and non-Jewish figures. Such dialogues, especially those that describe interactions between Rabbis with non-rabbinic and non-Jewish "others" have concerned modern scholars on multiple frontiers: whether dialectical accounts with "others" are imaginary; or whether they could possibly be historically credible; or whether these "other" voices represent real "others" or function rhetorically. Modern research raised the issue of the historicity of dialogues between Rabbis and "others," to make a shift into examining the purpose of such accounts and has continued with discussing their purpose in consideration with the potential contacts reflected in them.

Moshe David Herr in his examination of dialogues between Rabbis and Roman dignitaries is in favor of the dialogues' historical reality, considering their study as literary units less important and prioritizing their study for the examination of "social history and the history of ideas."[32] Herr's approach, however, is not considered the suggested approach anymore for studying dialogues that portray encounters between Rabbis and "others," but it drew attention to considering a historical parameter of such dialogues, as reflecting a situation of Rabbis living in a discursive environment with other groups and with whom contact would be inevitable.

[32] Moshe David Herr, "The Historical Significance of the Dialogues between Jewish Sages and Roman Dignitaries," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 150.

Richard Kalmin has argued for the historicity of dialogues between Rabbis and "others," in particular the minim, especially in those places in the Babylonian Talmud where the discussions between Palestinian Rabbis and minim warn against contacts with the latter.[33] Kalmin explains that the reason we do not find such dialogues in the Palestinian Talmud but only in the Babylonian can be explained either by "the general tendency of Palestinian compilations to contain relatively little dialogue, even dialogue between rabbis,"[34] or by the possibility that "Palestinian compilations depict Palestinian rabbis conversing with heretics about as frequently as do Babylonian compilations, but Palestinian compilations generally do not refer to them as Minim,"[35] or finally by the possibility that "disputes between rabbis and Minim were deliberately suppressed in Palestine in an effort to avoid insulting the Bible-reading non-Jews and heretics who were prominent in the Roman world."[36] Kalmin considers this last reason less possible. In any case, Kalmin suggests that these stories did not appear in a vacuum and could have represented a reality of the Palestinian Rabbis who found themselves in the midst of heretics discussing scriptural exegesis. Whereas Kalmin's argument on the dearth of dialogues in the Palestinian Talmud between Rabbis and minim and the considerably large amount of such dialogues in the Babylonian Talmud with Palestinian Rabbis as their protagonists can explain the difference on this type of excerpts in the two compilations, focusing primarily on the historical aspects of such accounts at the expense of their literary components leaves certain questions dealing with dialogues as literary units replete of literary components as less explored, which I address in this dissertation.[37]

---

[33] Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 72.

[34] Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society*, 74.

[35] Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society*, 74.

[36] Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society*, 74.

[37] The same can be said about other scholars who followed a similar focus. For example, Tal Ilan, in her examination of the dialogues between Matrona and R. Jose in rabbinic literature, seems to argue for the historicity of the image of

Marc Hirshman also prioritizes the historicity of dialogues between Rabbis and "others" over their literary nature and their study from a literary perspective when he writes,

> "Three dialogues between gentiles and Jewish sages were assembled together, unified thematically, with one exception. Does this perhaps point to the existence of a literary genre in the model of conversations between gentiles and Jews, on which the redactor drew? If the answer to this question is yes, this might support the claim of historians who believed that pagans and Jews were indeed engaged in a dialogue at the time."[38]

And Burton L. Visotzky initially interpreted the discussion in y. Ber. 9:1 (12d-13a) between a Rabbi, his disciples, and minim as based on historical facts,[39] although in a much later article he removed from this initial position to argue that the dialogue was "directed at INSIDERS [sic] in order to mark boundaries of acceptable praxis and belief, rather than intended to refute actually present outsiders, whatever their stripe."[40] Visotzky shifted from believing in the historical reality of the dialogues he examined to considering such dialogues (between minim, Rabbis, and their disciples) as composed for internal use to delineate what is the right or wrong belief and practice. Furthering this observation, I am examining the way in which Rabbis claimed legitimacy of their opinions and practices.

What I have analyzed so far is indicative cases of scholars for whom examining such dialogues between Rabbis and "others" as historical events could help understand the Rabbis' historical and social realities. However, the approach to the study of rabbinic dialogues as

---

the Matrona "the likes of her had certainly existed." Tal Ilan, "Matrona and Rabbi Jose: An Alternative Interpretation," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 25.1 (1994): 20. See also idem, 51. A similar attitude towards the historicity of rabbinic dialogues with "others" is shared by Catherine Hezser. See Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 436-49.

[38] Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*, trans. Batya Stein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 53-4.

[39] Burton L. Visotzky, "Trinitarian Testimonies," in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995), 61-74.

[40] Burton L. Visotzky, "Goys 'R'n't Us: Rabbinic Anti-Gentile Polemic in Yerushalmi Berachot 9:1," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holder M. Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 299-313.

historical events can be elusive when it is not supported by solid historical evidence. It is possible that there were contacts, for Rabbis and "others" did not live isolated from each other; nevertheless, it is also true that the dialogues Rabbis composed are literary compositions and need to be read as such.

A shift can be seen in the investigation of dialogues between Rabbis and "others" to look beyond the question of their historicity to examine the reasons behind their composition. Richard Kalmin in his analysis of rabbinic sources on the minim gives a number of reasons for the composition of such dialogues, such as Rabbis responding to their own anxiety about heretics and reassuring their audience that they handle the situation;[41] or composing such stories (that is dialogues) "provide(d) a forum for rabbis to respond to accusations, objections, and insults leveled at them by heretics during the course of actual conversations or through literary sources;"[42] or even that these dialectical stories were "perhaps part of a rabbinic effort to win converts by convincing others of the superiority of rabbinic doctrine and scriptural exegesis."[43] In other words, Kalmin sees the composition of these texts as part of the Rabbis' effort to negotiate tensions with "others" or even to proselytize outsiders. Kalmin applies his remarks on dialogues with the minim, but even in this case what is not taken into account is the possibility that Rabbis deployed the "other" to establish a prevailing opinion within the premises of the legitimization of their beliefs, as I argue in the present study, without necessarily being instigated by anxiety or need to respond to attacks against them.

[41] Richard Kalmin, "Christians and Heretics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *The Harvard Theological Review* 87.2 (1994): 164.

[42] Kalmin, "Christians and Heretics," 164.

[43] Kalmin, "Christians and Heretics," 164.

Christine Hayes, in her influential chapter "Displaced Self-Perceptions: The Deployment of Minim and Romans in b. Sanhedrin 90b-91a"[44] in which she analyzes a series of dialogues between Romans and minim on the resurrection of the dead from biblical scripture, considers these dialogues as bearing the Rabbis' anxieties which they projected on "others" through these dialectical narratives. She writes that, "Heretics and Romans serve as characters onto which the rabbis can project a radical doubt unacceptable to the collective rabbinic conscious; rabbinic objections to and anxiety over midrashic methods of exegesis are displaced onto heretics and Romans."[45] Hayes suggested that Rabbis internalized "others'" views about them and their thinking which they imprinted on such imaginary dialogues in a process which could be explained by the fact that "viewing themselves as others viewed them, the rabbis are, at times, uncomfortable with what they see."[46] Hayes's study is instrumental in offering an alternative way of studying dialogues between Rabbis and "others" that goes beyond the historicity of these accounts and aims to explore the deeper reasons for which Rabbis composed these texts in which they reflected their own concerns through discussions with "others." Furthermore, Hayes's description of heretics and Romans as characters in dialectical excerpts moves us away from considering the possibility of the reality of such interlocutors and helps us see them as images whose deployment says more

[44] Christine Hayes, "Displaced Self-Perceptions: The Deployment of Minim and Romans in b. Sanhedrin 90b-91a," in *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine*, ed. Hayim Lapin (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 1998), 249-89.

[45] Hayes, "Displaced Self-Perceptions," 274.

[46] Hayes, "Displaced Self-Perceptions," 254. This idea of internalization of "others'" opinions, in particular of Romans, about Rabbis is expressed by Mira Balberg who argues with regard to the dialogues she discusses that they "do not present only a simple rejection or problematization of the Greco-Roman body ideology, as Boyarin argues, but also an appropriation and internalization of it. That is to say, although the Babylonian creators or re-creators of these stories may have been quite alienated from the Hellenistic perceptions that underlie the dialogues, these dialogues do suggest that these perceptions shaped the rabbis' views, both of themselves and of Rome as their cultural Other." Mira Balberg, "The Emperor's Daughter's New Skin: Bodily Otherness and Self-Identity in the Dialogues of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania and the Emperor's Daughter," *JSQ* 19.3 (2012): 186.

about the Rabbis themselves than the "others" that are used by the Rabbis. It is on such a distinction that I have ventured to base this dissertation and it is on the shift to the focus on the Rabbis rather than on the "others" as historical figures that I attempt to execute in this dissertation for studying both the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the rabbinic multivocal narratives.

Similarly with Hayes, Kalmin explores this idea of internalization of "others'" opinions regarding the Rabbis when he explains the function of certain dialogues from b. Avodah Zarah 54b-55a, and writes that "The main function of this collection… is to help the rabbis feel confident about their rejection of idol worship."[47] The discussions in the dialogues that Kalmin analyzes are on idolatry and it seems that for him the Rabbis expressed through them their anxiety and "the sense that the opposition possesses arguments that must be responded to, even if only to make the rabbinic authors of the story feel more secure in their beliefs."[48] This dissertation shares with Hayes and Kalmin the importance of examining the deployment of the "other" in dialogues to comprehend the Rabbis' choice to compose such texts.

Sarit Kattan Gribetz and Moulie Vidas explain the deliberate creation of dialogues between Rabbis and "others" "as a way of negotiating central tensions in rabbinic culture,"[49] recognizing at the same time that the many different "others" and the many different ways "in which such dialogues were constructed and retold… provide[s] scholars with opportunities to tap into the social and historical circumstances that gave rise to particular dialogues."[50] The two scholars recognize that the different "others" may reflect different rabbinic concerns and questions

[47] Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 113.

[48] Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 113.

[49] Sarit Kattan Gribetz and Moulie Vidas, "Rabbis and Others in Conversations," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19.2 (2012): 94.

[50] Gribetz and Vidas, "Rabbis and Others in Conversations," 95.

depending on their identity, such as when an "other" is a min, or a woman, or the foreign ruler,[51] an observation that I share. Through a series of articles that Gribetz and Vidas put together under the title "Rabbis and Others in Conversation I and II" in two special issues of the *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, the two scholars have attempted to demonstrate the many different "others" that appear in them as well as the "multiple purposes and functions of this genre of dialogues between rabbis and "others" within the rabbinic corpus"[52] and their variety "according to the historical context in which they were produced and the literary context in which they are presented."[53] Their endeavor puts the focus on the genre of rabbinic dialogue and its function in relation to the content of the discussions that are in them, which is an approach that has informed my study not only of the rabbinic but also of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues.

Understanding the function of dialogues between Rabbis and "others," without totally dismissing the possibility that they could reflect a social or historical reality, has been taken on as an alternative way of reading such compositions. Discussing dialogues between Rabbis and Kutim, Andreas Lehnardt clarifies that these dialogues "are, for the most part, legends or literary fictions. Perhaps, some of them were inspired by 'real life.' Most of them, however, are in their pattern

[51] Gribetz and Vidas, "Rabbis and Others in Conversations," 95: "There are different kinds of 'others' in rabbinic literature, and each kind brings to our understanding of the rabbis a unique set of questions, problems and insights. Dialogues with women may be understood as part of the marginalization of the voices of women in rabbinic antiquity. The dialogues with foreign rulers (even if fictional) contain valuable information about the Jewish relationship with and negotiation of imperial power. Dialogues with minim or heretics in particular have attracted the attention of scholars in evaluating the interaction of 'Christian' and 'Pagan' ideas with rabbinic ones and the blurring of boundaries between rabbis and "others.""

[52] Gribetz and Vidas, "Rabbis and Others in Conversations," 95.

[53] Gribetz and Vidas, "Rabbis and Others in Conversations," 95-6: "The articles found in this and the next issue of *JSQ* represent a range of reflections on the multiple purposes and functions of this genre of dialogues between rabbis and 'others' within the rabbinic corpus, from Palestine to Babylonia and from Tannaitic to post-classical sources. The dialogues at the center of each study vary according to the historical context in which they were produced and the literary con text in which they are presented. They also differ according to the identity of the 'other' - the heretic, the Gentile ruler, the non-rabbinic Jew. What these diverse dialogues share in characteristics and function, however, makes investigating them as a unit a fruitful endeavor."

reminiscent of narratives depicting contacts between rabbis with other groups such as the 'am ha-ares or non-Jews."[54] For Lehnardt, "These aggadic stories are not intended to describe historical events but to illustrate halakhic decisions. Historical information can be recovered from these stories only very cautiously."[55] What is noticeable in Lehnardt's interpretation is the warning not to take these stories "at their face value as precise descriptions of social contacts [since] None of the analyzed stories seem to be (or intended to be) accurate reports of past events."[56] He, nevertheless, insinuates the possibility of historicity from these stories when he argues that "…the narratives and sometimes self-contradicting stipulations in the Yerushalmi do transmit minutiae that can hardly be explained as mere fictions. Especially in the analyzed stories, it seems to me, some 'superfluous details' can be observed that surely correlate to a certain degree with 'real life'."[57] Whereas my study considers Christian and rabbinic dialogues in tandem, and not merely rabbinic ones, it endorses Lehnardt's approach to study dialogues with "others" primarily as literary constructions and keeping a cautious stance toward them as possibly reflecting historical situations. Indeed, the dialogues I analyze in this dissertation may or may not reflect historical contacts, which is not a claim I endeavor to make. Their content and the deployment of "others," however, may tell us about what Christians and Rabbis tried to achieve through their respective texts.

Jenny R. Labendz, in her study, *Socratic Torah*, scrutinizes dialogues between Rabbis and "others" on Torah and brings together the notions of the purpose of composition of these texts,

---

[54] Andreas Lehnardt, "The Samaritans (Kutim) in the Talmud Yerushalmi: Constructs of 'Rabbinic Mind' or Reflections of Social Reality?**"** in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002,) 149.

[55] Lehnardt, "The Samaritans (Kutim) in the Talmud Yerushalmi," 149.

[56] Lehnardt, "The Samaritans (Kutim) in the Talmud Yerushalmi," 159.

[57] Lehnardt, "The Samaritans (Kutim) in the Talmud Yerushalmi," 159.

which she claims were "intended as means of producing and communicating rabbinic knowledge," and of the Rabbis living in a milieu where interaction was the social norm and not isolation; she writes,

> "If rabbinic Judaism had existed in a vacuum and answered only to itself, it could perhaps have sufficed with a revelation and tradition-based epistemology. But the rabbis not only historically did, in all likelihood, interact with and answer to people… but they actually portrayed themselves in dialogue with various outsiders discussing matters that often would not even have been subject to debate had the rabbis not imagined the perspectives of outsiders."[58]

In her analysis of dialogues between Rabbis and non-Jews on the Torah, Labendz brings evidence that testifies (according to her) to the "rabbinic interest in discourse with non-Jews about the Torah."[59] For Labendz, such discussions display the very notion of multivocality "challeng[ing] the common picture of the rabbis' ideal world as one in which non-Jews are either absent or subjugated."[60] She also underlines, "This does not mean that the dialogues the rabbis depicted happened the way they did. But if the rabbis were indeed surrounded by interreligious dialogue, this might have affected their interest in imagining their own abilities to do the same."[61]

Most recently, Michal Bar-Asher Siegal has argued that dialogues between Rabbis and minim show rabbinic awareness and familiarity with Christianity, suggesting a strong possibility of Jewish-Christian interactions, and although she explains that she does not believe that "these dialogues represent historical meetings between Christians and early Palestinian rabbis, but rather

---

[58] Jenny R Labendz, *Socratic Torah: Non-Jews in Rabbinic Intellectual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18-19.

[59] Labendz, *Socratic Torah*, 2.

[60] Labendz, *Socratic Torah*, 218.

[61] Labendz, *Socratic Torah*, 30.

a literary creation by the later Talmudic authors"[62] she nevertheless seems to go back and forth in alluding to rabbinic knowledge about Christianity when she writes that these dialogues "take part in the bigger process of boundary-making between Babylonian Talmudic authors and the beliefs of contemporaneous Christian communities."[63] Although both Labendz and Bar-Asher Siegal consider the "other" as an instrumental part of the dialogues with the Rabbis and they take into account the fact that Rabbis were not isolated, or the fact of possible interactions between the two parties, even when they caution against seeing the dialogues as accurate representations of what happened, they have not examined the underlying aspects of the attempted contrast between Rabbis and "others" that is prominent in these compositions.

The examination of dialogues between Rabbis and "others" has raised not merely the issue of the potential contacts between the two parties as one may see, for example, in discussions regarding the contacts between Rabbis and Christians but also reactions to trying to see contacts everywhere. Alon Goshen-Gottstein questions the scholarly tendency that identifies Christians behind any contact between the Rabbis and the minim.[64] He suggests that modern scholars have

[62] Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Jewish-Christian Dialogues on Scripture in Late Antiquity: Heretic Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 188.

[63] Bar-Asher Siegal, *Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 192-3.

[64] Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature—Shifting Scholarly and Relational Paradigms: The Case of Two Powers," in the *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis, Joshua Schwartz, and Joseph Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 16-20. The vagueness of the word "minim," whose idiosyncratic nature is testified not only in the scanty references in the Yerushalmi and the comparably many textual attestations in the Bavli, but also by the modern scholars' difficulty to classify under this generic term a particular group of people, obstructs the reading of rabbinic texts, which refer to these "other" groups, and, consequently, impacts the ability to see rabbinic Judaism's active engagement in the world of late antiquity. Marcel Simon states that the "Minim designated simply any dissident body, whatever its particular characteristics, which rejected in any respect the thought or practice of Jewish orthodoxy." Simon, *Verus Israel*, 181-182. Martin Goodman recognizes the importance of the term for the tannaim, who coined a new word to describe a deviant individual. Martin Goodman, "The Function of Minim in Early Rabbinic Judaism," in *Judaism in the Roman World: Collected Essays*, ed. Martin Goodman (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 166. The obscurity on whom this term defines remains and Goodman explains that "the very fact that *minim* have been identified, in different passages, with Jewish Christians, Gnostics, Hellenistic Jews, Sadducees and others constitutes evidence that the rabbis who compiled these

based their assumptions on two models; the "competitive-polemical model,"[65] according to which the relationship between Jews and Christians should be described as one of conflict and antagonism,[66] and the "identity constructing model"[67] that "attempt(s) to identify and characterize wider structures that bring to light the profound differences between the two religions... [and] focuses on questions of identity and how Jewish and Christian identities are constructed in different ways, as this difference is made manifest through the study of the deeper structures of the religion and thought of both religions."[68] To these models, Goshen-Gottstein suggests a third, "the parallel spiritual activity model,"[69] which, essentially, denies any form of interaction between Judaism and Christianity but explains "their activities… as parallel activities that do not rely directly upon one another, but rather upon a common source or activity, primarily scriptural interpretation."[70]

---

rabbinic documents used the term in a vague way." Idem, 170. For Goodman, the Rabbis were, after all, concerned about the contacts between this group and rabbinic Jews and the effect of the former on the latter. Idem, 172.

[65] Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature,", 21-23.

[66] Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature," 21-23.

[67] Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature,", 23-25.

[68] Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature," 23. Goshen-Gottstein further divides the "identity constructing model" into two branches when trying to interpret Jewish-Christian relations: the "phenomenological or comparative approach" and the "historical-evolutionary model." The latter has been used extensively by Daniel Boyarin who has claimed that Judaism and Christianity "were jointly born of the same matrix. However, their differences are no less profound, inasmuch as they express systemic differences, rather than disagreement on cardinal points of view. Most importantly, while the polemical model implicitly validates only one side, this model consciously validates both sides, inasmuch as both are presented as legitimate heirs of the earlier stage of Judaism, in which both phenomena existed without clear borderlines demarcating one from the other. Both religions are thus perceived as valid choices from a reservoir of religious options that the earlier unseparated stage represents." Idem, 24.

[69] Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature,", 26-29.

[70] Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature," 26. To substantiate his claim on the parallel development of Judaism and Christianity, Goshen-Gottstein uses the rabbinic text on the Two Powers in Heaven. He deconstructs the polemical character of this passage on the assumption that the formula is not found extensively in rabbinic literature and that Christianity had developed a Trinitarian rather than a binitarian theology (Idem, 38-40), suggesting a reading that seeks to talk more about the recognition of one God and the divinity of the Godhead that concerned the Rabbis when they read certain verses, rather than the polemical response of rabbinic Judaism to Christianity. Idem, 40-42. Similarly, Barak Cohen, drawing on this line of understanding with regard to

While I see Goshen-Gottstein to be correct in his remarks on how scholars have addressed the topic of relations between Rabbis and "others" based on those two models, the model he suggests does not explain adequately the fact that Rabbis and "others" lived in a discursive environment (a point that Bar-Asher Siegal has eloquently explained in her first monograph),[71] in which knowing the "other's" points of view or beliefs, even if not in the most minute details, would be most possible and interaction would be almost inevitable. Although my study cautiously avoids discussing real contacts between the interlocutors, it shows that even without engaging in the "competitive-polemical model," or in the "identity constructing model," let alone "the parallel spiritual activity model," the "other" as a character is instrumental for both Christian authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the anonymous rabbinic editors of multivocal narratives, for it was these authors' deliberate choice to deploy "others" for different purposes. The "other" as an image or character (whether a "Jew" in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues or Rabbis' interlocutor) or an "other" narrative, as I argue in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, has a purpose and beyond competing or helping the interlocutor with the construction of identity, the "other" can contrast the protagonist of these discussions to emphasize certain traits.

Finally, the scholarly suggestion of a discursive environment between Rabbis and "others" has been proposed to avoid the conundrum of influence or of direct contacts which implicitly or explicitly suggest historical approaches to the dialogues. To that end, Daniel Boyarin suggests "a

---

the contact and the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, inveighs against the scholarly tendency that usually sees Christians behind the minim in Babylonian texts, and argues that the term may even be a general reference directed at various sectarian groups and their members, and it is certainly not used exclusively in connection with Christians. Barak Shlomo Cohen, "'In Nehardea There Are No Heretics': The Purported Jewish Response to Christianity in Nehardea (A Re-examination of the Talmudic Evidence)," in *Studies in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity; Text and Context*, ed. Dan Jaffé (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 31.

[71] Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Especially the "Introduction," 1-34.

shared cultural milieu within which cultural innovation and productivity take place"[72] and Michal Bar-Asher Siegal takes this one step further to argue for a parallel development of two overlapping and shared cultures, that of late antique Judaism and late antique Christianity, and to propose "different types of interaction (that) include analogies, literary borrowing, and parallel developments."[73] This dissertation finds itself closer to the approach of these two scholars by attempting to consider together Christian and rabbinic dialogues that were written around the same period and which originated in proximate geographical spaces, drawing on Bar-Asher Segal's suggestion on different types of interaction between Rabbis and Christians, one of which, I suggest in this dissertation, is the rhetorical use and function of the "other" as a foil in dialogue texts.

One may see that discussions on dialogues between Rabbis and "others" can lead to many areas of research each of which demands special attention in order to understand the function, purpose, and choice of the interlocutors in these compositions.

Foil Characters and Narratives in Late Antique Dialogues

In this dissertation, I study the how and why of the use of the "other" in Christian *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and in rabbinic multivocal narratives. As described above, I do not enter the discussions on the historicity of these dialogues or on potential contacts, but I focus exclusively on the deployment of "others" and their function as such to investigate what their respective authors tried to achieve by using specific others.

[72] Daniel Boyarin, "Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 337.

[73] Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud*, 17.

Specifically, I examine the use of the "other" as a foil in these texts. Although the idea of the foil was seen first and examined in the context of premodern English literature,[74] it can be traced much earlier in works from classical and late antiquity and ought to be studied on its own accord. In literature, a foil can be either a character or a narrative. As a character, the foil emphasizes the contrast between two characters with the purpose to highlight the traits, qualities, and/or positions and ideas of the main character or protagonist.[75] The foil narrative is an account, (a dialogue or a narration) that serves as a contrast to an "other" narrative.[76] The foil narrative's purpose is to highlight aspects of the source or original story to which the foil narrative refers by creating a contrast between the two stories. Depending on the content of both the source story and its foil narrative, there are various aspects that the foil narrative may touch upon and there may be different objectives that a foil narrative may serve.

In the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues where a "Christian" and a "Jew" are portrayed to be discussing with each other on matters of Christian interest and concern, it appears, as I will show in the next chapters, that the "Jew" has been deployed as the foil to his "Christian" interlocutor. As a foil to the "Christian" discussant, the Jew's *modus operandi* changes when discussions concern topics of Christian practice and topics of Christian belief and dogma. The image of the

---

[74] See Victor Stradley Armbrister, *The Origins and Functions to Subplots in Elizabethan Drama*, (Vanderbilt University, 1938); Richard Levin, *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 111-2.

[75] Any character may function as a foil to an "other" character, especially in works with complex plots that involve many characters. See also, Chris Baldick, "Foil," *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 132.

[76] Regarding narratives as foils in literature from premodern to modern times see indicatively, Sa′diyya Shaikh, Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn 'Arabī, Gender, and Sexuality (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 141, 173; Jan Alber, "Unnatural Narrative," *The Living Handbook of Narratology* https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/104.html; Jessica Miller, "Passionate Virtue: Conceptions of Medical Professionalism in Popular Romance Fiction," *Literature and Medicine* 33.1 (2015): 84; Hans Walter Gabler, "The rocky road to Ulysses," in *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018), 8-10, 16; S. Douglas Olson, "The Stories of Agamemnon in Homer's Odyssey," *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 120 (1990): 58.

"Jew" becomes indispensable for the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, for it reinforces claims of legitimacy.

On the other hand, in rabbinic multivocal narratives we see both foil characters and foil narratives. The idiosyncrasy of the foil characters, as I will show, lies in that they are not limited to a specific group, but the foil characters can be anyone, non-rabbinic and non-Jewish figures, even other Rabbis. In certain rabbinic dialectical narratives where we see the foil interlocutor,[77] the foil interlocutor's identity seems to be contingent on the topic under discussion and it seems that the foil characters have been deployed by the anonymous rabbinic authors to highlight the rabbinic editor's stance on a particular topic. On the other hand, when the foil interlocutor is another Rabbi, the rabbinic foil allows the anonymous rabbinic editor to highlight to which rabbinic opinion his sympathy rests. At the end, the foil interlocutor in rabbinic literature may reveal the Rabbis' legitimacy of opinion in comparison to any other group.

Foil dialectical narratives in rabbinic literature appear as retellings or restatements of "other" stories. Narratives, which scholars have seen as parodies and satires of "other" stories, may have an additional but distinguished function, that of a foil. The difference between seeing narratives as parodies and seeing the same narratives as foils exists and deals with what goals the authors of such stories tried to achieve. As I explain in detail in Chapter 5, this relationship between foil dialectical narratives and source stories, to which the former refers, aims to highlight the contrast between them and through that contrast to emphasize the rabbinic legitimate reaction to "other(s')" stories. In other words, these rabbinic dialectical narratives could have been composed as foil narratives against which the Rabbis "interpreted" the source stories. We see that Rabbis and

[77] The examination of the use of foil characters in rabbinic multivocal narratives does not exhaust all the groups that appear in such multivocal narratives in the rabbinic literature. The examples I discuss in this dissertation are suggestive of similar functions of other groups as foils.

Christians used a similar method, that of foiling, but at the same time we see that they used that method differently.

Taking into account these observations, this dissertation's thesis argues that anonymous rabbinic editors of dialectical multivocal narratives (in which a resolution is ventured to be achieved) and Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues built their legitimacy of opinion and practice through contrast with an "other," whether a character or a narrative. Contrasting the "other" in the format of dialogue appears through the rhetorical use of the "other" as a foil allowed the authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the rabbinic multivocal narratives, respectively, to emphasize their own views as correct and to establish a prevailing opinion or stance on a topic. In this process, the "other" within a dialogue becomes vital because the "other" character or narrative provides the effective rhetorical space through which, by means of a dialectical discussion, the constructed result is the legitimacy of the opinion of the "Christian" or of the Rabbi in relation to their interlocutor or, as in the case of rabbinic literature, in relation to an "other" story. Thus, through foil(ing) characters and stories, Christian and rabbinic authors constructed and reconfirmed for their audiences the correctness of their views on the topics presented in the discussions.

Historical Context and Methodology

In this dissertation, my selection of texts from the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the rabbinic literature is thematic. I purposefully chose dialogues that resemble each other. Specifically, I analyze excerpts of Jewish and Christian dialogue texts concerning icons, idols, and idolatry, and texts concerning the divinity or humanity of Jesus, and Jesus' birth from a (virgin) woman. I chose these topics because they are addressed in both corpora, *mutatis mutandis*,

allowing me to examine how the "other" is used in Christian and rabbinic dialogues on similar subjects.

The six Christian dialogues that I include were composed between the early fifth and the tenth centuries CE and constitute only a small but representative part of this corpus. These texts are: the *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* (likely composed in the early fifth century CE);[78] the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (composed in the late fifth or second half of the sixth century CE);[79] the *Trophies of Damascus* (composed at the end of the seventh century, likely between 670

[78] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* (ed. Harnack) = Adolph Harnack, ed., *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani, nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlinchen Literatur (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883). Harnack's is the classic edition of this text. Two newer critical editions that considered more manuscript witnesses are the following: E. Bratke, ed., Evagrius Monachus, *Evagrii Altercatio Legis Inter Simonem Iudaeum et Theophilum Christianum*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 45 (Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1904); and R. Demeulenaere, ed*., Altercatio legis inter Simonem Iudaeum et Theophilum Christianum*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 64 (Turnhout : Brepols, 1991). *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* is the earliest anti-Jewish dialogue written in Latin and according to James Carleton Paget it is probably attributed to Cyprian, in the third century CE. See James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 46 n. 25. However, according to William Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues: Athanasius and Zacchaeus, Simon and Theophilus, Timothy and Aquila: Introductions, Texts, and Translations* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 87, this dialogue was most possibly written in the early-fifth century CE, probably around 400 CE based on a testimony by Gennadius of Marseilles "in chapter 51 of his appendix to Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*" according to whom another Evagrius wrote this work, who should not be confused with the well-known monk Evagrius of Pontus. Varner continues by explaining that "This [date] would be consistent with its being 'known to almost all' by Gennadius's time, which is late fifth century" (Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 87). On the date of this work see also A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos. A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 299. See also Lawrence Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (excluding Justin)," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 596-7.

[79] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (ed. Robertson) = R. G. Robertson, ed., "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: A Critical Text, Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationships" (Th.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1986). This is a Greek dialogue that was written either in the late fifth century CE, or most probably in the second half of the sixth century CE and narrates an encounter between a certain Christian, Timothy, and a certain Jew, Aquila. Alberto Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation: A Guide to Late Antique Dialogues in Greek and Syriac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 212 n. 572 presents both views about the date of the composition of this work with the latter date to have been proposed based on Justinian's novel 146 "that regulated the use of the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible within Jewish communities" (216) according to Robertson's thesis whom he cites. (See also Robertson, *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, 372-83). For the fifth century CE as the date of composition see F. C. Conybeare, ed., *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila: Edited with Prolegomena and Fascimiles* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1898), xxxiv, where Conybeare attributed the present form of the dialogue to the fifth century CE. Alexandria of Egypt is considered as a possible place of composition. See Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues," 603.

CE and 680 CE);[80] the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (one form of this text dates from the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century CE and a second form dates from the eleventh century CE);[81] the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (written between the end of eighth and the beginning of the ninth century CE);[82] and the *Dialogue of*

[80] *The Trophies of Damascus* (ed. Bardy) = Gustave Bardy, ed., "Les trophées de Damas: controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII[e] siècle," *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 (1920): 173-274 is an anti-Jewish work composed in the form of a dialogue at the end of the seventh century CE, in particular between 670 CE and 680 CE, in Damascus under Arab rule. The text is supposed to be a record of a dialogue that occurred between a Christian monk and several Jews in the presence of a large audience comprised of Christians, Jews, Samaritans, pagans, and Arabs. With the same author having written another dialogue against the Miaphysites, which follows his *Trophies of Damascus*, we deduce that his scope was also to bring *heretics* to the "right" path after he partially "succeeded" in converting Jews to Christianity (according to the plot of his first dialogue, the *Trophies of Damascus*). It is obvious that both his anti-Jewish and anti-Miaphysitism dialogues serve a propaganda in favor of Chalcedonian Christianity. See Gustave Bardy, ed., "Introduction," in "Les trophées de Damas: controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII[e] siècle," *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 (1920): 173-88; Peter Van Nuffelen, "Prepared for all Occasions: The Trophies of Damascus and the Bonwetsch Dialogue," in *Dialogues and Debates from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium*, ed. Averil Cameron and Niels Gaul (London: Routledge, 2017), 65-76; Shaun O'Sullivan, "Anti-Jewish Polemic and Early Islam," in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 49-68.

[81] The *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (ed. McGiffert) = Arthur Cushman McGiffert, ed., *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew Entitled* ΑΝΤΙΒΟΛΗ ΠΑΠΙΣΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΩΝΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΝ ΤΙΝΑ (Ph.D. diss. University of Marburg; New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889) appears in two forms, an earlier one written at the end of the seventh century CE and a later form that is dated in the eleventh century (31) and is most probably of Egyptian origin (43-44). Traces of other anti-Jewish dialogues such as the *Trophies of Damascus,* or the *Quaestio ad Antiochum Ducem,* cxxxvii can be found in this text whereas this work has been used to a large extent in the *Discourse against the Jews* by a certain Anastasius who should not be conflated with either Anastasius Sinaite or Anastasius the abbot of St. Euthemios in Palestine (44). The text focuses primarily on Christology, and, in particular, Jesus's divine status and his relationship with God the Father. *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (ed. McGiffert), 31-44. See also, A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos. A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 169-174; and Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 588 n. 23 where he writes: "The eighth-century Discussion of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk… 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 loasaph, ascribed to John of Damascus, to fill out a defense of Christianity in a scene before a king (see the Loeb edition)."

[82] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338) = A. Peter Hayman, ed., *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, CSCO 338 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973. In the colophon of the work it writes "A letter of the blessed Sergios the stylite [or pillar-saint] of Gousit which was written by him against a Jewish man who disputed that God does not have son and namely God has not begotten [a son]" (1). This dialogue constitutes one of the two anti-Jewish dialogues that either have survived or have ever been written originally in Syriac in the first nine centuries CE. The other Syriac dialogue is Jacob of Sarug's, *The Disputation of the Church and the Synagogue*, in which the interlocutors are not persons but religious institutions, the Church and the Synagogue. [For Jacob of Sarug, *The Disputation of the Church and the Synagogue*, see Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues," 598-9]. The *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* was written between the late eighth and the beginnings of the ninth century CE and its importance lies in that it is the only Syriac anti-Jewish dialogical work that has survived from the period between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries

Gregentius bishop of Himyar with Herban the Jew (composed sometime between the sixth and the tenth centuries CE).[83]

It would be impossible to include each and every dialogue from the corpus of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues within a single dissertation. Nevertheless, the texts I use resemble the characteristics of the rest of the works in this large corpus in three major ways. First, the dialogues are mostly anonymous, and we may identify a possible author only for very few of them. Lacking information about the identity of the author impedes our knowledge on whether they composed other works, for what specific audience, and what particular issues they dealt with and wished to address. On the other hand, knowing, for example, that Leontius bishop of Neapolis, Cyprus wrote a *Defense against the Jews*,[84] helps twofold: It allows us to identify his other works and to seek through them information on whether there are mentions to Jews or contacts with them. And, it permits us to investigate an author's surroundings and scrutinize social, political, and economic conditions of a place with which an author is associated.

CE, when the Syriac Church issued ecclesiastical canons against Jewish practices that were found among the Christians.

[83] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* (ed. Berger) = Albrecht Berger, ed., "Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban a Jew" in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006). The *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* "records" a public disputation between Gregentius the bishop of Himyar, modern-day Yemen, and a certain Jew called Herban. Despite scholarly suggestions that hint to the reality of this dialogue based on the text's own information that a certain notary, Palladios, recorded the debate and this recording was used by the author of the text we have at hand, such a possibility cannot stand without skepticism in the absence of solid proofs. The text of the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* was probably composed "in the mid-tenth century" (105) based among other textual proofs on the fact that "some allegorical interpretations of passages from the Old Testament…for which parallels can only be found in sources from the ninth century and later" (96, 107). Other alternative dates have been proposed that situate this composition between the sixth and the ninth centuries CE on account of references to theological issues that troubled the Church, such as Monothelitism, or owing to not mentioning Iconoclasm when the discussions touch on the veneration of the icons, or due to allusions to the debate on the filioque (94-96). All in all, this is a fictitious work whose action its author decided to situate "more than four hundred years" from its composition, at the time of archbishop Gregentius, using his figure to denote credibility to its historicity (107). Albrecht Berger, ed., "The Dialexis," in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 91-109.

[84] *Defense against the Jews* (ed. Déroche) = Vincent Déroche, ed., "*L'Apologie contre les Juifs* de Leontios de Néapolis," *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (1994), 45-104.

Second, the texts I am studying, as well as the other *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, are constructed in the format of a conversation, public or private,[85] between a Christian and a Jew. The general premise in these works is that the Christian aims to defend his Christianity against the Jew's attacks on certain Christian beliefs and practices. In so doing, the Christian discussant offers a succinct exposition of Christian teachings to which he adheres and against which the Jew is portrayed to inveigh.

A third characteristic of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues is that each dialogue addresses an array of topics that concern Christian teaching and dogma. The portrayed conversation flows back and forth from one topic to another, with previously mentioned topics coming back up for discussion throughout a single dialogue. The topics seem to follow the theological line of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea, 325 CE (First Ecumenical Council)[86] and Chalcedon, 451 CE (Fourth Ecumenical Council)[87] which defined Nicene Christianity and Chalcedonian

[85] Indicatively, in *The Trophies of Damascus*, Dialexis A΄ VIII.4; Dialexis B΄ I.1 (ed. Bardy), in *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §3.1a (ed. Robertson), and in the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis A΄ 1-15 (ed. Berger) the dialogues occur in public, whereas in the *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati*, I.43 (ed. Déroche) the conversation takes place in secret after many precautions have been taken.

[86] The first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea I, 325 CE dealt primarily with the relationship of the Son with God the Father introducing the theological concept of "homoousios" that is the Son is of the same substance with the Father, rejecting Arianism which, although it recognized the Son as God, considered the Son subordinate to the Father. See Leo Donald Davis, "Council of Nicaea I, 325," in *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 33-80; and Yaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, vol. 1 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 201-2, 218-9, 227-7, 270.

[87] The fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon 451 CE declared the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ, stating that the person of Christ is one from and in two natures, and renouncing Monophysitism and Nestorianism. See Davis, "The Council of Chalcedon, 451," 170-206; and Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:451.

Christianity,[88] with the anonymous authors of the texts I analyze[89] to appear as adherents to those dogmas. For example, although there is no reference in the dialogues to the aforementioned Church Councils as ecclesiastical events that took place, the fact that they offer a succinct analysis of certain teachings that the Jew is portrayed to attack, such as the belief in Mary being virgin *ante partum*, *in partu*, and *post partum*, or the belief that she is called *Theotokos*, to name a few, reveals a dialogue author's affiliation with that certain line of theology, such as in the example I just offered, with the teachings of the Council of Ephesus, 431 CE (Third Ecumenical Council) that were affirmed by the Council of Chalcedon, 451 CE.[90]

When one reads these compositions, they likely see a paradox: Despite their having been composed in different periods, we may not see many differences among the various compositions due to the similarity in topics, in theological concerns, in arguments, and structure of them. It is true that the texts I examine in this dissertation were written during a period of large theological fermenting and political changes in the Eastern Roman Empire. Already between the fifth and the

[88] Nicene Christianity reflects the branch of Christianity that adhered to the dogmas of the Nicaea-Constantinople Creed of 325 CE and 381 CE that resulted from the first two Ecumenical Councils which resolved the discussions of the divinity of the second person of the Trinity, the relationship between the Son and the Father, the divinity of the Holy Spirit and in general trinitarian issues that arose and troubled the Church in the fourth century CE. Chalcedonian Christianity, which continued Nicene Christianity, dealt with resolving the theological issue of the two natures of Christ in one person and its dogmas prevailed among other Christian groups and Christian streams from the fifth century CE onwards. The *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues follow the tradition of Nicene Christianity and Chalcedonian Christianity.

[89] The same is true for the other *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues that I am not considering; their authors seem to adhere to Nicene Christianity and Chalcedonian Christianity. There are very few dialogues that were composed before the fourth century CE such as the *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho the Jew* which is extant or others that are either fragmentary or have not survived. Regarding these dialogues, the beliefs of their authors as expressed through their exposition in these texts resemble those of the authors who composed *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues in the fifth century CE onwards, lacking, as it is reasonable to understand, the dogmatic support of the Ecumenical Councils. To that end, these authors could be considered proto-orthodox.

[90] The third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, 431 CE affirmed again the Nicene-Constantinople Creed; it renounced Nestorianism, which argued for two persons in Christ and called Virgin Mary *Christotokos* (Christ-bearing referring to her giving birth to Jesus as human alone); and it declared the Virgin Mary *Theotokos* (God-bearing) and the unity of Christ's person as both a perfect God and a perfect Man. See Davis, "The Council of Ephesus, 431," 134-69; and Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:260-1, 318, 329-30, 340.

tenth centuries CE, five Ecumenical Councils and numerous other regional councils had convened[91] to address theological issues that were arising and dividing the Christian population according to their doctrinal beliefs, and which were seen as being deviated from the dogmas of Nicene Christianity and from opinions of those theologians who lived before the fourth century CE that could be called proto-orthodox.[92] Nevertheless, this immense theological development has not been well reflected in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues. The Christian dogmas and teachings in these compositions are presented as crystalized and not disputed by "other" Christians, who did not adhere to certain teachings of Nicene and Chalcedonian Christianity, as was happening at the time. Instead, Christian dogmas and teachings in these compositions are negated by a "Jewish" interlocutor, who also raises topics and issues that were not of concern of intra-Christian debates, such as the identity of what group comprises the true Israel or the importance of circumcision.[93] Thus, although the texts that I examine were written during this period and we see theological topics that are debated concurrently with a dialogue's composition to be addressed as crystalized, there are also topics that were more of a focus from previous periods that appear in these dialogues.[94]

---

[91] Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787)*, 134-289; See also A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire 324-1453*, 2 vols. (Madison: The University of Madison Press, 1952), 98-99, 105-6, 150-4, 224-6, 251-65.

[92] "The **'proto-orthodox' Christians** [sic] represent the forerunners (hence the prefix 'proto') of the group that became the dominant form of Christianity in later centuries. When this group later acquired more converts than any of the others (say, by the beginning of the fourth century) and stifled its opposition, it claimed that its views had always been the majority position and that its rivals were, and always had been, 'heretics,' who willfully 'chose' (the Greek root of the word 'heresy') to reject the 'true belief' (the literal meaning of 'orthodoxy')." Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10.

[93] See for example *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* V.18-21 (ed. Harnack) where "Simon" is portrayed to criticize mildly the fact that Christians do not practice circumcision, but he is depicted to be willing to hear "Timothy's" explanation on the matter.

[94] For example, scholars situate the composition of the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban the Jew* sometime between the sixth and the tenth centuries CE. The reason for situating the composition of this work within this wide timeframe is explained by the theological topics that are covered and which for some scholars are indicative of a particular compositional time. See above n. 83. In other words, the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues may reflect not only some

From only very few exceptions among the Christian dialogue texts one may get a glimpse of certain historical situations which, however, are described mostly in passing. One such example is the *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati,* which was written around 634 CE and in which one may see references, for example, to Emperor Heracleius's forced conversions of Jews to orthodox Christianity,[95] or to "the often extremely violent relations between the Jews on the one hand and the hooligan-like circus factions of the Blues and Greens on the other (including the strange alliance between Jews and Blues)."[96] Or, another example is the seventh-century CE *Defense against the Jews* by Leontius bishop of Neapolis, Cyprus whose text focuses on icons and their worship.[97] This very brief work, which reflects the historical circumstances of the time of its composition, may help us understand the issue at stake, providing a succinct analysis of the theology of the icons and the reasons for which their worship should not be considered idolatry, per the dialogue author's exposition.

The reference to a Jew as Leontius's discussant is interesting in its own right: A Jew's deployment as a character, like in the other *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, raises the question of why the author of this brief work had recourse to a Jew as Leontius's interlocutor and not to an iconoclast who would be a better fit for the position of the "other" party against icons. To claim that behind the Jewish interlocutor Leontius meant an iconoclast we cannot say with any certainty,

---

theological topics that were under discussion at the time of their composition, but also theological topics that were at the center of the ecclesiastical life before the time of these dialogues' writing.

[95] *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati* (ed. Déroche) = Vincent Déroche, ed., "Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991) : 47-229; Pieter van der Horst, "A Short Note on the Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati," *Zutot* 6.1 (2009): 1-2.

[96] van der Horst, "A Short Note on the Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati," 5; and Ibid., n. 16 as quoted by van der Horst: "See P.W. van der Horst, 'Jews and Blues in Late Antiquity,' in D. Accorinti and P. Chuvin (eds), *Des Géants à Dionysos. Mélanges de mythologie et de poésie grecques offerts à Francis Vian* (Alessandria 2003) 565–572, reprinted in my *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen 2006) 53–59."

[97] *Defense against the Jews* (ed. Déroche), 66-71.

although such a possibility cannot be dismissed. To also claim that behind the Jewish interlocutor the author of the text had in mind an actual Jew or a Jewish reaction to icons as a collective attitude cannot be dismissed either. Therefore, the possibilities of either of the two options are rather equal. To this, we need to keep in mind the iconophiles' accusations that behind the iconoclastic movement there was a Jewish influence which would strengthen the assumption that the Jewish interlocutor in this text could refer to the Jews collectively as the target of the text. But again, for the lack of historical evidence this remains only a hypothesis. An examination of whether Leontius had relationships with Jews or was close to them even if he was not interacting with a particular Jewish community, could provide evidence that would strengthen or weaken the possibility that the Jew in this text refers to Jews or to Jewish attitudes, collectively, toward Christian icons.

From texts like Leontius's *Defense against the Jews* and the *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati* from which it can be easier to see particular historical situations, we may get more concrete historical information about the time of their composition, either because they mostly focus on one subject, as in the case of the former, or because they include even in a disperse fashion historical information of a particular period, such as in the case of the latter. Such compositions can be helpful in investigating the reality or not of Jews described in these texts or the reality of Jewish-Christian contacts in late antiquity when these texts were written, keeping at the same time in mind that any claims need to remain speculative. However, these are questions I am not focusing on in this dissertation.[98]

[98] All in all, the Christian dialogue texts I examine, and which date between the early fifth and the tenth centuries CE, were composed at a time when theological discussions were ongoing. The discussions between a Christian and a Jew revolve around theology that reflects topics both concurrent with texts' compositional date and from earlier periods. Consequently, despite their different compositional date, these works have a uniformity in content, structure, format, and characters, which allows to consider them together. Most importantly, their authors adhere to the same theological line and have recourse to the same rhetorical tools.

The rabbinic dialectical narratives that I use in this dissertation are from the Mishnah (composed in the first half of the third century CE),[99] Sifre Deuteronomy (most likely dated at the end of the third century CE),[100] and the Babylonian Talmud (considered to have closed sometime between the sixth and the early eighth centuries CE).[101] From the Mishnah, I examine m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 and 3:4; from Sifre Deuteronomy I examine pisqa *'Ekev* 43:12; and from the Babylonian Talmud, I analyze excerpts from Bekhorot 8b and Shabbat 104b (= b. Shanhedrin 67a).

These texts, although written in the course of five centuries (counting from the Mishnah in the early third century CE up to the Babylonian Talmud in the early eighth century CE) are all part of what scholars refer to as "rabbinic literature," which flourished in Palestine and Babylonia in late antiquity.[102] During this time, Rabbis lived in a discursive environment with other groups

---

[99] Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, Yehudah Cohn, and Fergus Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity 135-700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press published for The British Academy, 2012), 23. The Mishnah, which is comprised of six orders and was composed in the first half of the third century CE is "an edited anthology of brief and often elliptical pronouncements on matters of Jewish law and practice, frequently providing conflicting views on the individual matters discussed. Some of these pronouncements are attributed to a named rabbi, or group of anonymous rabbis, while others are entirely anonymous." Ibid.

[100] Ben-Eliyahu, Cohn, and Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature*, 73. Sifre Deuteronomy belongs to the category of halakhic midrashim which are "exegetical midrashim on Exodus through Deuteronomy" [H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, ed. and trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 247]. Sifre Deuteronomy is an exegetical midrash on certain portions from the biblical book of Deuteronomy, containing also haggadic passages apart from legal biblical exegesis. [Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 270]. The date of its composition, most likely at the end of the third century CE [Ben-Eliyahu, Cohn, and Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature*, 73] taxonomizes it among the tannaitic works of classical rabbinic literature due to its "close connection to the other *Tannaitic* books (the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*)." Idem, 61.

[101] Ben-Eliyahu, Cohn, and Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature*, 34. The Babylonian Talmud is a commentary on the Mishnah following the Mishnah's organization, with the Babylonian Talmud's amoraic stratum to include "at the very least, sayings and discussions of Babylonian and Palestinian rabbis who flourished between *c.*200 and *c.*500 CE." [Ben-Eliyahu, Cohn, and Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature*, 33]. According to the same authors, "Recent scholarship has paid particular attention to the large anonymous stratum of the *Bavli*, which many scholars now believe to be the work of post-*Amoraic* redactors, from the sixth century on. Others continue to maintain that a good part of this anonymous material might properly be dated to the *Amoraic* period." Ibid.

[102] See Catherine Hezser, "*Classical Rabbinic Literature*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 115. On general introductions to classical rabbinic literature, see H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, ed. and trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); and Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, Yehudah Cohn, and Fergus Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135-700 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press published for The British Academy, 2012).

(pagans, Christians, Samaritans, and Zoroastrians), according to the geographical location in which they resided, and across their literature they worked on and incorporated excerpts in the format of dialogues that describe encounters with several groups discussing an array of topics.

The excerpts I use from the Mishnah and Sifre Deuteronomy discuss the persistence of idolatry, Rabbis' negotiation with idols and idolatrous institutions, and rabbinic reaction to idolatry. This topic is unsurprising given the fact that these texts "derived originally from a period, the third century CE, when the gentile neighbours of the Jewish population of Palestine were still pagan."[103] Thus, we see the reflection of a historical situation that was apparent at the time of composition of these works. Similarly, the dialogues I use from the Babylonian Talmud (between sixth and early eighth centuries CE) that comprise allusions to New Testament accounts and subsequent Christian teachings to these accounts, as I analyze in Chapter 5, may reflect rabbinic knowledge of these texts and teachings which were transmitted among the Christian populations of Mesopotamia and Babylonia in writing and/or orally.[104]

With regard to the topics of icons and idols in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the discussions between a "Christian" and a "Jew" revolve around the "Jewish" accusation that Christians practiced idolatry, transgressing the biblical commandments against image-making and image-worship. In the rabbinic texts I examine on the topic of idols we see Rabbis discussing either with gentiles or with each other expressing their puzzlement, or their effort to negotiate their presence in the midst of an idolatrous environment. In both cases, the authors of the excerpts deal

[103] Ben-Eliyahu, Cohn, and Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature*, 4.

[104] See indicatively Holger Michael Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 141-2; Burton L. Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995); Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and Bar-Asher Siegal, *Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 33.

with a topic that concerns practice, and in both texts, one may see inherent criticism against sacred objects and a culture that supports and disseminates the ritual worship of objects. Both texts reflect the situation about which they write: The rabbinic dialogues under examination reflect a time when idolatry was prevalent. The Christian dialogues I analyze, reflect certain Christians' concerns of the worship of icons as a form of idolatry. However, in the case of the Christian texts we cannot know whether the "Jewish" interlocutor represents iconoclasts or contemporary Jews who could have seen the Christian practice as the epitome of idolatry.

For the topic on the divinity of Jesus, the conversations between the "Christian" and the "Jew" in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues I analyze portray the "Jew" to negate the salvific role of Jesus, his virgin birth, his relationship to God as the Son of God, and his divinity. In the dialogues from the Babylonian Talmud, the Rabbis created their own narratives to "other" stories, presumably from the New Testament, to allude to the irrationality of the belief in the virgin birth, and to express their opinion that Jesus is merely human and not the son of God born of sexual intercourse, suggesting that they cannot believe in such accounts and showing their antithesis to those who adhere to such beliefs. In both cases, we can see the expression on part of both the imagined Jew and the Rabbis to the idea of Jesus's divinity and to the accounts that want him to be divine and not human. We may also notice each author's attempts to support their own beliefs on the matter at hand. The topics on the divinity of Jesus and his origins in relation to the dating of the Christian and rabbinic dialogues in which they are discussed assist us in seeing a mutual concern that was also historically present at the time of their composition.

That being so, despite how disparate the sources are, there are contextual similarities between them. At the same time, the relative temporal and geographical closeness between these

texts[105] allows us to consider them in tandem. I discuss each topic in its own right to demonstrate the similarities and shared interest between dialectical excerpts from the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic texts when it comes to deployment of the "other."

Finally, one last parameter that I have taken into consideration is the different nature of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic texts, in particular those I am using in this dissertation. The rabbinic dialectical excerpts are very short and each one deals with a different matter. On the other hand, the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, including the ones I analyze here, are individual works, long in structure, and contain multiple small sections that cover different topics and yet are tied together within a single text. For example, a dialogue might start discussing the prefiguration of the holy Cross in the Old Testament, followed by a brief discussion on the coming of Christ and the conversion of the nations, followed by a discussion of Jesus's victory over the demons, and, then, end with discussing again the holy Cross in the Old Testament (as is the case in the narration of the third day of the debate depicted in part of the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*).[106] This structure allows me to compare small dialectical excerpts from rabbinic literature on a certain subject with small dialectical excerpts from the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues on similar subjects.

Overall, the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the rabbinic multivocal narratives that I examine in this dissertation in relation to the topics they address give a glimpse of the concerns of their authors and editors who ventured to legitimize the correctness of their opinions.

[105] The Christian and rabbinic sources I have used date collectively between the early third and the tenth centuries CE. They originate from a geographical area that covers the ancient Mediterranean basin—that is, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Palestine, Syria, and Babylonia.

[106] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, *Dialexis* Γ΄ 648-657 (ed. Berger).

Outline of Chapters[107]

In Chapter 2, I examine dialectical conversations between "Christians" and "Jews" on icon-making, icon-worship, and the association of icons with idols in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues to discuss the rhetorical use of the image of the "Jew" by the Christian authors of these texts. Drawing on the literary concept of *foiling*, I claim that Christian authors deployed the "Jew" as a foil who opposes Christian practices of iconolatry. In these discussions, the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues listed the "Jews'" accusations against the practice of icon-making and icon-worship based on the biblical prohibitions against image-making and image-worship. Interestingly, Christian authors did not conceal that the "Jews" correctly had recourse to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible to inveigh against the practice of icon-making and icon-worship, recognizing the "Jews'" genealogical affinity with biblical Israelites. Whereas Christian authors recognized the "Jews'" legitimacy of opinion on the matter, however they claimed that their own practice of icon-making and icon-worship mirrored the practice of biblical Israelites to make sacred objects following God's commandments. They further claimed, as I will show, that biblical

[107] All the translations of excerpts from the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues from Greek, Syriac, and Latin provided henceforth are my own unless otherwise stated. Furthermore, all the translations from Mishnaic Hebrew, Palestinian, and Babylonian Aramaic are my own unless otherwise stated. For the biblical verses cited in the rabbinic texts I have used the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999). The biblical verses that the Greek speaking authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues use are from the Septuagint. The translation of the Latin biblical verses that are interpolated by the Latin speaking author in the excerpts of the *Dialogue of Simon and Theophilus* are mine. For the English translation of the biblical verses from LXX I have used the translation by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuaginta: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) [On the Greek translation of the Septuagint see, Jennifer M. Dines, *The Septuagint*, ed. Michael A. Knibb (London: T&T Clark, 2004); and also, Emanuel Tov, "The Septuagint," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 161-188]. The New Testament passages in Koinē Greek are from the twenty-eighth edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*; Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Ioannis D. Karavidopoulos, Carlo Maria Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Holger Strutwolf, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 2012). The English translation of the New Testament passages is from the New King James Version.

Israelites, just like them (the Christians for whom they wrote), worshipped not the sacred objects per se but God through them.

I argue that using the "Jew" as a foil helped Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues in discussions on icon-making and icon-worship to mirror their practices to similar (according to these authors) practices of the biblical Israelites in the Tabernacle and the two Temples and thus to assert a claim to a legitimacy that they already recognized to the "Jews."

In Chapter 3, I investigate the deployment of the image of the "other" interlocutor—both rabbinic and non-Jewish—as a foil in rabbinic multivocal narratives on idols from Palestinian rabbinic sources. I argue that anonymous rabbinic authors of imagined dialectical narratives that discuss aspects of idolatry deployed characters as foils from among any number of groups and used the "other" as the foil who either challenges the Rabbis (in the case of gentiles as religious or ethnic "others") or who expresses an "other" opinion (in the case of rabbinic "others") from the opinion with which they side.

I explain that the foil could be anyone, even someone from the rabbinic class, and I characterize the deployment of the foil by the anonymous rabbinic editors as a rhetorical device, by which either the anonymous rabbinic authors and editors underlined the legitimacy of the rabbinic stance, or they attempted to demonstrate their sympathies to the rabbinic opinion that they chose to promote. The anonymous rabbinic authors and editors appear to use foil to create a contrast between the rabbinic and the "other" characters and, thus, to argue that the rabbinic author's group can claim a legitimacy of behaviors and beliefs. By using the "other" as a foil, rabbinic authors seem to express, what the rabbinically legitimate attitude towards idolatry was. At the end, while the Christian authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues created foils exclusively out of Jewish characters, the anonymous rabbinic authors used as a foil anyone—even someone

from their own group, a Rabbi expressing a minority opinion or an "other" opinion—that would serve to highlight their own view that they (the rabbinic authors) saw as legitimate or sought to support.

In Chapter 4, I return to examining the deployment of the image of the "Jew" as a foil in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues. I analyze discussions between "Christians" and "Jews" that concern Christian teaching and doctrine in contrast to Chapter 2 that dealt with conversations on iconolatry that revolved around Christian practice. This new focus demonstrates an important turn regarding the use of the "Jew" as a foil: It shows a change in the deployment of the image of the "Jew" by the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, depending on the topic of interest; practice versus dogma and belief.

I argue that in conversations on Christian dogma and teaching, such as on Christ/the Messiah, Christian authors appear to have manipulated the image of the "Jew" by presenting him as the foil to themselves (Christian authors and Christian audience for whom they wrote) and to their ancestral biblical Israelite authors (and not just to biblical Israelites) whose genealogical affinity with the "Jews" of their dialogues they recognized, in order to emphasize their claim to exclusive ownership of religious legitimacy of opinion for their audience on matters of belief. Taking discussions between "Christians" and "Jews" on virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus as a case study, Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues used the "Jew" as a foil to highlight a contrast between their own beliefs and "others'" beliefs on these matters. In so doing, Christian *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues' authors had recourse to the Old Testament, arguing that (their) Christians' beliefs about virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus had been already pronounced by biblical Israelite authors whom the "Jewish" interlocutors failed to understand (according to the Christian authors).

Bringing the "Jews" in opposition to the biblical Israelite authors and arguing that Christians were in line with the latter, the authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues tried to show that Christians were correct in their beliefs, tracing their theological teachings back to the biblical Israelite authors, whereas the "Jews" were wrong. It appears that the image of the "Jew" as the foil provided to the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues the link to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Consequently, Christians propagandized not only the exclusive correctness of their beliefs but also their antiquity. By imagining the "Jew" as the foil to both their "Christians" and to their (the "Jew's") ancestral biblical authors and by tracing their beliefs in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues reimagined and reinvented the correctness of their own views.

With the last chapter, Chapter 5, I return to the discussion of the use of the foil in rabbinic literature. However, I examine a different type of foiling that can be seen in some rabbinic dialectical discussions. In these, although conversations are held between two or more interlocutors, the foil is not a character to be identified with either discussant, but, instead, it is a narrative. These dialectical narratives are foils to "other" texts, often called "original" or "source" texts. I show that through these foil dialectical narratives rabbinic authors highlighted the contrast between the rabbinic dialectical stories that were composed as absurd narratives and "other" stories that seemed absurd but they were circulated as believable accounts, highlighting at the same time the contrast between the Rabbis who were not naïve to believe absurd stories and "others" who were seen as naïve enough to believe such accounts.

I, thus, argue that these dialectical narratives functioning as foils to "other" stories allowed the anonymous rabbinic authors and editors to demonstrate a difference between themselves and "other" groups that wrote narratives, insinuating a dichotomy between Rabbis, as wise, and

"others" whose beliefs seem nonsensical. By highlighting this contrast, the anonymous rabbinic authors implied not only that they were not naïve to believe irrational stories, offering their alternative look at certain accounts, but also they insinuated that they would not base a teaching or belief on senseless narratives as "others" did.

With this last chapter, we may see an asymmetry in the choice of foils between Christian and rabbinic authors: While Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues limited themselves to taking the character of the "Jew" as a foil for various purposes, the Rabbis did not restrict themselves to only "other" characters, including Rabbis; they also crafted foil dialectical narratives, by providing their own retelling of "other" stories as a way to emphasize the contrast between a rabbinic and "other's" stance towards accounts that seemed unbelievable.

Chapter 2: Christian Authorial Dialectical Claims of a Religious Legitimacy: Christian Dialectical Discussions on Icons and Idols in the *Adversus Iudaeos* Dialogues

Introduction: *Ethopoieia* and Foiling in the *Adversus Iudaeos* Dialogues

The *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, a sub-group of works in the larger corpus of Christian dialogues that were written in late antiquity, are multitopic dialectical texts that portray a "Jew" and a "Christian" discussing with each other about various Christian theological topics. Each dialogue (irrespective of length) covers several different topics. For example, in Leontius of Neapolis's *Defense Against the Jews*—a brief anti-Jewish dialogue from the seventh century CE composed by Leontius bishop of Neapolis, Cyprus—the discussion extends beyond strictly icon worship (despite what the original title of this work implies, *Leontios bishop of Neapolis of Cyprus's, from the fifth discourse, defense of Christians both against the Jews and on the holy icons*) to cover the subjects of osteolatry, the incarnation of Jesus, and the worship of the cross.[108] In each of the dialogues, and throughout each topic covered in these texts, the "Jew" appears as the interlocutor who argues against a "Christian." In these works, the "Jew" does not appear

[108] A critical edition of this work has been made by Vincent Déroche, ed., "*L'Apologie contre les Juifs* de Leontios de Néapolis," *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (1994), 45-104. For a brief history of the authenticity of this work see Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 55 n.37: "The document survives only through fragments quoted by John of Damascus in his treatise *On the Divine Images* and in the *Acta of the Second Nicene Council in 787 CE*. If the work is authentic, perhaps it dates from the period of Heraclius's anti-Jewish legislation in 634. In John of Damascus: PG 94.1272A–76B, 1313A, 1381D–88D. An English translation is available in *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1980). In Nicaea II: PG 93.1597B–610A; cf. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum* 13, cols. 44–54. Vincent Déroche ("L'Authenticité de l' 'Apologie contre les Juifs' de Léontios de Néapolis," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 110 [1986]: 655–69) has argued strongly for the authenticity of the work. Paul Speck ("Zu dem Dialog mit einem Juden des Leontios von Neapolis," *Poikila Byzantina* 4 [1984]: 242–49), however, believes it to be a work of the eighth century."

periodically; he is presented as discussing with the "Christian" throughout the entirety of each work on all the different topics covered.

The "Jew" as the interlocutor in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues is a fictitious character.[109] When portraying the "Jew," the Christian dialogue authors appear to have used *ethopoieia*, or "impersonation." *Ethopoieia* is one of the rhetorical exercises found in *progymnasmata*, which are handbooks of compositional exercises for rhetorical purposes commonly used at that time, such as those composed by Theon, Hermogenes of Tarsus, Libanius, Apthonius, and others.[110] In the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the Christian authors impersonated the character of the "Jew" and imagined what a "Jew" would say in a discussion with a "Christian," had such a discussion taken place. It is important, then, to examine why the Christian authors of the dialogues wrote this particular genre of texts and why they chose the "Jew" as their imaginary interlocutor to talk about Christian teachings when they could do so, as they have actually done, with dialogical compositions against pagans, heretics, or Muslims.[111]

To understand the role of the "Jew" as a character, we can look at the texts through literary or narrative lenses. By doing so, we may see that the "Jew" serves as a rhetorical device to *foil* and *mirror* the "Christian" interlocutor. In literature, foil is most often "a character whose qualities or actions serve to emphasize those of the protagonist (or of some other character) by providing a

[109] For a scholarly discussion on the image of the "Jew" in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues see the "Introduction" of this dissertation.

[110] George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), ix. According to Hermogenes of Tarsus, *ethopoieia* is "an imitation of the character of a person supposed to be speaking." [Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 85].

[111] For an overview of the Christian dialogues written in Greek and Syriac from late antiquity up to the sixth century CE see Alberto Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation: A Guide to Late Antique Dialogues in Greek and Syriac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Here Rigolio gives a detailed overview on Christian dialogues [not only dialogues *Adversus Iudaeos*] from late antiquity written in Greek and Syriac, arguing that they contributed to opinion making. I am grateful to Ellen Muehlberger for bringing this book to my attention before its publication.

strong contrast with them."[112] Using the concept of foil, the Christian authors of the dialogues against the Jews have created an image of the "Jew" that is portrayed to challenge each Christian interlocutor by attacking Christian teachings and beliefs. Mirroring, on the other hand, is when authors juxtapose characters to compare them, often to reflect the characters' similarities. The Christian dialogue authors also mirrored the "Christian" character's teachings, beliefs, and practices with those of the "Jewish" character's biblical ancestry.

Drawing on these concepts, the goal of this chapter is to analyze the role of the "Jew" as a character in relation to the discussions on the worship of icons, the cross, and the relics of the saints in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues. This goal fits within the broader objectives of this dissertation, which are to explain why Christians deployed the "Jew" as a character in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and by extension to explore why Christians wrote these works. In particular, I argue in this chapter that Christian authors used the image of the "Jew" as a foil to underline the argument of the "Christian" interlocutor regarding the Christian practice of iconolatry, and that they mirror the "Christian's" practices with those of the "Jew's" biblical ancestors to defend the worship of icons, the cross, and the relics of holy persons as being justified already in the Hebrew Bible and for this reason as having legitimacy. Through this, the Christian authors claim that Christians are not idolaters, just like the Jews are not idolaters, because, according to them (the Christian authors), they follow the same practices, beliefs, and teachings as the biblical Jews.

To examine the role of the "Jew" as a character in these texts, I will analyze aspects associated with the worship of icons, the cross, and the relics of holy persons in selected *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and which are related to the following topics: 1) the materialization of the

[112] Chris Baldick, "Foil," *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 132. In Chapter 5, I discuss another type of foil, the dialectical foil narratives. Such foil narratives appear in rabbinic texts.

contact with the divine, 2) the relationship between sacred objects and divine remembrance, and 3) discussions on the existence of holy persons, on the pictorial representation of bodiless beings, and the veneration of relics. By analyzing these sub-topics that fall under the broader discussions on iconolatry, I will show how the Christian authors used the character of the "Jew" in discussions with the "Christian" in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues on the worship of icons, the cross, and the relics of saints to argue that their practices are a continuation of similar biblical practices performed by ancient Jews and, by doing so, to assert a claim to a legitimacy that they associated with the Jews due to the latter's genealogical affinity with the Hebrew Bible. I use the word legitimacy in this chapter in relation to biblical practices and commandments that the authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues recognize as valid and rightful because they draw their origins from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

In the next section, I examine the role of the "Jew" as a character in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogue texts that discuss what may be called the materialization of the contact with the divine, which is one aspect of the Christian practice of iconolatry.

Materializing the Contact with the Divine

The *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk*,[113] an eighth-century CE text, originating possibly from Egypt, opens with the "Jew" Papiscus acting as a foil to the "Christian" by expressing his opposition and criticism against Christians for worshipping the materials of which their sacred objects were made. The "Jew" reminds the "Christian" of God's prohibition against the worship of stone or wood and expresses his wonderment for why Christians act against this proscription by creating crosses and icons from these materials. Papiscus opens the discussion

[113] For more information about the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (ed. McGiffert) see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 30 n. 81 of this dissertation.

and asks his monastic discussant, "although God ordered to not worship the stone or the wood, for what reason do you revere and worship those making from them crosses and icons?"[114] Here, the Christian author presents the "Jew" as a foil and uses him in this capacity to remind a biblical prohibition that concerns the creation of imagery and its subsequent worship. The "Jewish" interlocutor is presented as a foil to challenge this practice by arguing that Christians in reality worship the materials of stone and wood of which icons and the cross are made, and he appears to want to understand the reason why Christians transgress the biblical law. Here, the "Jew" is depicted as demonstrating his allegiance to the "correct" attitude towards icons by being presented as the foil who criticizes a Christian practice as deviating from the Hebrew scriptures. Having the "Jew" function as a foil, the Christian author of the dialogue creates an image of the "Jew" where he emerges as agreeing with the biblical prohibitions against the worship of objects[115] and practically as a keeper of these prohibitions by presenting himself in opposition to image-making and image-worship.

The "Christian's" response, however, describes the performance of a similar practice on the part of the biblical Israelites through the personhood of Jacob, and the Christian author deliberately uses the "Jew" as a character due to his genealogical affinity with biblical Israelites in order to portray at this stage of the dialogue that the "Jew's" interpretation of the biblical incident conforms with the biblical prohibition against image-making and image-worship to which he

[114] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §1 (ed. McGiffert): "Ἠρώτησε Παπίσκος Ἰουδαῖος· διὰ τί τοῦ θεοῦ παραγγέλοντος μὴ προσκυνεῖν λίθον ἢ ξύλον, ὑμεῖς ταῦτα σέβεσθε καὶ προσκυνεῖτε ποιοῦντες ἐξ αὐτῶν σταυροὺς καὶ εἰκόνας;"

[115] Biblical verses from the Hebrew Bible that constitute prohibitions against image-making and image-worship are the following: Ex 20:3, 20:4, 20:5, 20:23, 23:13; Lev 19:4, 26:1, 35:12; Num 15:39; Deut 7:25, 7:26. Abraham Chill categorizes these verses under topics that concern prohibitions against images. Abraham Chill, *The Mitzvot: The Commandments and their Rationale* (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2009). It appears that the Christian authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues have these verses in mind when they portray the "Jew" to attack the "Christian" interlocutor and his practices towards icons and other sacred objects.

alludes and, thus, is legitimate based on the Hebrew Bible. The "Christian" indicates that the biblical Jews had a practice that mirrors what Papiscus accuses the Christians of doing. As he responds to Papiscus, the monk asks, "for what reason did Jacob worship the top of Joseph's staff?"[116] The Christian author through the character of the "monk" uses the biblical verse of Gen 47:31 from the Septuagint according to which while Jacob was at his deathbed, he asked Joseph to bury his body in the land of Canaan after his demise; after Joseph did so, Jacob "worshipped on the top of his staff."[117] The Christian author appears to reference this verse in the "monk's" discussion with the "Jew" to argue that Jacob worshipped on the staff of Joseph and thus to imply that Jacob also transgressed the same biblical commandment. The "Jewish" interlocutor, however, dismisses the Christian reading of Gen 47:31 and consequently the "monk's" argument that already Jacob bowed on the top of his staff following Joseph's commitment and gives his interpretation of the same verse by responding that Jacob "did not worship the staff or the wood, but he honored Joseph who held it."[118] The "Jew's" response that Jacob's posture symbolized the honor he paid to Joseph for the vow he took to fulfill his father's wish and that it was not an actual worship of

[116] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §1 (ed. McGiffert): "ἀπεκρίθη ὁ μοναχός· εἰπέ μοι σὺ, διὰ τί ὁ Ἰακὼβ προσεκύνησε τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου τοῦ Ἰωσήφ;" Regarding the names of the interlocutors in this dialogue, Jaqueline Z. Pastis, "Dating the Dialogues of Timothy and Aquila: Revisiting the Earlier Vorlage Hypothesis," *Harvard Theological Review* 95(2) (2002): 181 writes that the fact that the name Papiscus appears only once, the name Philo is entirely absent, and the Christian is designated as *μοναχός* only "in the title and the first section" and that in the rest of the text the two interlocutors are identified as *ὁ Ἰουδαῖος* and *ὁ Χριστιανός* these elements are indicative of either the lack of the proper names from the original text or the many textual transmissions of this work.

[117] Gen 47:31. The incident is situated after Jacob went to Egypt and around the time when, according to the biblical narrative, Jacob's demise was approaching. In his conversation with Joseph, Jacob requests that Joseph will carry his body and bury him in Israel. After Joseph swore to his father that he would do so, Jacob bowed upon the bed's head, according to the Hebrew text, or upon his staff, according to the Septuagint. The Christian author quotes from the Septuagint. The Septuagint version which the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (ed. McGiffert) follows in his citation of Gen 47:31 writes that Israel worshipped on the top of his staff: "**εἶπε δέ· ὄμοσόν μοι. καὶ ὤμοσεν αὐτῷ. καὶ προσεκύνησεν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ράβδου αὐτοῦ,**" which has the sense of veneration or of bowing before the top of his staff with the aim to worship it. In the Hebrew Bible, the equivalent verse writes that Jacob bowed at the head of the bed: ".וַיֹּאמֶר, הִשָּׁבְעָה לִי--וַיִּשָּׁבַע, לוֹ; וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַל-רֹאשׁ הַמִּטָּה" .

[118] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §1 (ed. McGiffert): "ὁ Ἰουδαῖος εἶπεν· οὐχὶ τὴν ῥάβδον προσεκύνησεν ἢ τὸ ξύλον, ἀλλὰ τὸν κρατοῦντα αὐτὴν Ἰωσὴφ ἐτίμησεν."

his staff is given by the Christian author to demonstrate how the "Jew" understands Jacob's performance differently from his "Christian" interlocutor—as one would expect from a "Jew" who adheres to the biblical commandment against image-worship—and in this way to present the "Jew's" view as the legitimate interpretation that fits the "Jew's" alignment with the biblical prohibition against image-worship. For the time being, according to the explanation of the "Jew," both behaviors, the Christian and Jacob's, might look similar externally, but are different in essence.

So far, the discussion between the two interlocutors prepared the Christian answer which seems to appropriate the "Jew's" explanation of Jacob's action and to apply it upon the relationship of Christians with the material objects of the icons and the cross. The Christian author through the image of the "monk" creates a new interpretation of the narrative that says that Christians worship the materials of which their sacred objects were made:

> *The monk said*: In this way, by worshipping the cross we do not worship the nature of the wood, God forbid, but he who was crucified on it. And just as you would worship, if you found, the two tables and the two cherubim which Moses crafted, and the ark [i.e. of the covenant] honoring God who dictated those, so also, by worshipping the icons, I do not worship the wood, God forbid, but I honor Christ and his saints. [119]

Based upon the response of the "Jew" who, as the Christian interlocutor's foil, is presented to interpret differently the biblical incident of Jacob's action as signifying a gesture of honor towards Joseph, the "monk" explains that Christians worship neither the cross nor the material of which it is made but the person whom the cross represents. To show even more the sameness between Christian and Jewish attitudes towards sacred material objects, the Christian author does not

[119] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §1 (ed. McGiffert): "ὁ μοναχὸς εἶπεν·οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς προσκυνοῦντες τὸν σταυρὸν, οὐ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ ξύλου προσκυνοῦμεν· μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὸν σταυρωθέντα ἐν αὐτῷ. καὶ ὥσπερ σὺ προσκθνεῖς εἰ εὕρῃς τὰς δύο πλάκας καὶ τὰ δύο χερουβὶμ ἅπερ ἐποίησε Μωϋσῆς, καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν, τιμῶν τὸν θεὸν τὸν ἐπιτάξαντα αὐτὰ, οὕτω κἀγὼ προσκυνῶν τὰς εἰκόνας, οὐ τὸ ξύλον προσκυνῶ· μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὸν Χριστὸν τιμῶν καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτοῦ."

hesitate to argue through the image of the monk that just as Jews would honor God by worshipping the ark of the covenant, the tables of the law, and the two cherubim on top of the ark so also Christians by worshipping the icons (προσκυνοῦντες) in reality they honor and venerate God and the saints. In other words, the Christian author, being driven by the biblical mention to Jacob's behavior, equates the Christian attitude towards icons with a hypothetical Jewish behavior had Jews still had access to their sacred objects.

The Christian author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* tries to prove that the Christians of his work continue a Jewish practice of materializing the contact with the divine through sacred objects, in general, and icons, in particular, and, by doing so, he tries to reclaim an orthopraxis—i.e. correctness of a religious practice—that he recognizes already in the Old Testament. In his response, the "monk" describes a process of materialization of one's contact with the divine which employs the use of sacred objects through which a connection with the divine becomes tangible. He recognizes this process as having been employed already by Jacob and claims that it would have been employed by the Jews had they now had access to their sacred items. The monk's insistence that Christians do not worship the material of which their sacred objects are made but the person with whom these objects are associated shows the author's effort to present a Christian approach to icons as facilitators of a process through materiality in which the abstract becomes concrete. In this relationship between the person depicted on the icon or the cross and the human who seeks to establish this contact, the material functions as the catalyst. This mirrors how the relationship of the Jews would be with the ark of the covenant, the tablets of the law, and the cherubim on top of the ark according to the author of the dialogue, for whom these objects would facilitate the Jews' contact with God. The affinity between the Jewish and Christian approaches to sacred objects helps the Christian author to claim legitimacy for a Christian behavior

which he seems to base on the assumption of the relationship of contemporary Jews with their own sacred items had they still had them.

To further persuade that through the worship of the icons and the cross Christians offer their actual worship to the depicted persons, just as the "Jews" would worship God through their sacred objects had they had access to them, the Christian author lays out an almost technological function of the icons which for him facilitates human-divine interaction, but, as with any device, its operation is not infinite. According to the "monk" in the dialogue, when the persons painted on the icons have been erased due to usage or age, the icon loses its operational power, and it can be destroyed by fire. The "monk" appears to state in support of him not worshipping the material of the sacred objects, "and that I worship neither the wood nor the painting it is evident from the fact that many times we burn the old and erased icons and we make other new ones only for a good reminding."[120] It seems for the Christian author that icons are not subject to the sphere of taboo, to use a modern term, and the holy person that is depicted on them is not identified with the icon or its material. Here the Christian author describes that when the conditions dictate it, icons are replaced by new ones, which re-function in the same way as the ones that were discarded.[121] The

[120] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §1 (ed. McGiffert): "καὶ ὅτι οὔτε τὸ ξύλον οὔτε τὴν ζωγραφίαν προσκυνῶ, ἐκ τούτου δῆλον, ὅτι πολλάκις τὰς εἰκόνας παλαιουμένας καὶ ἀπαλειφομένας καίομεν, καὶ ἄλλας νέας ποιοῦμεν, πρὸς ὑπόμνησιν μόνην ἀγαθήν."

[121] Scholars who have discussed the function of icons in Byzantine society have the tendency to identify the icon as an object with the painted holy person, and they overlook the distinction between the two, which ancient writers have underlined. [In general, scholars identify the object with the painted image, but it seems that the two need to be seen independently from each other. See Averil Cameron, "The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation," *Studies on Church History* 28 (1992): 1-42; George Galavaris, *The Icon in the Life of the Church*: *Doctrine, Liturgy, Devotion* (Leiden: Brill, 1981); Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm," in *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies by Ernst Kitzinger*, ed. W. Eugene Kleinbauer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 91-150; Anthony Eastmond, "Between Icon and Idol: The Uncertainty of Imperial Images," in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack,* ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (England: Ashgate, 2003), 73-86]. However, highlighting this distinction helps us see how the Christian author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* can both associate and disassociate the image and the painted person. Had the image-object and the portrayed saint always been one, it would have been forbidden for the Christians to destroy old icons after the figure of the painted holy person is erased. In other words, the practice of destroying "old and erased" images to which only the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* refers points to the lack of inherent sanctity in the material image whose

point of attention is the relationship of Christians with matter that the author of the dialogue portrays them to have, with the icons and the cross to fit into the wider space that defines the relationship between the Christians of the dialogue and materiality and the affinity between the Christian practice and the hypothetical contemporary Jewish attitude towards Jewish objects of worship.

In the hypothetical Jewish behavior of the worship of God through the worship of Temple objects, the author sees a facilitating usefulness that objects have for the "Jews" and he recognizes a similar usefulness for Christians' icons. We can better understand the author's rationale behind his interpretation of the relationship of the "Jews" with their sacred objects to justify the Christians' relationship with icons by drawing on Bill Brown's *thing theory*.[122] Thing theory explains the relationship of persons with objects and the relationship between objects and things. As Brown argues, objects become things "when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily."[123] Take for example the filthy window; a window is an object as long as one can see through it. The filth on

---

relationship with the saint has a temporal processual dimension and is neither static, nor distinct, nor separate [Eastmond discusses the separation between the icon and the prototype as it is shown by how the severed icons were treated. John Damascus "argued that damaged icons should be destroyed… [since] the image was no longer a true representation of the prototype, and so it could no longer function as an icon: the link between image and prototype was severed." Eastmond, "Between Icon and Idol," 75. See also, Idem, 83 n. 10 "John of Damascus, *Oration* 2.19, 3.12, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. B. Kotter (Berlin, New York, 1988), 3:118, 123; Leontius of Neapolis, *Contra Judaeos*, *PG* 93, 1597C; Parry, 'Image-Making', 181-82."]. For the Christian author, the icon as a technological tool facilitates the contact with the divine, and the painted saint puts to work other processes that move this contact forward [The saints after all belong to the realm of the divine. Holding an intermediary role, the saints facilitate the contact of human with the divine world. See also Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 5-6, where Brown discusses the role of the martyr (another type of a saint) who is the "friend of God" and they intercede on behalf of the worshipper].

[122] I am thankful to Rachel Raphael Neis for bringing Bill Brown's thing theory to my attention: Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28.1 (2001): 1-22.

[123] Brown, "Thing Theory," 4.

the window impedes its operational function for the viewer and the window does not perform its function. Applying thing theory to the Jewish objects that the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* uses in order to claim that Jews would worship God through them, we see how they can be viewed as objects—following the Christian author's reading—when they function as intermediaries to facilitate the contact of a viewer with the divine. At this stage, they have an operational function that is useful to the viewer. Once the contact is achieved, they disappear and become a "thing." Seeing this function of the items of the biblical Jews as the Christian author argues that they had for their worshippers, we can see how he applies it to the Christians' icons and the cross and how he justifies that the Christians (for whom he writes), just as the biblical Jews *mutatis mutandis*, do not worship the object but the depicted person. In this line of thinking, because the icon becomes a thing after losing its function as an intermediary, its viewers do not see it as an idol and do not consider it as such. Therefore, an icon is an "object" as long as it has the usefulness of bringing a person in contact with the divine. Once this contact is achieved and the person sees only the holy person or Jesus, the icon as an "object" becomes a "thing" without usefulness. Thus, the Christian author claims that Christians venerate the holy person and not the icon because the icon has been transformed into something that does not have usefulness. It appears that, for the Christian author, it is the person that one looks at and not the "thing" – an icon. This is not a Christian innovation, as the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* attempts to show, but he traces it back to the biblical Israelites' relationship with their own objects.

In the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* the author tries to prove that the materiality of the icons and the cross is for the Christians what the materiality of the ark, of its cover with the two cherubim, and of the tablets of the law, is for the biblical Israelites: it is what

achieves the perceptibility of the human-divine relationship. By showing an affinity between the "Jews" and the "Christians" in terms of their access to the divine through material objects that are uniquely sacred for each interlocutor, the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk*, appropriates for his audience a legitimacy of a practice that he justifies as being attested first by the Jews, referring to ancient Israelites.

To achieve this, the Christian dialogue author creates an image of the "Jew" as a foil to the "Christian" discussant to challenge the practice of iconolatry. He, thus, has the "Jew" oppose the Christian practice of image-making in order to represent the "Jew" as the exemplar of opposition to icon-worship, because he evokes the biblical prohibition against image-making and image-worship as one of the negative commandments in the Hebrew Bible. Then, by battling against a "Jew," and arguing that the practice the Christian author describes appears already in the Old Testament and, thus, claiming that Jews would behave similarly towards their sacred objects, the Christian author reinforces his position that the worship of icons and the cross is a genuine expression of the worship of God that mirrors a practice established already in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible.

Sacred Objects and Divine Remembrance

Another aspect of iconolatry that Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues also mirror with respective attitudes and beliefs from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is a connection between sacred objects and memory of God's works.

While the Christian author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jewish, with a Monk* deployed the image of the "Jew" to argue for the legitimacy of his audience's practice of materializing the contact with the divine through the worship of icons and the cross by arguing that the "Jew's" fellow-Jewish contemporaries would act similarly if they had their sacred objects

from the Tabernacle and the two Temples, another Christian writer, the author of the *Trophies of Damascus*,[124] also uses foiling and mirroring, engaging the "Jew" as a character to argue for the connection between divine remembrance and sacred objects as well as for the correctness of this practice that he also traces back to the Old Testament. The Christian author begins by using the image of the "Jew" as a foil to contrast the "Christian" practice of connecting God's memory and sacred objects. He, thus, builds gradually the image of the "Jew" as one who slowly recognizes the connection between memory of God and sacred objects. And he does so to present it as "orthopraxy" on part of the "Jews" in order to claim it later for his Christian audience by forging the character of the "Jew" of his dialogue as representative of a legitimate stance and by arguing that the "Christian's" stance mirrors that of the "Jew's."

In the *Trophies of Damascus*, the topic on images is one of the many that the "Jew" and the "Christian" discuss. The author of this text portrays the "Jew" as a foil to his "Christian" interlocutor and has the "Jew" harshly criticize the practice of making and worshipping sacred objects, alluding that Christians engage in idolatry. In his criticism, the "Jew" parallelizes Christians with the gentiles. Through paraphrasing Isaiah 44:14-15, the "Jew" calls the Christians pagans (ἐθνικοί) and, by using the words of Isaiah, he says "While, I the Lord, grow all the trees of the field, you cut a tree; part of it you give it to burn, part of it you trample with your feet, and the rest part, after you carve it, you worship it."[125] The "Jew" lays the ground for his direct attack

[124] For more information about the *Trophies of Damascus* (ed. Bardy) see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 30 n. 80 of this dissertation.

[125] *The Trophies of Damascus*, Dialexis Γ΄ VI.1 (ed. Bardy): "Ὁ Ἰουδαῖος λέγει· ἐπειδὴ ἄνω καὶ κάτω μοι τον Ἠσαίαν προσφέρεις, ἄκουσον πῶς μέμφεται τοὺς ἐσθίοντας τοὺς χοίρους, καὶ ποιοῦντας χειροποίητα καὶ προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὰ, ὥσπερ ὑμεῖς τὰς εἰκόνας καὶ τὸν σταυρὸν ὑμῶν. **Φησὶ γὰρ περὶ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνικών· «ἐγὼ κύριος αὔξων πάντα τὰ δένδρα τοῦ ἀγροῦ, ὑμεῖς δὲ διακόπτοντες δένδρον· τὸ ἥμισυ αὐτοῦ δίδοτε εἰς καῦσιν, τὸ ἥμισυ αὐτοῦ συμπατεῖτε τοῖς ποσὶν ὑμῶν, καὶ τὸ ἄλλο ἥμισυ ποιοῦντες, γλυπτὸν προσκυνεῖτε αὐτὸ».**" The original verse of Isaiah from the Septuagint writes: "ἔκοψε ξύλον ἐκ τοῦ δρυμοῦ, ὃ ἐφύτευσε Κύριος καὶ ὑετὸς ἐμήκυνεν, ἵνα ᾖ ἀνθρώποις εἰς καῦσιν· καὶ λαβὼν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐθερμάνθη, καὶ καύσαντες ἔπεψαν ἄρτους ἐπ᾽ αὐτῶν, τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν εἰργάσαντο θεούς, καὶ προσκυνοῦσιν αὐτοῖς."

against the Christians (to whom the *Trophies of Damascus* refers) and their practice and uses the biblical verse to imply that Christians appropriate God's nature to make idols for ritual purposes.

Following this attack, the "Jew" does not hesitate to identify the Christians as the recipients of Isaiah's castigation when he tells them, "Do you see how God said these [words] for you [and] against you? For we see that in your churches, on the one hand you strike wood [objects], and on the other hand after you make icons, and images, and crosses, falling to your old habit of the nations, you worship them."[126] The "Jew," without calling Christians outright pagans, sees a resemblance between image-making and image-worship and the practice of gentiles from whom Christians have originated according to the "Jew." In the text of the *Trophies of Damascus*, there is an insinuated "accusation" that Christians are idolaters and practice idolatry.[127] Having been

---

"He cut this wood from the forest, which the Lord planted and the rain made grow, so that it might be for people to burn. And taking part of it, he warmed himself, and they burned the pieces and baked bread on them. But the rest they fashioned into gods, and they do obeisance to them."

[126] *The Trophies of Damascus*, Dialexis Γ΄ VI.1 (ed. Bardy): "Εἶδε πῶς εἰς ὑμᾶς περὶ ὑμῶν ταῦτα εἶπεν ὁ θεός; ὁρῶμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ὑμῶν, τὰ μὲν τῶν ξύλων τύπτετε, τὰ δὲ εἰκόνας καὶ ζῷδα καὶ σταυροὺς ποιοῦντες, προσπίπτοντες τῇ παλαιᾷ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν συνηθείᾳ, προσκυνεῖτε αὐτά."

[127] We find this insinuation of equating Christians' sacred objects with idols in other dialogues as well, such as the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* or the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, but only in Leontius of Neapolis's *Defense against the Jews* (ed. Déroche), an anti-Jewish dialogue from the seventh century CE, the Christian character says explicitly that the Jews call Christians idolaters [*Defense Against the Jews*, lines 71-75, 90-92, 121-125 (ed. Déroche)]. Equating sacred objects with idols allows the "Jew" to imply that Christians are idolaters. In the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, the Christian author presents Herban, the purported "Jewish" discussant, to attack his interlocutor (the archbishop Gregentius) saying "Be attentive and behold that first of all your church has been filled with all sorts of idols, works made by the hands of men according to the prophet; for what your fingers have made from the beginning until now you have not stopped to worship." [*Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 232-235 (ed. Berger)]. The "Jew" is portrayed to accuse Christians of worshipping idols, referring to Christian sacred objects that are in the churches. This identification of icons with idols enhances the "Jew's" legitimate stance in alignment with the biblical prohibition against image-making. Similarly, in the Syriac anti-Jewish dialogue, *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, X.2 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338), the Christian author has the imagined "Jew" call the cross an idol when he says "But I have to say this: Whether the Messiah has come or not, why do you worship the cross?...But, behold, you have filled the earth [with] crosses of every material that is found by you, of wood, and of stone, of brass and of iron, et cetera. And with this, how are they less than idols?"
[ܒܪܡ ܕܝܢ ܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܠܡܐܡܪ ܗܕܐ. ܐܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܘܐܢ ܠܐ: ܠܙܩܝܦܐ ܠܡܢܐ ܣܓܕܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ...]
ܐܢܬܘܢ ܕܝܢ ܗܐ ܡܠܝܬܘܢܗ ܠܐܪܥܐ ܙ̈ܩܝܦܐ ܕܗܘܠܐ: ܕܟܠ ܕܡܫܬܟܚܐ ܠܟܘܢ. ܕܩܝܣܐ ܘܕܟܐܦܐ.
ܕܢܚܫܐ ܘܕܦܪܙܠܐ ܘܕܫܪܟܐ. ܘܒܗܕܐ ܡܢܐ ܒܨܝܪܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܡܢ ܦܬܟܪ̈ܐ.]
The making of crosses out of different materials and their worship renders them idols for the "Jew" who hints that Christians engage in idolatry. In Leontius of Neapolis's, *Defense against the Jews*, lines 71-75, 90-92, 121-125 (ed. Déroche), the Christian author has the "Christian" interlocutor respond to the "Jews'" allegations that Christians are idolaters by saying that there is inconsistency between them being called idolaters and them venerating the saints who

portrayed as an opponent of the practice of object-making for worship purposes, the Christian author has outlined the "Jew" as a proponent of an anti-image stance that can be considered the proper stance towards images, given the prohibition in the Hebrew scripture/Old Testament.

Having presented what would constitute the Jewish attitude towards carved objects and their worship, the author of the *Trophies of Damascus* next uses the image of the "Jews"[128] to create a link between them and biblical Israelites in order to present the "Christian" interlocutor reminding his "Jewish" discussants that biblical Israelites engaged in a behavior similar to that of the Christians regarding the making and worshiping of sacred objects. The "Christian" counterargues the previous harangue of the "Jew" by warning him that he will prove that Jews also worshipped handmade items.[129] To this end, the "Christian" author is presented to evoke to the "Jews" their own sacred handmade objects and their special connection with God:

> In the end, the Christian wanting to put them to shame by the truth, he repeated the word a second and a third [time], and he called all the people to witness, and then he said: Did not craftsmen hew the ark of the covenant? Did not Moses hew in stone the two tablets that you received? Did not goldsmiths carve and cast those two figures that are formed of cast metal the so-called cherubim? I administer an oath

---

fought against the icons, concluding that Christians have been writing, praying, and chanting against idols. The image of the "Jew" features as one who holds the truth about what constitutes idolatry and what renders one an idolater, and for this reason the Christians in these dialogues appear to have an apologetic tone towards defending their ritual objects as distinct from idols and themselves as distinct from idolaters.

[128] In the text of the *Trophies of Damascus* the "Christian" discusses either with one "Jewish" interlocutor or with many.

[129] *The Trophies of Damascus*, Dialexis Γ΄ VI.2 (ed. Bardy): "Ὁ χριστιανὸς εἶπεν· τί οὖν; ὑμεῖς οὐ προσκυνεῖτε χειροποίητα καὶ κτιστὰ πράγματα; Οἱ ἰουδαῖοι εἶπον· ἵλεος ἵλεος μὴ δώσει ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαάκ καὶ Ἰακώβ. Ὁ χριστιανὸς εἶπεν·εἶτα ἐὰν παραστήσω ὅτι καὶ χωρὶς θεοῦ προσκυνεῖτε ἄλλα τινὰ, τί ποιοῦμεν; ἐὰν εἴπω τί γίνεσθε χριστιανοὶ, ἢ ἂν ψεύσομαι γίνομαι ἰουδαῖος. Ἔχετε εἰπεῖν ὅτι οὐκ ἐνδέχεται. Οὐκοῦν ἐμοῦ δεικνύοντος ὅτι καὶ ζῷδα καὶ ξύλα καὶ λίθους προσκυνεῖτε, πρότερον μὲν μηκέτι περὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ λαλήσητε, ἔπειτα ὁμολογήσατε ὅτι εἰς ὅσα εἴπατε ψεύδεσθε."

"The Christian said: What really? Do you not worship handmade (χειροποίητα) and wrought (κτιστὰ) things?" The Jews said: Mercy, mercy [It has the sense of "God forbid"]! May the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob not allow. The Christian said: Then if I prove that apart from God you worship other things, what shall we do? If I say [i.e. prove] what [these other things are] you become Christians, otherwise if I lie, I become a Jew. You can say that it is not allowed. Therefore, if I show you that you worship both images (ζῷδα) and woods (ξύλα), and stones (λίθους) first you will no longer talk about the cross, and then you will confess that you lie for all that you said."

> to you in the name of God: if you had these [objects] at this time, would you not worship them by falling down [before them]?[130]

The "Christian" challenges the "Jews" by arguing that their ancestors, who are implied here, worshipped not only God but also other objects. The "Jews" are gradually reminded by the "Christian" of the practices of their biblical predecessors. The character of the "Jews" provides the Christian author a link to connect to biblical Judaism's sacred objects, whose rightful making the "Jewish" interlocutors cannot dispute. The Christian author then presents the "Jews" disagreeing among themselves regarding whether they would worship these items had they had access to them and the "Christian" interlocutor argues that Moses, following God's order, made the ritual objects of their ancestors which they venerated.[131] This situation creates a dipole between members of the same group insinuating the legitimacy or not of a practice which some of the "Jews" approve and others, as it is presented, oppose. This legitimacy is related to the existence of a similar practice that the Christian author tries to argue that is already present in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The Christian author presents that what his contemporary "Jews" have alienated themselves from is what his Christian audience have kept, continuing and mirroring a practice that already ancient Jews were bestowed upon. Overall, this scene with the "Jews" helps the author to attribute correctness to a practice that he links to the Old Testament.

After demonstrating that the practice of biblical Jews to make certain objects was dictated by divine order and presenting the "Jews" as representative of this "orthopraxis," the Christian

---

[130] *The Trophies of Damascus*, Dialexis Γ΄ VI.3 (ed. Bardy): "Ο χριστιανὸς καταισχῦνται αὐτοὺς εἰς τέλος διὰ τῆς ἀληθείας βουλόμενος, ἐδευτέρωσε καὶ ἐτρίσσωσε τὸν λόγον, καὶ τὸν λαὸν ὅλον διεμαρτύρατο, καὶ τότε εἶπεν· την κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης οὐχὶ τέκτονες ἄνθρωποι ἐπελέκησαν; τὰς δύο πλάκας ἃς ἐλάβετε οὐ Μωϋσῆς ἐλαύξεσεν; τὰ δύο ζῷδα ἐκεῖνα τὰ χωνευτὰ τὰ καλούμενα χερουβὶμ, οὐ χρυσοχόοι ἔγλυψαν καὶ ἐχώνευσαν· Ὁρκίζω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὸν θεόν· εἰ εἴχετε αὐτὰ τῇ ὥρᾳ ταύτῃ, οὐ προσπίπτοντες προσκυνεῖτε αὐτά;"

[131] *The Trophies of Damascus*, Dialexis Γ΄ VI.4 (ed. Bardy).

author of the *Trophies of Damascus* associated this Jewish practice with the Christian practice of icon-making and iconolatry by connecting the two through similar functionality to justify the Christian praxis and to render it equally legitimate. The Christian author attempts an analogy between both the biblical Israelites' sacred objects and those of the Christians and between both the biblical Jews and some of his contemporary "Jewish" interlocutors' attitude towards the making of their objects and the stance of Christians towards their own sacred items by discussing how they both function in similar ways, namely as reminders of God's works. The Christian author mirrors the two practices, and writes,

> And with regard to the icons that are with us, just as you placed in your ark [of the covenant] the staff of Aaron and the jar of manna as a *reminder* of God's benefactions, so also we do those [icons] as a *reminder* of those things that Christ performed to us, or his saints, whose representations when we see, we imitate the works. And just as by honoring God you venerate the book of his words, so also, when we glorify Christ, we revere his cross as a *reminder* of him alone.[132]

The ark of the covenant and the items stored in it, the staff of Aaron and the jar with the manna, work for the ancient Israelites as reminders of God's benefactions. The author of the dialogue argues that Christians' sacred objects function similarly; he argues that they are *aide-mémoire* of the holy persons and their lives and of Jesus's works for them. The Christian author, thus, presents the interplay between image and memory as already present in the relationship of ancient Israelites with their own items and he sees the same interaction when he discusses the events that a Christian worshipper recalls when they look at the painted person on their own sacred objects.

[132] *The Trophies of Damascus*, Dialexis Γ′ VI.7 (ed. Bardy): "Περὶ δὲ τῶν παρ᾽ ἡμῖν εἰκόνων, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν ὑμῶν τὴν ῥάβδον Ἀαρὼν καὶ τὴν στάμνον τοῦ μάννα ἐθήκατε εἰς ὑπόμνησιν τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ εὐεργεσιῶν, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ταῦτα ποιοῦμεν, ὧν τοὺς τύπους ὁρῶντες, μιμοπυμεθα τὰ ἔργα. Καὶ καθάπερ ὑμεῖς τιμῶντες τὸν θεὸν, τὸ βιβλιον τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ προσκυνεῖτε, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς, δοξάζοντες τὸν Χριστὸν, τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ σεβόμεθα εἰς ἀνάμνησιν αὐτοῦ μόνου."

Charles Barber in his discussion on Christian images acknowledges this interplay between image and memory, an ancient relationship that goes back to Plato and Aristotle,[133] and ascertains that "the importance of the image is enhanced because the image has become central to the act of remembering" and thus memory becomes "a central feature of the image."[134] For Barber, who interprets Leontius bishop of Neapolis's position on memory and its association with icons in his *Defense against the Jews*, memory reminds the Christian truths and moves "the image into the center of the definition of the Christian truth claims."[135] Rachel Rafael Neis with regard to the interplay between memory and icons in Leontius's same text further observes that an icon or an image has a "mnemonic use not only as proof of its utility, but also as a reproof against the Jewish failings in this regard (that is, the Jewish failure to remember and consequent tendency to transgress)."[136] The author of the *Trophies of Damascus* describes a similar functionality in the

[133] As Jack M. Greenstein discusses in his article "Icons and Memory: Aristotle on Remembrance," *Public* 15 (1995): 5-28, Aristotle in his *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* talks about the "commemorative function" of icons, a reference to images and portraits, and of their function as reminders (p. 25). Plato, on the other hand, with his theory of the Forms discusses the relationship of material things, including images, all of which are "merely imperfect instantiations of the eternal forms." Nigel J. T. Thomas, "Plato and His Predecessors," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mental-imagery/plato-predecessors.html. See also R. M. Dancy, *Plato's Introduction of Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially his chapter "*Phaedo* 72-78: The Forms and Recollection," 253-283. As Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion write, "memory operates through representation. Images do not simply encode prior mnemonic functions, but rather posit a dynamic of mnemonic processing. Images ngender modes of recollection as much as they are determined by them." Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion, "Introduction: Memory, Cognition, and Image Production," in *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation*, ed. Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 7.

[134] Charles Barber, "The Truth in Painting: Iconoclasm and Identity in Early-Medieval Art," *Speculum* 72.4 (1997): 1028. See also, ibid, n. 32 where Barber writes that Déroche "touches on the subject of memory, linking it to the desire provoked by the absence of God and the saints." In his commentary on Leontius of Neapolis's *Defense against the Jews* Déroche writes "Notons que dans l'Apologie cette foi apparaît marquée par la conscience d'un manqué, le sens d' une perte et d' une privation: les icônes, les reliques et la croix servent à compenser l' absence de Dieu et de ses saints, si douloureuse pour les fidèles." Déroche, "*L'Apologie contre les Juifs*," 92-93. I am not sure whether Déroche hints to memory or whether for him icons and their visibility function in a complementary fashion as a way to give visibility to the invisible. Icons as objects become sacred once they picture certain individuals that are considered to have a degree of sanctity. We need to separate icons as objects that are called as such because of their feature to depict holy persons and icons as triggering the memory of the viewer and thus furthering the process of concretizing the contact with the divine.

[135] Barber, "The Truth in Painting," 1028.

[136] Rachel Neis, "Embracing Icons: The Face of Jacob on the Throne of God," *Image* 1.1 (2007): 51. In Leontius's *Defense Against the Jews*, lines 149-174 (ed. Déroche), the Christian enumerates a number of Tabernacle and Temple

Jewish items and has the "Jews" recognize the centrality of their objects for the memory of God's workings but the reclaim of this orthopraxis on part of the Chritians is based on the "Jews" failing to keep up with a practice that their ancestors were acquainted with and once exercised. The author's portrayal of the "Jews'" silence in response to the Christian interlocutor's interpretation of the relationship of the biblical Israelites with their sacred objects is used by the author to suggest acknowledgment by the "Jew" not only of an ancient practice and of its continuation by the author's contemporary Christians but also of its legitimacy.

A unique approach that associates the instructional role of objects with memory and whose functionality is portrayed as legitimate by the imagined Jewish interlocutor is given by the Syriac Christian author of the Syriac anti-Jewish dialogue, the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*.[137] The author associates the prohibitive content of the biblical commandments against image-making in the books of Exodus 20:2-4 and Deuteronomy 5:6-7 with their evocative role to underline at a first stage the right stance on part of the "Jew" towards the creation of images.[138] The "Jew" explains that the commandments that prohibited the biblical Israelites to carve images and to worship other gods are based on the fact that many of the ancient Israelites had lost memory

items to argue that the ancient Israelites were remembering God through them. I cannot see if these items were used as a reproof against the Jewish failings "(that is, the Jewish failure to remember and consequent tendency to transgress)", as Neis suggests [Neis, "Embracing Icons," 51], but what is for sure is that Leontius accuses the "Jew" (and through him those ancestors of his that turned to idolatry and with whom he associates the "Jew," alluding to the genealogical affinity between the two) of preferring other images rather than those that were created for the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon in the memory and glory of God. Leontius twists the Jewish accusations against the Christian images and icons as idols and presents these Christian items as objects that merely facilitate the remembrance of God and help to his worship.

[137] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, V.6 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338). For more information about this text see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 30 n. 82 of this dissertation.

[138] Ex 20:2-4. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of a house of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not make for yourself an idol or likeness of anything whatever is in heaven above and whatever is in the earth beneath and whatever is in the waters beneath the earth." Deut 5:6-7: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of a house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

of the God of their forefathers.[139] According to the "Jew," as portrayed by the Christian author, the commandments served as reminders of God's existence alone. This understanding of the role of the commandments features here as the "proper" one that is offered by the "Jewish" interlocutor. The "Christian" discussant in his turn brings up additional instances from the Old Testament that serve both as reminders of events and of the biblical commandments.

As a first example, he mentions the questions that the son will ask his father during the Passover ceremony about the reason for the celebration of this festival.[140] These questions prompt the Christian narrator to recount the story of the Exodus from Egypt but in reality they prompt the memory of the audience about God's workings for their ancestors. As a second example, the "Christian" interlocutor mentions the biblical commandment to ancient Israelites regarding the attachment of fringes on the corners of their garments as evoking God's commandments.[141] In other words, Sergius argues and finds support in the Bible that the fringes were made as reminders of the biblical commandments being seen as a protective measure after the incident in the Israelite camp where the violation of the commandment against any type of work on Sabbath by one of the Israelites brought about his death by stoning.[142] The Christian authors show the "Jew" agreeing

[139] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, XVI.7 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338).

[140] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, XVI.7 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338). See Ex 13:14. "Now if your son should ask you afterward, saying, 'What is this?' you shall also say to him, 'With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of the land of Egypt, from a house of slavery."

[141] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, XVI.12 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338). See Num 15:38-40. "Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall speak to them. And let them make for themselves fringes on the flaps of their garments throughout their generations, and you shall put on the fringes of the flaps a blue thread. And it shall be for you on the fringes, and you shall see them and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and you will do them. And you shall not turn aside after your thoughts and after your eyes, in the things after which you whore, so that you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God."

[142] Num 15:32-36. "And the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, and they found a man gathering sticks on the day of the sabbaths. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moyses and Aaron and to all the congregation of Israel's sons. And they placed him in custody, for they did not decide what they should do to him. And the Lord spoke to Moyses, saying, "Let the man by death be put to death; stone him with stones—all the

with the examples that the "Christian" interlocutor presented him regarding the use of signs and objects as reminders of God's law. The author of the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* appears to weave what he considers the proper attitude towards the relationship between memory and signs or memory and objects according to the "Jewish" ideology that he portrays in his text.

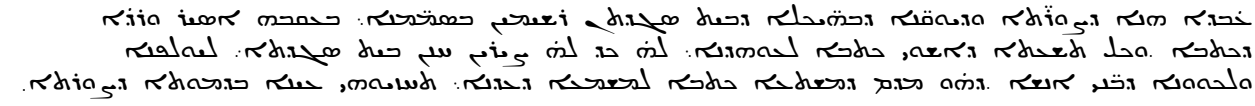
The author of the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, after having given representative instances (which are associated with the ancient Israelites) of the relationship between objects and memory and after having showed the legitimacy of this function by presenting the "Jew" to recognize the workings of certain objects, proceeds to argue that Christians' icons have the same role with those objects that are mentioned in the Old Testament/Hebrew scriptures. For the Christian author, icons function equally as reminders of scriptural teachings. He thus explains,

> This making of images and icons that are engraved with pigments in our churches is tied [with] and follows the scripture. And we paint our churches [with] every account that the scripture deemed worthy for being *remembered* for the teaching and for the admonition of people, [in order] that whatever the scripture narrates for the ear, the eye should see in the shape of an image.[143]

The author presents the making of icons as being aligned with the Bible, in that they function as reminders of the biblical events applying a different modality, that of painting, when the Bible functions as a reminder of God's commandments in the modality of writing. At the same time, the author claims that these images acquire an educational and instructional function and associates

congregation." And all the congregation brought him forth outside the camp, and all the congregation stoned him with stones outside the camp, just as the Lord instructed Moyses."

[143] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, XVI.19 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338):



the two functionalities with each other. He describes the educational and evocative role of images and how people are motivated to seek information on the meaning of the narratives which they see depicted on the walls of a church. The author explains,

> When people enter for worship and see before their eyes these accounts that are engraved on the walls of [the] church do they not ask the learned [people], what is this? And the learned [ones] teach and explain to them every appearance according to it. And then the non-learned [ones] learn and knowledge will enter with learning and from knowledge the fear of God is born. For it is written, that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, like the waters that cover the sea. [144]

The icons' educational role is a *sine qua non* for Sergius who explains that the Christian practice of iconography is also associated with the instructional role of images. For him, looking at icons brings to the memory of the viewers ethical and doctrinal teachings that are associated with biblical narrated stories.[145] A dialectical relationship is established between the icon, the portrayed figures, and the knowledgeable viewer who can both decode and interpret these painted stories to those who are less experienced with the theological teachings behind them. In other words, the painted figures and narratives become alive and assume the role of an instructor and of the reminder of the message they convey. The "Jew" as a character helps the Christian author of the Syriac dialogue to construct the argument that the Christian practice of icons in the churches has a genealogical affinity with the biblical practice of using signs as reminders of biblical commandments and events.

---

[144] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, XVI.21 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338):

ܘܡܐ ܕܥܠܘ ܐܢ̈ܫܐ ܠܣܓܕܬܐ: ܘܚܙܝܢ ܬܫ̈ܥܝܬܐ ܗܠܝܢ: ܠܘܩܒܠ ܥܝ̈ܢܝܗܘܢ ܕܪ̈ܫܝܡܢ ܒܟܘ̈ܬܠܐ ܕܗܝܟܠܐ: ܠܐ
ܝܕ̈ܘܥܐ ܡܫܐܠܝܢ. ܡܢܘ ܗܢܐ. ܘܝܕ̈ܘܥܐ ܡܠܦܝܢ ܘܡܦܫܩܝܢ ܠܗܘܢ. ܟܠ ܐܣܟܡܐ ܐܝܟܘܬܗ. ܘܗܝܕܝܢ ܠܐ ܝܕ̈ܘܥܐ
ܝܠܦܝܢ. ܘܒܝܘܠܦܢܐ ܥܐܠ ܝܕܥܬܐ. ܘܡܢ ܝܕܥܬܐ ܡܬܝܠܕܐ ܕܚܠܬܗ ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܟܬܝܒ ܓܝܪ. ܕܬܬܡܠܐ ܐܪܥܐ
ܝܕܥܬܗ ܕܡܪܝܐ: ܐܝܟ ܡ̈ܝܐ ܕܡܟܣܝܢ ܠܝܡܐ.

[145] The educational function of the icons has been recognized by Byzantinists and art historians who work on Byzantine iconography. Averil Cameron, for example, underlines the importance of the icons for teaching doctrine, and she cites Anastasius of Sinai who saw in the icons "a more effective way of convincing people of true doctrine than quotations from the Scripture and the Fathers." Cameron, "The Language of Images," 41.

Overall, the Christian authors use the "Jewish" interlocutor to help them validate their reading of biblical instances where memory is associated with certain objects. Using the "Jew" as a foil who challenges the Christian practice of iconolatry and its connection to the memory of God's works, the Christian authors lay the groundwork to explain what could be considered as the "proper" "Jewish" stance on the association between objects and divine remembrance by arguing that ancient Israelites venerated objects such as the staff of Aaron or the jar of manna which triggered their memory of God's benefactions and that they worshiped God through objects by means of memory. Thus, the Christian authors provide to their audience a genealogical connection to an ancient Jewish practice and argue that Christians actually mirror what Jews (that is the ancient Israelites) once did. The Christian authors claim an orthopraxis that they already recognize in the "Jews," elevating themselves to the same status with them. Thus, for the Christian authors, icons activate the memory of the viewer/worshipper, who, through them, worships God and not idols.[146]

[146] The author of the *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati* [Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati," 47-229, another anti-Jewish dialogue text from the seventh century CE, addresses directly this issue when he states that idols are the residence of demons. [*Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati*, I.8 (ed. Déroche)]. As opposed to the relationship of demons with idols, Christians did not consider icons as the seat of divinity and they rejected the idea that the divine or the saint dwelled in them. Differentiating between icons and idols on the basis of this explanation allowed Christians to distinguish not only icons from idols but also themselves from idolaters, a distinction that was necessary especially when the line that separated the two was fine, and, in particular, when idols were associated with miracle stories. [Eastmond, "Between Icon and Idol," 77]. This difference between icons and idols is twofold: 1) it is based on the grounds that idols had a prototype which is found within the idol itself and is associated with an evil spirit as opposed to icons whose prototype is found outside the image; and 2) it is based on the soteriological dimensions of miracles which, in the case of idols, their purpose is corruptive and thus spiritually destructive [Ibid. Eastmond explains that "In semiotic terms, in an idol the signifier and the signified are identical… Unlike an icon, to attack an idol is to attack its prototype, its devil." See also the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 458-465 (ed. Berger), in which Gregentius does admit the miraculous power of certain idols but he justifies their power as a corruptive one that stemmed from demons that resided in them. Cf., *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, XVII.2-3 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338)]. Under this effort of distinguishing icons from idols, we may interpret the persistence of Christians to explicate in their responses that they were not idolaters and that icons were not idols. In the case of icons, the divine is independent from the image of the saint and the icon merely becomes the channel through which the divine flows and comes in contact with the human world. What distinguishes icons from idols is the relationship of the divine with the sacred paraphernalia: according to the Christian perception on the issue, the idolaters needed the idols because the deity resided in them. The Christians needed the icons as a way to establish a contact with the divine that exists outside the object, and for this reason the icon ceases to exist once this connection has been achieved. [For historical information on the *Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati* (ed. Déroche) see Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'orient du VII^{e} siècle. Introduction historique : Entre histoire et apocalypse," *Travaux et*

For the authors of the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* and the *Trophies of Damascus* (their) Christians continue a practice whose legitimate status the Christian authors justify on the basis that it was already present in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

Discussions on Holy Persons, Pictorial Representation of Angels, and the Veneration of Relics

In some Christian dialogues, certain discussions between "Christians" and "Jews" pertain to the existence and veneration of holy persons, the pictorial representation of bodiless beings, and the veneration of relics. In these discussions, the Christian authors recognize the legitimacy of the "Jewish" discussant's opinion on the basis of the biblical prohibitions against image-making and avoidance of corpses,[147] and even more their veneration, in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. However, these Christian authors, by showing that their practices mirror similar practices of biblical Jews, claim a religious legitimacy equally based on the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

In one such dialogue text, the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*[148] the Christian author raises the issue of the presence of saints and justifies their existence already in the Hebrew scriptural texts to argue for the legitimacy of his contemporary Christian belief. The "Jew" of the dialogue acts as the foil to the Christian's belief in the existence of the saints and as such he is presented to negate it, arguing that "There is only one holy God who is in heaven, for he did not call saints here. There is one lord Sabaoth who made the heaven and earth, and there is no one holy

Mémoires 11 (1991) : 17-46 ; Pieter W. van der Horst, "A Short Note on the Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati," *Zutot* 6.1 (2009): 1-6; Shaun O'Sullivan, "Anti-Jewish Polemic and Early Islam," 49-68].

[147] With regard to the "Jewish" interlocutor's opposition against the veneration of relics, the Christian author seems to have in mind Num 6:6 and 19:11-16 that discuss the prohibition of a Nazirite to be near a corpse during the time of her or his consecration (Num 6:6) and the impurity that a corpse transmits (Num 19:11-16).

[148] For more information about the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* (ed. Berger) see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 31 n. 83 of this dissertation.

as the lord and there is no one righteous beside our God."[149] Herban, the "Jewish" interlocutor, who is deployed as a character by the author to present the legitimate opinion about the existence of saints, rejects the possibility of their presence and argues for the existence of only one holy being. Archbishop Gregentius, the purported "Christian" interlocutor, has recourse to the book of Psalms 15:3[150] and to the apocryphal book of the Wisdom of Solomon 5:15[151] to prove that ancient Judaism recognizes holy persons and that their acknowledgement is not a Christian invention. The "archbishop" asks Herban to explain about whom the psalm is talking[152] when it writes that, "As for the *holy ones* who are in his land, he made marvelous all his wants among them"[153] and continues quoting from the Wisdom of Solomon where the author says, "But the *righteous* live forever, and in the Lord is their reward and the care of them with the Most High."[154] The Christian author interprets the mentions to *saints* (τοῖς ἁγίοις) and *righteous* persons (δίκαιοι) in these biblical verses as references to holy persons, arguing through these scriptural passages their existence already in the writings of ancient Jews. Immediately after the "archbishop" quotes the two biblical verses from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, he continues the "appropriation" of the idea of holy persons from the scriptures of the Jews by stating,

---

[149] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 310-312 (ed. Berger): "Ἑρβᾶν λέγει· "Ἅγιος ΄ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ἐπεὶ ἐνταῦθα ἁγίους μὴ ὀνομάτιζε. Εἷς κύριος Σαβαὼθ ὁ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἅγιος ὡς ὁ κύριος καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος πλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.""

[150] Ps 15:3. "τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς ἐν τῇ γῇ αὐτοῦ ἐθαυμάστωσεν ὁ Κύριος, πάντα τὰ θελήματα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτοῖς." Gregentius, *Dialexis Δ΄*, 314-315 (ed. Berger).

[151] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 318-319 (ed. Berger): WSol 5:15. "Δίκαιοι δὲ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσι, καὶ ἐν Κυρίῳ ὁ μισθὸς αὐτῶν, καὶ ἡ φροντὶς αὐτῶν παρὰ ΄Υψίστῳ." The Wisdom of Solomon is one of the apocrypha or deuterocanonical books written in Greek in the first century BC. It is not included in the canon of the Hebrew Bible but it is part of the Greek translation of the Septuagint.

[152] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 314 (ed. Berger): "Τίνα οὖν ὁ προφήτης λελάληκεν ἢ περί τούτων τοιαῦτα;"

[153] Ps 15:3. "τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς ἐν τῇ γῇ αὐτοῦ ἐθαυμάστωσεν ὁ Κύριος, πάντα τὰ θελήματα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτοῖς."

[154] WSol 5:15. "Δίκαιοι δὲ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσι, καὶ ἐν Κυρίῳ ὁ μισθὸς αὐτῶν, καὶ ἡ φροντὶς αὐτῶν παρὰ ΄Υψίστῳ."

> Those saints and just people, who pleased well the lord on earth, and who departed in spirit gloriously to the highest, we embrace with insatiable passion and divine love by depicting the honorable icons, revering not the matter but adoring the form and the appearance of each of the saints.[155]

The "archbishop" associates the holy persons from the Hebrew scriptures with the holy persons of his Christianity to create a continuation between the two and justifies the creation of their icons as a way to venerate not the matter of the icon but their personhood. The Christian author uses the image of the "Jew" as an opponent of the concept of holy persons presenting his stance as correct only to argue that it is Christians who have kept up with this practice. Here the Christian author mirrors the Christian practice of holy persons with the Old Testament tradition of saints that, according to him, appears in the book of Psalms and the Wisdom of Solomon.

Similarly with reclaiming a legitimacy recognized in the "Jewish" interlocutor by presenting a Christian religious belief on holy persons as being found already in the Hebrew scriptures, a discussion on the depiction of angels supports further the effort of the author of the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* to present his Jewish discussant as an advocate of a religious orthopraxis which he reclaims for his Christian audience. The Christian dialogue author traces back to the Hebrew Bible the depiction of angels to argue that the Christian practice of their portrayal and worship is not an innovation but is well-documented in it. Herban is depicted to attack the Christian practice of picturing angels on the premise that they are bodiless and says,

> *Herban…said:* "It has been written that, 'He who makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flaming fire.' How can you [Christians] worship [the holy angels] by depicting the worthy nature of the holy angels? Perhaps those who have possessed bodies [you worship], as you say, because by depicting through them the form of their bodies, we honor [them], and we do not divinize [them] by worshipping their shadow; well then, for what reason [do you worship] the angels who have acquired

[155] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 319-323 (ed. Berger): "Τούτους τοιγαροῦν τοὺς ἁγίους τε καὶ δικαίους τοὺς ἐν τῇ γῇ μὲν καλῶς τῷ κυρίῳ εὐαρεστήσαντας, ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις δὲ ἐνδόξως μεταστάντων τῷ πνεύματι τὰς τιμίας εἰκόνας σκιογραφοῦντες ἡμεῖς πόθῳ ἁπλήστῳ καὶ ἔρωτι θείῳ σχετικῶς ἀσπαζόμεθα οὐ τὴν ὕλην τιμῶντες, ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν θέαν ἑκάστου τῶν ἁγίων σεβαζόμενοι."

> neither bodies nor did anyone see clearly their incorporeal shape as it is? For they are spiritual spirits and [they are] utterly without reflection and [they are] immaterial.[156]

Being presented as a foil, the imagined "Jew," Herban, uses a strong *a fortiori* argument to question the Christian practice of depicting angels wondering how their substance can be conveyed pictorially. For the sake of supporting his argument, he "recognizes" ostensibly that holy persons may be captured pictorially because they have material bodies, but he negates the pictorial representation of incorporeal beings. The role of Herban is auxiliary for the author who features the "Jew's" opinion as the mainstream. However, the archbishop's reply comes to help the author claim the correctness of the Christian practice by providing an explanation on the reasons for their practice,

> *The archbishop said:* "Even here you will not have something to say, for we found from you to depict the angels of God[157]… Verily, when Solomon built the temple of God the highest, in the holy and in the holy of holies above the mercy-seat he composed with mosaic cherubim of glory overshadowing the altar, and he constructed cherubim at the first gate of the sanctuary and at the second gate of the temple. Therefore, you [all] see how by depicting [them] you worshipped the incorporeal natures and you [all] censure us over against how much we honor and worship the saints because they pleased the Lord well in [their] body by depicting [them]."[158]

---

[156] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 731-737 (ed. Berger): "Θαυμάσας δὲ Ἐρβᾶν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀποκρίσει ταύτῃ λέγει· "Γέγραπται, ὅτι *Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρός φλόγα*. Πῶς ὑμεῖς τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων τὴν τιμίαν φύσιν ἱστοροῦντες προσκυνεῖτε; Τοὺς μὲν σώματα κτησαμένους ἴσως, καθὰ λέγεις, ὅτι τὸν τύπον τοῦ σώματος αὐτῶν ἱστοροῦντες δι᾽ ἐκείνους τιμῶμεν τὴν σκιὰν αὐτῶν προσκυνοῦντες καὶ οὐ θεοποιοῦμεν· τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοίνυν δι᾽ ἣν αἰτίαν, οἵτινες οὔτε σώματα ἐπικέντηνται, οὔτε τὴν ἀσώματον αὐτῶν μορφὴν ὡς ἔστι τίς ἐθεάσατο; Πνεύματα γὰρ εἰσὶν νοερὰ καὶ παντελῶς ἀθεώρητα καὶ ἄϋλα.""

[157] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 738-739 (ed. Berger): "Ὁ ἀρχιεπίσκοπος ἔφη· "Κἂν ἐνταῦθα οὐχ ἕξεις τινὰ τοῦ λέγειν, παρ᾽ ὑμῶν γὰρ αὐτῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἱστορεῖν ἐξευρήμεθα.""

[158] *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, Dialexis Δ΄ 746-752 (ed. Berger): "Ναί, οἰκοδομήσας Σολομὼν τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου, ἔνδον εἰς τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων ὑπεράνωθεν τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου χερουβίμ δόξης ἐμουσουργήσατο ἐπισκιάζοντα τὸ θυσιαστήριον, καὶ εἰς τὴν πρώτην δὲ πύλην τοῦ ἱεροῦ χερουβίμ καὶ εἰς τὴν δευτέραν πύλην τοῦ ναοῦ χερουβίμ κατεσκευάσατο. Ὑμεῖς οὖν ὅρα πῶς τὰς ἀσωμάτους φύσεις ἱστορήσαντες προσεκυνήσατε, καὶ ἡμᾶς μέμφεσθε, ἀνθ᾽ ὅσον τοὺς ἐν σώματι ἁγίους κυρίῳ εὐαρεστήσαντας καθιστοροῦντες τιμῶμεν καὶ προσκυνοῦμεν."

Gregentius explains that Christians' pictorial representation of angels is a practice first exercised by the Jews (a reference to the biblical Israelites) and provides the making of the cherubim in the Temple of Solomon to support his argument. The "Christian" discussant maintains that this practice was received from the Jews and further argues for the genealogical affinity with them. He then concludes that the Jews, a reference to the biblical Israelites, just as his contemporary Christian audience, by depicting angels, worshipped them. He thus tries to claim the legitimacy of a practice by justifying it as a continuation of a praxis that was documented in the Hebrew scripture, and which had fallen into disuse among Jews of his day.[159]

Additionally, a controversial topic that features the "Jewish" interlocutor's legitimate attitude and of which the Christian dialogue author of the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, distinctly among other anti-Jewish dialogue authors, asserts ownership is the discussion on the relics of holy persons. Two ideologies seem to come in conflict when the "Jew" and the "Christian" converse on osteolatry: one that forbids it and one that allows it, repositioning the

[159] Although the discussion centers on the provenance of the Christian practice to depict and worship angels, it goes beyond this by allowing us to see into how the Christians of the dialogue subconsciously perceived the functional dimensions of holy images. The author portrays Christians to be cognizant of the fact that icons give reality to things that cannot be perceived through vision. When Christians represent aspects of the invisible world, not only do they concretize it, but they make it evidently real. In this case, angels can be seen, they can be kissed, they can be embraced, and they can be worshipped. The icon has transgressed the barrier between the intelligible and unintelligible worlds. Depicting the incorporeal nature of angels through the contours of human shape, icons surpass the conundrum of representing what is bodiless and outside human perception. Angels become real not so much because biblical narratives refer to them but because these biblical narratives and the angels in them are portrayed pictorially. Of course, believing in the reality of the angels precedes their pictorial representation. In other words, for the Christians to concretize the existence of angels through icons, they had first to believe in their reality. Ellen Muehlberger explains what the term "real" meant for late antique Christians in relation to the existence of angels and argues that the "term [was] synonymous with [them being] 'culturally operational'" meaning that "Christians expected angels to exist and to persist and that they accepted that angels could interact with human beings, even if only select one." [Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19. See also, Glenn Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) where he discusses another aspect of angels, that is their representation in art, the polemics against this practice, and the iconophiles' approach and arguments to images]. Because Christians believed that angels existed, then angels had to be real and they could be conveyed pictorially. At the same time, their illustration enhanced their reality, for, in order to be depicted, they had to be real. The Christian author finds no particular issue with his Christian tradition of the pictorial depiction of the incorporeal beings and their subsequent worship; based on this, he justifies the more reasonable portrayal of holy persons and their worship which for him conducts worship to God.

legitimacy with whom among the two interlocutors orthopraxis stands. Similarly here, the Syriac Christian author employs foiling and mirroring. The "Jew" as a foil to the "Christian" interlocutor is portrayed to criticize the Christian practice of osteolatry with the Christian author to weave the "Jew's" alignment with what can be seen as the legitimate stance towards the topic. According to the author,

> *The Jew [said]:* It is written in the law, do not touch the bone of a dead [person] especially those who are priests. But, behold, you carry the bones of dead people in your pockets and you defile your souls with dead bodies and you are not ashamed. And not only that, but [also] you pray and worship dry and withered bones. And you rub the dust that was from them on your body and you hold [this] as it is something [important]…And you build for them churches and you paint for them images with pigments, and you put upon them the name of martyrs and you call them a house of prayer."[160]

The use of the "Jew" as a foil allows the author of the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* to show how the purported Jewish criticism has recourse to the biblical law, from which it draws its legitimacy, in order to censure the Christian practice that the Syriac author describes. The "Jew" notices how the Christians of the author's audience transgress the biblical commandment of touching the bones of dead persons and enumerates a number of practices that he sees as defiling the practitioners.[161] Carrying the relics of dead persons in their pockets,

---

[160] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew*, XIII.1 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338):

ܫܡܝ ܕܐܢܬ ܟܬܝܒ ܒܢܡܘܣܐ ܕܠܐ ܬܫܬܘܠ ܓܪܡܐ ܕܡܝܬ ܒܪܝܫ ܟܠ ܕܟܐ ܘܒܪܝܫ ܟܠ ܕܟܝܢ ܐܠܐ ܗܐ ܐܢܬ ܛܥܝܢ ܓܪܡܝ ܡܝܬ̈ܐ ܒܟܝܣ̈ܐ ܘܛܡܐ ܢܦ̈ܫܬܟ ܒܦܓܪ̈ܐ ܘܠܐ ܟܣܝܬ ܐܦ ܠܐ ܒܗܕ ܕܠܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ ܐܦ ܕ̈ܝܒܫ̈ܐ ܘܝܒܫ̈ܐ ܐܢܬ ܨܠܝ ܘܣܓܕ ܘܐܢܬ ܡܫܚ ܥܦܪܐ ܕܗܘ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܥܠ ܦܓܪܟ ܘܐܢܬ ܛܥܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܕܡ ܗܘ ܘܐܢܬ ܒܢܝ ܠܗܘܢ ܥܕ̈ܬ̈ܐ ܘܐܢܬ ܟܬܒ ܠܗܘܢ ܨܠܡ̈ܐ ܒܨܒ̈ܥܐ ܘܐܢܬ ܣܡ ܥܠܝܗܘܢ ܫܡܗ̈ܬ ܕܣܗ̈ܕܐ ܘܩܪܝ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܝܬ ܨܠܘ̈ܬܐ...ܘܐܢܬ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܗܘ ܒܢܡܘܣ ܕܠܐ ܬܫܬܘܠ ܓܪܡܐ ܕܡܝܬ ܒܪܝܫ ܟܠ ܕܟܐ ܘܒܪܝܫ ܟܠ ܕܟܝܢ ܐܠܐ ܗܐ ܐܢܬ ܛܥܝܢ ܓܪܡܝ ܡܝܬ̈ܐ ܒܟܝܣ̈ܐ ܘܛܡܐ ܢܦ̈ܫܬܟ ܒܦܓܪ̈ܐ ܘܠܐ ܟܣܝܬ ܐܦ ܠܐ ܒܗܕ ܕܠܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ ܐܦ ܕ̈ܝܒܫ̈ܐ ܘܝܒܫ̈ܐ ܐܢܬ ܨܠܝ ܘܣܓܕ ܘܐܢܬ ܡܫܚ ܥܦܪܐ ܕܗܘ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܥܠ ܦܓܪܟ ܘܐܢܬ ܛܥܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܕܡ ܗܘ ܘܐܢܬ ܒܢܝ ܠܗܘܢ ܥܕ̈ܬ̈ܐ ܘܐܢܬ ܟܬܒ ܠܗܘܢ ܨܠܡ̈ܐ ܒܨܒ̈ܥܐ ܘܐܢܬ ܣܡ ܥܠܝܗܘܢ ܫܡܗ̈ܬ ܕܣܗ̈ܕܐ ܘܩܪܝ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܝܬ ܨܠܘ̈ܬܐ...ܘܐܢܬ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܗܘ ܒܢܡܘܣ

[161] The "Jewish" interlocutor's castigation reminds Num 19:11-16 that define the impurity which stems from the contact with a corpse and the consequences that fall upon a transgressor who does not cleanse herself or himself afterwards: "And it shall be a perpetual precept for the sons of Israel and for the guests who associate themselves. The one who touches the dead of any human soul shall be unclean for seven days. He shall be purified on the third day and on the seventh day, and he shall be clean, but if he is not purified on the third day and on the seventh day, he shall not be clean. Everyone who touches the dead from a human soul—if he died and was not purified—has defiled the tent of the Lord. That soul shall be wiped out from Israel; because water for sprinkling was not sprinkled upon him, he is unclean; his uncleanness is still in him. And this is the law: a person, if he dies in a house, everyone who enters into

worshipping them, building churches on them (possibly a reference to the storage of relics in the altar) and making icons of the persons to whom these relics belong are practices that the "Jew" condemns and implies are illegitimate.

This criticism of the "Jew" creates and enhances his image as a representative of a religious legitimacy that the Christian author has fabricated to compare it to the "Christian" character. The "Christian's" response to the "Jew's" criticism repositions and reclaims the legitimacy of the Christian practice. Sergius, discusses with his "Jewish" interlocutor the translation of the relic of Joseph by Moses from Egypt to Canaan only to make the "Jew" accept that the ancient Israelites on their way to the promised land had honored and venerated Joseph's relic with which they came in contact without being defiled due to the religious status of the deceased as a righteous person.[162] By means of the "Jewish" charge, the Christian author ventures to reclaim the religious legitimacy of the "Jewish" interlocutor and presents a Christian practice as originated already in the Old Testament. The Christian author recreates a narrative which he presents as Jewish in origin but resulted as Christian in legitimacy and supportive of Christian practices.

For the Christian authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues that I examined, the existence of holy persons, the pictorial representation of bodiless beings, and the veneration of relics mirror respective beliefs and practices that they see as being present in the Old Testament/Hebrew scriptures, attempting to assert ownership of orthopraxis on these beliefs and practices for the audiences for whom they write.

---

the house and as many things as are in the house shall be unclean for seven days. And every open vessel, as many as do not have a band tied on it, are unclean. And everyone who, on the surface of the plain, might touch a slain person or a corpse or a human bone or a grave, for seven days he shall be unclean." The Christian author appears to draw upon Num 19:11-16 and presents the "Jew" to allude to it when he castigates Christians for their practice to touch and venerate the relics of dead persons.

[162] *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, XIII.15-21 (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed discussions between "Christians" and "Jews" on three topics that pertain to icon-making and icon-worship in selected *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues as a case study to explore the use of the character of the "Jew" in these works. The examples analyzed above show how Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues used the character of the "Jew" as a rhetorical device, using foiling and mirroring, to try to lay claim to religious legitimacy from the Old Testament. As a foil, the "Jew" is depicted to oppose Christian practices of icon-making and icon-worship, insinuating that Christians are idolaters and he is portrayed as a representative of a religious legitimacy because he follows the biblical prohibition against images. However, according to the Christian dialogue authors of the texts under examination, the Christian practices of icon-making and icon-worship that the "Jew" attacks as idolatrous mirror the ancient Israelites' *modus operandi*. In other words, the authors aim to show that the making of sacred objects by the Christians for whom they write mirrors the biblical Jews' making of sacred objects placed in the Tabernacle and the two Temples. By showing the connection between the Christians' practices and those of the biblical Jews, the Christian authors attempt to claim for their Christian audiences a religious legitimacy that they have recognized to the "Jews" due to their genealogical affinity with biblical Jews and the Hebrew Bible. In all, the discussions on image-making and image-worship in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues reflect the efforts of their authors to use the "Jew" as representative of a legitimacy that they desire to claim for themselves.

In the next chapter, I will analyze rabbinic dialogical discussions between Rabbis and "others" (gentiles as ethnic or religious "other" and other Rabbis) on the topic of idols to show how rabbinic authors also employed the image of the "other" as a character, but for a different purpose than the Christian authors.

Chapter 3: Foiling the "Other" in Rabbinic Multivocal Narratives on Idols

Introduction: Foils to the Rabbis

Late antique Christians were not the only ones who employed the literary genre of dialogue. Rabbis wrote literature deploying this genre as well. In classical rabbinic literature, the genre of dialogue appears in the form of dialectical argumentation,[163] which, although it reached its apex with the Stammaim,[164] as David Weiss Halivni explains, it already existed before the Babylonian

[163] As David Weiss Halivni explains, there are at least three categories of dialectical argumentation, "(1) questions such as "what is the reason (mai ta'ama)?" and "whence are these things derived (mina hani milei)?," in which the meaning of the text is clear but its source is unknown; (2) questions such as "what are the circumstances (heikhei damei) ?," in which the meaning is unclear; (3) questions such as "was it [not] taught in a baraita (vehatanya)?" and "there is a contradiction between them (ureminhu)," in which both the meaning and source are clear but another source contradicts it." David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xxxiv. Also, Jacob Neusner explains that the dialectical argument "raises a question and answers it, then raises a question about the answer, and, having raised another question, then gives an answer to that question, and it continues in the same fashion. So it moves hither and yon." Jacob Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 74. Neusner further explains that "those second and third and fourth turnings differentiate a dialectical from a static argument, much as the bubbles tell the difference between still and sparkling wine. The always-sparkling dialectical argument is one principle means by which the Talmud or some other rabbinic writing accomplishes its goal of showing the connections between this and that, ultimately demonstrating the unity of many 'thises and thats' [sic]." Ibid. Daniel Boyarin gives illustratively the dialectical nature of the Babylonian Talmud, in particular, when he discusses that it "consists of a particular kind of dialectic in which two opposing views on a given topic in halakha are presented and then an argument is pursued in which each of the two *amora'im* …tries to topple the view of the other by contradicting it with authoritative texts which are explained away in turn." Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 143.

[164] According to Halivni, the stammaim are "the authors of the anonymous sections of the Talmud, 427 to c. 520" and "*stammoth* is the term for anonymous sections." David Weiss Halivni, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36; and David Weiss Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 76. See also in the latter work chapter 5 where Halivni discusses the stammaitic period.

Talmud in a briefer and simpler form in the Mishnah,[165] the halakhic midrashim, and the Jerusalem Talmud.[166]

In this chapter, I analyze strictly dialectical materials from Tannaitic sources, in particular two dialogues from Mishnah Avodah Zarah (3:4 and 4:7) and one dialogue from Sifre Deuteronomy (Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12),[167] in both of which dialectical argumentation unfolds involving discussions between two or more interlocutors that are constructed as debates, and in which we can see the give-and-take style, characteristic of the structure of the sugya—namely dialectical argumentation between different interlocutors—in the Babylonian Talmud. David Brodsky discusses, rather convincingly, the close relationship between the rhetorical style of the sugya that "developed in Sasanian Babylonia" and progymnasmata ("Greco-Roman primers for written composition") to argue that the "the basic structure of the sugya was already well known in the Greco-Roman world and was part of the educated elite's basic education."[168] He further argues that the "basic structure of the sugya—an opening statement followed by a series of challenges and resolutions—can already be found in tannaitic Palestinian rabbinic documents,

[165] Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara,* 79. Already in this monograph (1986), Halivni discusses the decisive role of the Stammaim for the development of dialectical argumentation and points out that "prior to them there were only short dialogues and comments strung along the Mishnah and Braithoth." Ibid.

[166] Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, 191. Halivni further states that the Stammaim "were the first to transform dialectics into an independent pursuit, to explore all possible avenues of investigation, to pursue subtle and complex analysis, and to propound objections and solutions—which far surpassed anything seen previously." Ibid.

[167] More specifically, I examine m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 and 3:4 and Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12. For more information on the Mishnah see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 37 n. 99 of this dissertation. On Sifre Deuteronomy see also "Chapter 1: Introduction," 37 n. 100 of this dissertation.

[168] David Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse: Progymnasmata and the Evolution of a Rabbinic Genre" in *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, ed. Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 177. See also Ibid. 177 n. 13 for a concise bibliography "on the ubiquity of the Greco-Roman educational system by the rabbinic period." Brodsky argues that "The two styles in the progymnasmata that are an exact fit with the rabbinic sugya are the last two, "On Thesis" (*thesis*) and "On Introduction of a Law" (*nomou eisphora*)." Idem, 186.

though the genre is less common in those documents than it is in the Bavli"[169] and explains that although the Mishnah contains mostly apodictic law (namely concluded legal opinions), however, the give-and-take style so common in the Talmudim is already present in the Mishnah as well, even if infrequently.[170] As an example of the give-and-take style as being already present in the Mishnah, he cites a dialectical excerpt from tractate m. Pesahim 6:1-2 in which one may see a long debate between three interlocutors, R. Eliezer, R. Yehoshua, and R. Akivah.[171] Despite the fact that one of the main differences between this mishnah and a Babylonian sugya, as Brodsky demonstrates, is that "the Babylonian sugya offers the give-and-take all in the same voice (usually that of the *stam*),"[172] this passage, as well as others,[173] exhibits the appearance and deployment of the dialectical format as early as the Mishnah, first half of the third century CE.

The passages I examine in this chapter, despite their brevity and simple form, demonstrate a dialectical argumentation where the interlocutors express different opinions in order to reach a resolution. In all, the genre of dialogue and, accordingly, dialectical argumentation that seems to have appeared among rabbinic circles as early as the third century CE was a useful tool for the Rabbis. It helped them in their effort to present diverse opinions in a fashion that allows the reader or the audience to follow the rhetorical unfolding of each interlocutor's rationale and the outcome or resolution from the juxtaposition between different opinions.

---

[169] Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse," 179.

[170] Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse," 179.

[171] Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse," 182.

[172] Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse," 182.

[173] See Brodsky, "From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse," 179 n. 15 where he includes debates between Rabbis from the Mishnah "mGit 1:6; mPea 6:6, 7:7; mTer 9:2; mPes 6:5; mNed 10:6; mShevu 3:5 and 6; mZev 12:5; mHul 4:4; and mKer 3:9-10." In the same footnote he includes mKer 3:10 and mAZ 2:5 as examples of mishnayot that "can be categorized as give-and-take in one voice."

If we take into consideration the connection between progymnasmata and the dialectical argumentation in the dialectical narratives in rabbinic literature, as Brodsky has argued, then it is not surprising that for the creation of rabbinic staged discussions, the Rabbis, like the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, appear to have used the rhetorical device of *ethopoieia*, namely speech by character, to discuss topics of their concern presented through discussion between two or more individuals.[174]

By applying *ethopoieia*, namely by imagining what two or more discussants would respond to each other on topics of legal and non-legal nature, the rabbinic authors constructed the "other"—rabbinic, non-rabbinic, or non-Jewish—as the foil. The foil, as I explained in the previous chapter, is used as a comparison point to the protagonist to underline the latter's traits and qualities through contrast. It seems that the anonymous editors of the rabbinic dialectical excerpts from the tannaitic sources I examine in this chapter deployed the "other" as the foil to emphasize the opinions, actions, beliefs, and/or legal authority of those Rabbis whose side the rabbinic editors chose to take by making a contrast between the foil's voice versus the Rabbis' voice. Moshe Simon-Shoshan in his dissertation "Halakhah Lemaʿaseh: Narrative and Legal Discourse in the Mishnah,"[175] in which he discusses the role and use of narratives in the Mishnah and their relationship with the legal content in it, raises the issue of the Mishnaic narrator's objectivity who narrates the stories "in light of a subjective agenda."[176] The role of the foil in this process is

[174] In the texts I will examine in this chapter, the rabbinic authors portray the interlocutors as if they are acting a role by offering canned responses on the topics that these authors present these interlocutors to discuss. In other words, the anonymous authors imagined the questions and answers that the interlocutors would use in the flow of a conversation as if they are based on a "script," as is also the case with the rest of the purely dialectical discussions in rabbinic literature.

[175] Moshe Simon-Shoshan, "Halakhah Lemaʿaseh: Narrative and Legal Discourse in the Mishnah" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2005).

[176] Simon-Shoshan, "Halakhah Lemaʿaseh," 116: "…we must read Mishnaic stories with increased skepticism. We must look for signs that the narrator is not telling things "as they happened" but in light of a subjective agenda. The most obvious examples of this are those cases when the Mishnah departs from objective, omniscient narration and

fundamental and to that end I agree with Mira Balberg's observation that the "…Other functions…not only as an opponent to be defeated in order to solidify the rabbinic standing, but also as a foil, as an instrument for raising questions and doubts from the unconscious to the conscious,"[177] for it appears that the foil in rabbinic literature is a rhetorical device that Rabbis had recourse to in order to argue in favor of a certain opinion or attitude. For me, the "other" seems to be used intentionally by anonymous rabbinic authors as a constituent part of their rhetorical program to distinguish themselves from the "other" and to demonstrate the legitimacy of their opinions, attitudes, and practices.[178]

In the context of explaining the use of the "other" as a foil in rabbinic multivocal narratives, the goal of this chapter is on the one hand, to show that the Rabbis chose foils from among any number of groups (as opposed to the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues who primarily created foils out of Jewish characters) based on the topic they wanted to discuss (in this

identifies the narrator of the story as an individual rabbi. Rabbis are presumably meant to be taken as reliable narrators. However, these rabbinic narrators often tell stories about earlier rabbis in order to support their own previously stated opinion. The narrator thus has a vested interest in the outcome of the story. His objectivity is thereby compromised. In some instances rabbis tell stories in which they themselves are the protagonist, making their viewpoint even more subjective. For instance, in Erubin 4:4, R. Judah rules that it is permissible to enter a city on the Sabbath if one unwittingly encamped nearby on the eve of the Sabbath. R. Judah argues with R. Meir who forbids such an entry. R. Judah proceeds to narrate a story about R. Tarfon in which R. Tarfon entered a city under exactly such circumstances. Similarly, in Sukkah 2:1, R. Judah tells a story involving his own actions in order to back up his position that it permissible to sleep under a bed in a sukkah. In both of these cases, we cannot help but wonder if and how R. Judah's bias colors his account."

[177] See Mira Balberg, "The Emperor's Daughter's New Skin: Bodily Otherness and Self-Identity in the Dialogues of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania and the Emperor's Daughter," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19.3 (2012): 182.

[178] See Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, 192 regarding the anonymous rabbinic editor's choice of rabbinic opinions in the Mishnah to reflect his own attitude: "In the Mishnah an anonymous formulation (*setam*) is a sign of authority. The more a mishnah lacks attributions, the greater the authority. The authority of an anonymous mishnah exceeds that of a mishnah stating "the Sages say" or "these are the words of the Sages," and the authority of these formulations exceeds that of an individual opinion. The editor selected these formulations, and he expressed his legal judgment by the way he quoted the opinions, whether anonymous or attributed, and whether attributed to an individual or to the majority. This was the editor's major contribution to the Mishnah, in addition to the choice of topics, which he apparently was responsible for selecting to include or omit. When the editor was unable to decide the law and quoted two individual opinions, the law was decided by recourse to principles of adjudication (kelalim), such as when R. Meir and R. Yehudah disagree, the law follows R. Yehudah. These principles also helped the student determine the law in cases where the Mishnah contradicts itself."

case on various aspects on idols and idolatry), and, on the other hand, to discuss the role of the foil in certain rabbinic dialectical narratives on idols and idolatry where two or more interlocutors are portrayed to engage in discussions. In particular, I argue that depending on the context of the rabbinic dialogues, the foil can be anyone—a non-rabbinic, or a non-Jewish "other," or even another Rabbi—and that for the anonymous rabbinic authors the foil is instrumental to discuss rabbinic views, on idols (for example in this chapter), among other topics. Although Christine Hayes in her list of internal others has not included Rabbis who hold another opinion from the opinion the anonymous rabbinic editors have sided with or who are used by these editors to bolster the opinion they want to promote, I argue that in the context of the deployment of "other" interlocutors as foils, the internal "other" can also include a Rabbi who is portrayed to hold another opinion from the opinion the anonymous rabbinic editor seems to side with or to be sympathetic to and whose stance helps to highlight the stance of the Rabbis that the anonymous rabbinic editor(s) want(s) to underscore.[179]

To examine the rabbinic choice of the foil from among any number of groups, as well as the use of the foil by the Rabbis as a literary device to demarcate (their) views and to argue for the legitimacy of their opinions, I will analyze three dialectical discussions on idols in m. Avodah Zarah 4:7, m. Avodah Zarah 3:4, and Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12. These three excerpts pertain to the following topics: 1) The idolater foil: rabbinic perplexment on the pervasiveness of idolatry; 2) The gentile foil: living in an idolatrous world but not being part of it; and 3) The rabbinic foil: foiling from inside to side with the preferable stance towards idolatry. Through analysis of these subtopics, I will examine how the anonymous rabbinic authors used as foils members from

[179] Christine Hayes, "The "Other" in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 248.

different groups—even another Rabbi—based on the context, topic, or issue they wanted to address in order to express and discuss opinions otherwise marginal to the majority rabbinic system and thus to distinguish between the two interlocutors' views, making explicit with whom they sided.

In the next section, as a first case study, I examine the use of the idolater foil in dialectical discussions that reflect a rabbinic perplexment on the pervasiveness of idolatry.

The Idolater Foil to the Rabbis: Pervasiveness of Idolatry and Rabbinic Perplexment

In the rabbinic discussions in m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 between Rabbis and "other" interlocutors on the existence of idols and the subsequent pervasiveness of idolatry, the rabbinic interlocutors are depicted as perplexed by this situation while their foil interlocutor is depicted to challenge them by reminding them of the pervasiveness of idols and the idolatrous environment in which the Rabbis lived. In this section in which the dialogue describes a discussion between Rabbis and gentiles on idols and idolatry, I refer to the "other" interlocutor as the "idolater foil" instead of the "gentile foil" to distinguish between the gentile as religious other and the gentile as an ethnic other, following Hayes's list of external others.[180] In the narrative I examine here, while the idolater foil appears to challenge the rabbinic notions of monotheism and he is portrayed as triumphant, the idolater foil becomes a tool at the hands of the anonymous rabbinic editor and is used to match the topic of the discussion, helping him to present the rabbinic response towards idols and safeguard it as a legitimate one.

According to m. Avodah Zarah 4:7,

[180] Hayes, "The "Other" in Rabbinic Literature," 244-8. In m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 where the discussion between the elders and the gentiles is on idols and the prevalence of idolatry, the gentiles can be identified as religious others. The topic and content of a discussion seem to determine the taxonomization of a gentile as an ethnic or a religious other.

> *They asked the elders in Rome:* If he [God] is not content with *Avodah Zarah*, [then] for what reason does he not abolish it?
> *They [the elders] said to them [the idolaters]:* If they would worship for a thing which the world does not need, he [i.e. God] would destroy it. But, behold, they worship the sun, and the moon, and the stars. Should his world be lost because of the fools?"
> *They [the idolaters] said to them [the elders]:* If so, should he [God] not destroy the thing that the world does not need and he should preserve the thing that the world needs?
> *And they [the elders] said to them [the idolaters]:* [Then] we [i.e. the Rabbis] may also encourage their [i.e. the idolaters'] deeds of those [things] and they will say, Know that they are gods for, behold, these [gods] he did not destroy them.

In M. Avodah Zarah 4:7[181] the rabbinic author narrates a story of a conversation between the elders of Rome (maybe a reference to Rabbis) and some unnamed persons (presumably idolaters) who appear as foils to their rabbinic interlocutors by posing before them a conundrum on the pervasiveness of idols. At first, the unnamed discussants raise the issue of God's weakness to eradicate idolatry and they are portrayed to inquire from the elders in Rome about the reason why God does not abolish (מבטלה) idolatry.[182] These anonymous discussants' question poses not merely the issue of the ubiquitous presence of idolatry, but it goes deeper to imply God's inactivity towards it, to say the least. In the context of the topic at hand these anonymous discussants[183] are

---

[181] M. Avodah Zarah 4:7 (MS Kaufmann A 50):

שאלו את הזקינים ברומי. אם אין רצ(י)[ו]נו בעבודה–זרה, מפני מה אינו מבטלה.
אמרו להן. אילו לְדָבָר שאין צורך () [ה]עולם בו היו עובדין היה מבטלו. הרי אלו עובדין לחמה וללבנה ולכוכבים. יאבד עולמו מפני השוטין.
אמרו להם. אם כן יאבד דבר שאין צורך (ל)[ה]עולם בו ויקיים דבר שצורך ()[ה]עולם בו.
(וי)אמרו להן. אף אנו מחזקין ידי עובדיהם שלאילו ויאמרו+ ת–דעו שהן אלוהות. שהרי אילו לא בטל[ו].

Rabbinic expositions to m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 are found in y. Avodah Zarah 4:7, in b. Avodah Zarah 54b-55a, and Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, *Bahodesh* ch. 6 on Ex. 20:3-6, Lauterbach edition.

[182] M. Avodah Zarah 4:7 (MS Kaufmann A 50):

שאלו את הזקינים ברומי. אם אין רצ(י)[ו]נו בעבודה–זרה, מפני מה אינו מבטלה?

[183] In the parallel text in b. Avodah Zarah 54b (MS Munich 95) the elders' interlocutors are identified as philosophers (פלוספוסין): "The sages taught: The philosophers asked the elders in Rome…"

ת"ר שאלו פלוספוסין את הזקני' ברומי .

presented as foils to their rabbinic interlocutors by being depicted to initiate a challenge for the Rabbis' discussion on a convoluted subject that (as we will see below from the way the Rabbis are presented to respond to it) will prove as awkward for them as it can get.

The insinuating observation (made through the idolater foil) of God's inactivity to the prevalence of idols meets the response of the Rabbis who offer their explanation on the matter within the parameters of the situation that they also seem to recognize by not objecting to their interlocutors' remark. The making of objects that are indispensable for the continuous existence of the cosmos as receptacles of adoration poses a conundrum that seemingly leads to the prevalence of idolatry.[184] The elders of Rome respond to their interlocutors that, "If they would worship (עובדין) for a thing (לְדָבָר) which the world does not need, he [i.e. God] would destroy it. But, behold, they worship (עובדין) the sun, and the moon, and the stars. Should his world be lost because of the fools?"[185] The elders appear to be aware of the idolatrous adoration of objects that are essential for human existence and explain that destroying objects such as the sun, the moon, and the rest of the heavenly bodies because they have become objects of humans' adoration would lead to the subsequent destruction of the world. The elders seemingly agree with the idolaters' initial implication of God's inability to eradicate idolatry. At first glance, although their response seems to validate the argument of their idolater foil, however, they point not so much to God's inability but to God's active choice to not take radical steps. The rabbinic author has the idolaters continue their attack against their interlocutors by presenting them to suggest the partial destruction of

[184] We see here a transition from human-made objects, like statues and images, to natural entities that are worshipped as idols.

[185] M. Avodah Zarah 4:7 (MS Kaufmann A 50):

אמרו להן. אילו לדבר שאין צורך () [ה]עולם בו היו עובדין, היה מבטלו. הרי אלו עובדין לחמה וללבנה ולכוכבים. יאבד עולמו מפני השוטין.

idolatry. They are, thus, presented by the rabbinic author to suggest to the Rabbis that God could eradicate those idols whose destruction would not bring about fatal consequences on the world.

The idolaters, as foils, seem to challenge the Rabbis further by being presented to raise another plausible question, based on everyday observation and, thus, they appear to pose the conundrum of God's inability to eradicate idolatry altogether. As foils, the idolaters do pressure for a rabbinic response to the matter which does not seem to have been answered by the Rabbis' previous reply. The elders' subsequent rejoinder to the new challenge by arguing for God's purposeful inactivity against idolatry does not resolve the issue in m. Avodah Zarah 4:7. They explain that if God abolished only those idols that were not important for the world "[then] we [i.e. the Rabbis] may also encourage their [i.e. the idolaters'] deeds of those [things] and they will say, Know that they are gods for, behold, these [gods] he did not destroy them."[186] The irresolution of this quandary stems from the fact that from the Rabbis' perspective the selective destruction of idols would complicate rather than solve things, for it would enhance the idolaters' belief that the objects that were not destroyed were gods indeed, and thus divine. At the end, the elders are portrayed to address only partially the matter of the existence of idolatry. While the idolater foil is presented by the anonymous editor to describe a reality, that of the pervasiveness of idolatry, and to come out as triumphant from the discussion with the Rabbis, the elders are presented to attempt to address this vexed situation with responses that solve the problem of God's stance towards idols but not that of the prevalence of idolatry.[187]

---

[186] M. Avodah Zarah 4:7 (MS Kaufmann A 50):

אמרו להם. אם כן, יאבד דבר שאין צורך (ל)[ה]עולם בו ויקיים דבר שצורך ()[ה]עולם בו. (וי)אמרו להן. אף אנו מחזקין ידי עובדיהם שלאילו שלאילו ויאמרו+ ת–דעו שהן אלוהות. שהרי אילו לא בטל[ו].

[187] Whereas the issue in m. Avodah Zarah remains unresolved, the Rabbis in y. Avodah Zarah 5:7 and in b. Avodah Zarah 54b seem to provide a resolution. In y. Avodah Zarah 4:7, 44a (MS Leiden, Scaliger 3), R. Nahman argues for

The question that one may ask is for what reason the anonymous rabbinic editor presents the idolaters as prevailing in their discussions and the elders as unable to provide convincing answers to their interlocutors. The answer might be in the deployment of the "other" interlocutor as a foil. The anonymous rabbinic author seems to use the idolater as a foil to underline a situation where idolatry was commonplace at the time in order to help the Rabbis formulate their reaction to this environment and then present it as a suitable approach. We may see the relationship between the idolater foil and the elders and the former's importance for the latter in how the observation of a situation leads the elders to propose the adoption of a certain attitude towards idols. Moshe Halbertal explains the elders' answer from the Mishnah as an admission that "a total war with

---

the abolishment of idolatry: "R. Nahman [said] in the name of R. Mana: Idolatry is destined to come and spit in the face of idolaters and put them to shame and he shall abolish it from the world."

ר' נחמן בשם ר' מנא. עתידה ע"ז להיות באה ורוקקת בפני עובדיה ומביישתן ובטילה מן העולם.

In b. Avodah Zarah 54b (MS Munich 95), the stam does not say anything against the abolishment of idolatry but inveighs against the idolaters and writes that according to the sages those who engaged in idolatry will be punished in the future: "Shall he destroy the world because of fools? But rather, the world follows its laws and the fools who sinned are destined to receive the judgment."

יאבד את העול' העול' מפני השוטים אל' עול' במנהגו נוהג שוטי' שקלקלו עתידין ליתן הדין.

Later on, in the discussion between Rabban Gamliel and a philosopher in the same sugya, b. Avodah Zarah 54b that discusses m. Avodah Zarah 4:7, Rabban Gamliel makes an analogy between dead people and the idols to justify why God does not destroy idols. He uses the parable of the king who wages a war against the living and not against the dead to argue that God similarly did not wage a war against the idols because they were dead. However, at the end of this sugya, the issue still remains unresolved. As Rachel Rafael Neis has argued, the same analogy between idolatry and dead people appears already in tannaitic sources, in particular in Mekhilta *Bahodesh* 6. Neis explains that in *Mekhilta Bahodesh* 6 on Exodus 20:5, Rabban Gamliel's response (to his opponent who claimed the usefulness of idols) that a king wages war against the living and not against the dead aims to "designate idolatrous divine images as lifeless, passive things (or "objects"), rather than as living things, actors, and agents." Rachel Neis, "Religious Lives of Image-Things. Avodah Zarah and Rabbis in Late Antiquity," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 17.1 (2016): 102. Similarly, in *Mekhilta Piska* 13 on Exodus 12:29-30 (the rabbinic interpretation of the plague of the killing of the firstborns in Egypt) Neis explains that "The Palestinian Tannaim use the biblical story of the tenth plague as an opportunity to imagine divine destruction of *avodah zarah*" and continues noting that "The juxtaposition of these two "deaths"—of human and image—vividly parallels the termination of human life and the rendering of the body into a lifeless and decomposing things and the destruction (or maltreatment and abuse) of ancestor images, which are treated as somehow living by the descendants, and hence in need of physical destruction." Neis, "Religious Lives of Image-Things," 100-1.

idolatry is self-defeating, since the sun, the moon and the planets are pagan symbols."[188] And he further states that the rejection on the part of the elders of the possibility for God to destroy the idolatrous objects whose destruction does not pose any threat to the cosmos is based on the assumption that such a semi-destructive action would reinforce the idolaters' conviction that idolatry is invincible.[189] According to Halbertal, the Mishnah creates a neutral space for rabbinic toleration of idolatry by avoiding "either of two alternative options: a declaration of open and total war until the mixed cities have been abolished; or a complete withdrawal and maximum reduction of the points of friction and contact."[190] In other words, it was preferable for the elders to tolerate the situation of idolatry rather than to engage in a war that could be destructive for them. The rabbinic response, nevertheless, remains enigmatic and from it one may see the Rabbis' perplexity regarding the pervasiveness of idols. However, the use of the idolater foil by the rabbinic author to address the issue of the commonness of idolatry and the pressure the former is presented to

[188] Moshe Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy: Jews and Pagans in the Mishnah," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 170.

[189] Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy," 170.

[190] Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy," 171. Yair Furstenberg, "The Rabbinic View of Idolatry and the Roman Political Conception of Divinity," *The Journal of Religion* 90.3 (2010): 364, on the other hand, examines this conundrum from the perspective of the practice of *damnatio memoriae* or nullification according to which the new emperor nullifies the memory of his predecessor to solidify his own authority which process would require the collaboration of the people. On part of the sages, their response suggests "limitations to God's power; His standing is totally dependent upon His subjects." As Furstenberg observes, knowing the practice of *damnatio memoriae* allows to understand the rabbinic concept of the nullification of idolatry. However, in order for the nullification of idolatry to take place, it is important that this should be initiated from the gentiles who engage in it; originating from the Jews would have no impact "in a world in which statues and likenesses abound; [and] it would also have no meaning in the context of Roman rule" (366). And this is how the inability of God, as described in the Mishnah, is explained. Furstenberg reveals this procedure eloquently: "This way of thinking is based not only on an attempt to reconstruct (or, alternatively, to artificially define) the hidden feelings of the gentile who performs the act; rather, it is taken directly from the political model in which the status of the emperor, and thus also that of the gods, is determined. The authority to infer status upon the ruler, or to deny it, lies in the hands of his subjects alone, in accordance with defined procedures. This act, then, which is formative of the relationship between ruler and subjects, cannot at all be partaken in by those who stand outside of the relevant political framework. As such, when it comes to the negation of the divine status of the ruler, there is no meaning to the procedure when performed by a person who does not take part in that political system." See Furstenberg, "The Rabbinic View of Idolatry," 365-6.

exercise on the latter, allowed him to construct the rabbinic stance that tolerating idolatry was a legitimate behavior at the time.[191]

As the foil to their rabbinic discussants, the idolaters' conundrum brings to the fore what for some Rabbis would constitute a proper attitude toward idols that would suggest neither an open war, nor an involvement with them, but a necessary tolerance that would not mean engagement with idolatry. The purposeful choice of idolaters as foils to the rabbinic figures allows the rabbinic author of the story to discuss openly his perplexment regarding the pervasiveness of idolatry and to present through the foil the proper rabbinic response to it. The idolater foil becomes the instrument in the hands of the anonymous rabbinic author to grasp the nettle regarding the issue of the prevalence of idolatry and to offer the rabbinic resolution to the problem even if this is addressed partially.

The Gentile Foil to the Rabbis: Living in an Idolatrous World but not Being Part of It

In another rabbinic dialogue in m. Avodah Zarah 3:4, a very scrutinized dialectical narrative that describes an encounter between Rabban Gamliel and a certain Paraklos son of Pelaslos and discusses the interaction of Rabbis with an idolatrous culture, the foil to the rabbinic

[191] In a more recent reading of the story which Amit Gvaryahu, "A New Reading of the Three Dialogues in Mishnah Avodah Zarah," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19 (2012): 207-229 considers along with m. Avodah Zarah 2:5 and 3:4 to examine the "construction and reduction" (208) of Mishnah Avodah Zarah as a whole, he explains that whereas *bitul* or the laws of nullification which prohibit the use and the derivation of benefit from idols and idolatry replaced the biblical obligation for the destruction of idols, m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 suggests that only the destruction of the world will resolve the issue of idolatry and since "this is not desirable, idolatry is portrayed not as a temporary reality, but rather as inherent in the very existence of the world" (224). It appears that *bitul* or nullification of an idol by losing its status is not good enough, and only the destruction of the world can really solve the problem of the commonness of idolatry. However, as Gvaryahu contends, m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 "explains that the existence of idols is actually a logical imperative and that God cannot do anything against it, further cementing the new reading of the imperative to destroy idols as a prohibition against using them, since destruction of individual idols is cosmically futile" (226). Again, it still seems that the neutrality the Rabbis are trying to create is the desirable goal, and the foil gives them the opportunity to raise the issue of the extensiveness of idolatry, to express their desired solution (eradication of idolatry), and to come in terms with the realization that tolerance was the best solution for the time.

interlocutor is a gentile as an ethnic other,[192] as opposed to the story in m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 where the idolaters-foil to the Rabbis were gentiles as religious others. In m. Avodah Zarah 3:4, Paraklos son of Pelaslos does not discuss idol worship nor does he bring up the topic of the existence of idols. Rather, he is depicted to cast doubt upon his rabbinic interlocutor's presence at a Roman bathhouse—a hallmark of gentile culture and social hub.[193] The gentile foil according to (his understanding of) Deuteronomy 18:13 is portrayed to consider forbidden any rabbinic association with such an edifice, for such an activity in or an association with such a building seems to suggest a distinction between idolaters as non-Israelites (namely gentiles as ethnic others) and the Rabbis. At the end, in m. Avodah Zarah 3:4, the gentile foil appears to contribute to the anonymous editor's projection of what might have constituted a legitimate rabbinic attitude in an idolatrous culture and rabbinic interaction with aspects of such an idolatrous cultural environment.

As the narrative goes, the rabbinic author of m. Avodah Zarah 3:4 has a certain Paraklos son of Pelaslos[194] engage in a conversation with Rabban Gamliel in a bathhouse in Akko:

> *Paraklos the son of Pelaslos asked Rabban Gamliel in Akko, while he was bathing in the bathhouse of Aphrodite; He said to him:* It is written in your [*plural*] Torah: 'Let nothing that has been doomed stick to your hand.'[195] For what reason are you bathing in the bathhouse of Aphrodite?
> *He [Rabban Gamliel] said to him [Paraklos son of Philosopher]:* One does not respond in the bathhouse.

---

[192] Hayes, "The "Other" in Rabbinic Literature," 245. According to Hayes, the gentile as an ethnic other "is merely a non-Israelite or *goy* (member of a non-Israelite nation) to whom the laws of the Mosaic covenant do not apply." Ibid.

[193] For the importance of baths in the Roman world as social and cultural institutions see Garrett G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), in particular the "Introduction," 1-223; and Fikret Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5-40, 181-99.

[194] For the transliteration of the name "פַּרְקְלוֹס בֶּן פְּלַסְלוֹס" I used the reading by Rachel Rafael Neis "Paraklos the son of Pelaslos" from their monograph, Rachel Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 197, in which they explain that the vocalization is according to the MS. Kaufmann A 50.

[195] Deut 13:18. "Let nothing that has been doomed to stick to your hand, in order that the Lord may turn His blazing anger and show you compassion, and in the His compassion increase you as He promised your fathers on oath."

> *And when he went out, he [Rabban Gamliel] said to him [Paraklos son of Philosopher]:* I did not come to her border (בגבולה); she came to my border (בגבולי). One does not say: "let us make a bathhouse a dwelling (נוי) for Aphrodite," but says: "let us make Aphrodite an ornament (נוי) for the bathhouse." Another reason: If they gave you a lot of money, would you enter to your *Avodah Zarah* naked, and polluted (ובעל קרי), and urinating (ומשתין) before her [*the statue of Aphrodite*]? And this [*statue of Aphrodite*] stands upon the gutter and all the people urinate before her [*the statue of Aphrodite*]. It is stated only, "their gods." That which one applies under the category of god, it is forbidden. And that which one does not apply under the category of god, is allowed.[196]

The rabbinic dialogue opens with the author's portrayal of a gentile "other" as a foil to Rabban Gamliel. Paraklos initiates the discussion with Rabban Gamliel, addressing him with a question that insinuates his puzzlement, admonition, or even hypocritical stance on part of Rabban Gamliel due to the latter's being at the bathhouse of Aphrodite. Paraklos's question is indicative of its derisive tone: "Paraklos the son of Pelaslos asked Rabban Gamliel in Akko, while he was bathing in the bathhouse of Aphrodite; He said to him: It is written in your [*plural*] Torah: 'Let nothing that has been doomed stick to your hand.'[197] For what reason are you bathing in the bathhouse of Aphrodite?" Whereas for Paraklos the bathhouse, an ancient "institution" of daily life, seems an appropriate place to be at for his everyday personal care, he does not seem to think the same when it comes to Rabban Gamliel's presence in it.

---

[196] M. Avodah Zarah 3:4 (MS Kaufmann A 50):

שאל פָּרַקְלוֹס בן פְּלַסְלוֹס את רבן גמליא׳ בעכו, שהיה רוחץ במרחץ של אפרודיטי. אמ׳ לו: כתוב בתורתכם, ’ולא ידבק בידך מאומה מן החרם‘. מפני מה אתה רוחץ במרחץ של אפרודיטי.
אמ׳ לו: אין משיבין במ?ר?חץ.
וכשיצא, אמר לו: אני לא באתי בגבולה, היא באת בגבולי. אין או׳. נעשה מרחץ לאפרודיטי. אלא נעשה היא אפרודיטי נוי למרחץ. דב׳–אחר. אם נותנין לך ממון הרבה אתה נכנס לעבודה–זרה שלך ערום ובעל קרי ומשתין בפניה. [ו]זו עומדת על הביב וכל העם משתינין בפניה. לא נאמר אלא ’אל(?ה?)[ה]יהן‘. את שהוא נוהג מִשֶּׁם אלוה, אסור(). [ו]את שאינו נוהג מִשֶּׁם אלוה מותר:

The story appears in the Jerusalem Talmud, y. Avodah Zarah 3:4 and the Babylonian Talmud, b. Avodah Zarah 44b. In the Jerusalem Talmud, the discussion of the Rabbis is on whether one is allowed to discuss matters of the law in the bathhouse or not. In the Babylonian Talmud the discussion between the Rabbis is on whether the answer that Rabban Gamliel gave to his gentile interlocutor was deceptive or not.

[197] Deut 13:18.

The anonymous rabbinic author of the dialectical narrative presents the gentile "other" to be surprised at the sight of Rabban Gamliel in the same building with him and, to demonstrate Paraklos's puzzlement for such an encounter in a Roman bathhouse, the rabbinic author has Paraklos inquire from Rabban Gamliel with a scoffing tone to explain how he can reconcile the biblical prohibition from the book of Deuteronomy 18:13 that warns "Let nothing that has been doomed stick to your hand"[198] with him being in a bathhouse. The biblical verse is part of a biblical instruction given to the Israelites by God on how to act in the case some of their co-religionists engaged in idolatry after an exhortation from fellow-Israelites. In the biblical context, the Israelites are instructed to destroy not only the city whose inhabitants engaged in idolatry but also its inhabitants, the cattle, and spoil from which it is prohibited to retain any item.[199] By having Paraklos cite Deut 13:18 in the context of Rabban Gamliel's presence in a Roman bathhouse, the rabbinic author outlines the gentile "other" as the foil who underlines a discrepancy between a "forbidden" place and a person's identity, in this case the Roman bathhouse and Gamliel's rabbinic affiliation. The gentile foil is presented to pinpoint the contrariety between a biblical prohibition

[198] Deut 13:13-19 (in bold Deut 13:18). "If you hear it said, of one of the towns that the Lord your God is giving you to dwell in, that some scoundrels from among you have gone and subverted the inhabitants of their town saying, "Come let us worship other gods"—whom you have not experienced—you shall investigate and inquire and interrogate thoroughly. If it is true, the fact is established—that abhorrent thing was perpetrated in your midst—put the inhabitants of that town to the sword and put its cattle to the sword. Doom it and all that is in it to destruction: gather all its spoil into the open square, and burn the town and all its spoil as a holocaust to the Lord your God. and it shall remain an everlasting ruin, never to be rebuilt. **Let nothing that has been doomed to stick to your hand, in order that the Lord may turn His blazing anger and show you compassion, and in the His compassion increase you as He promised your fathers on oath—**for you will be heeding the Lord your God, obeying all His commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, doing what is right in the sight of the Lord your God."

[199] Seth Schwartz provides an overview of rabbinic uses of Deut 12:8 in "Tosefta (Avodah Zarah 3[4]:19)," "Tosefta Avodah Zarah 6:10," and "Sifre Deuteronomy (ed. Finkelstein-Horowitz, pisqa 96, page 157)" to argue that in these contexts "the rabbis used Dt 13:18 as a source for laws about *herem* (in their terms, prohibition of benefit, or of contact) in general. And he concludes that Paraklos uses this verse to "demonstrate the impropriety of Rabban Gamliel's behavior… Proklos is made to say, this bath is *herem*, which means that whether or not you destroy it, you may not use it…" Seth Schwartz, "Gamaliel in Aphrodite's Bath: Palestinian Judaism and Urban Culture in the Third and Fourth Centuries" in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer, vol. 1 (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 1998), 212. The foil here, Paraklos, allows Rabban Gamliel to make the case that he may use the bathhouse of Aphrodite, as I show below.

and Rabban Gamliel's presence at a space that is associated with idolatrous culture and thus prohibited on account of Deut 13:18 which is used to prepare the rabbinic response towards this type of "other."

Paraklos's challenge seems to help the rabbinic author to unfold his stance on the rabbinic accessibility and interaction with institutions or buildings associated with polytheism and the general idolatrous culture. Rabban Gamliel's response unfolds gradually, commencing with differentiating between cultic and non-cultic purposes of an edifice on the account of whether a building was built to house an idol or vice versa. According to the text: "He [*Rabban Gamliel*] said to him [*Paraklos son of Pelaslos*]: One does not respond in the bathhouse. And when he went out, he [*Rabban Gamliel*] said to him [*Paraklos son of Pelaslos*]: I did not come to her border (בגבולה); she came to my border (בגבולי). One does not say: "let us make a bathhouse a dwelling (נוי) for Aphrodite," but says: "let us make Aphrodite an ornament (נוי) for the bathhouse."" In Paraklos's insinuation that Rabban Gamliel is seen in a place that is prohibited by the biblical law due to its association with idolatry, Rabban Gamliel is presented to respond with an analysis of the relationship between three-dimensional statues and the identity of the space at which they are located.[200] To that end, according to the text, an idol in the space of the bathhouse becomes part of the decoration of the edifice and is deprived of divinity that it could have assumed had it been in a different space of cultic identity, namely a pagan temple. However, as Richard Kalmin explains, it was not unusual for idol worship to be taking place in bathhouses despite the story's different claim; as well as it was also known in the Greco-Roman world the existence of statues that operated

[200] Schwartz, "Gamaliel in Aphrodite's Bath," 1:213 explains that the refusal of Rabban Gamliel to respond a question based on the Torah designates the bathhouse as a place deprived of cultic character, arguing convincingly that "This refusal foreshadows the Mishnah's argument that the bath, with its naked, urinating patrons, is unsuitable for religious activities, like pagan sacrifice and Torah-study."

as cultic objects and others that were not part of the cultic worship.[201] Nevertheless, the certainty with which the anonymous rabbinic author has Rabban Gamliel retort that the statue of Aphrodite functioned in a decorative and not in a cultic way suggests that in the context of the story the editor had in mind statues that had lost their status as cultic objects.[202] What we see, according to Halbertal, is a rabbinic effort to "redescribe the bath as a neutral space in spite of the presence of a pagan symbol in the midst, thus allowing Rabban Gamliel to use the bath."[203] Halbertal further distinguishes between the cultic and the aesthetic qualities of objects to emphasize the importance of the distinction "in order to create a neutral space between pagans and Jews and to allow for a broader interaction in that space."[204]

Taking these parameters into consideration, we may understand Rabban Gamliel's answer that the bath is not the domain of Aphrodite to which he intruded but it is her statue, which was used for decorative purposes, that intruded to his domain, allowing him, thus, to make use of the edifice and its services.[205] Bathing in Aphrodite's bath before her statue does not translate into acceptance of the legitimacy of idolatry or subscription to Aphrodite's cultic adoration.[206] The rabbinic author seems to attempt to differentiate between an edifice used for religious purposes and one that is an integral part of daily life on the basis of the combination between functionality

---

[201] Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 106.

[202] Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, 106.

[203] Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy," 166.

[204] Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy," 167.

[205] Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy," 167. In Gvaryahu's reading of the same dialogue, the story introduces a more lenient stance to idolatry and contact with idols in contradistinction to the rest of the tractate Mishnah Avodah Zarah, so much so that one would have to engage formally with idol worship, as the Mishnah delineates it, in order to really transgress the laws against idolatry. Gvaryahu, "A New Reading of the Three Dialogues in Mishnah Avodah Zarah," 220, 226.

[206] Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy,"167.

or purpose of a space and the nature of its decoration, cultic or non-cultic, preparing the ground to support the idea of Rabbis living in an idolatrous world without being part of it.[207]

For the rabbinic author, the place of a deity's statue, in this case of a goddess, and the use which it serves appear to determine its purported divine status. As the author mentions, denigrating an idol can be a determinant of the cultic character of the building in which it is located. In this regard, we may see Rabban Gamliel's additional (supportive to his first argument) reply to his gentile foil interlocutor as part of the author's agenda to argue for the Rabbis' everyday involvement in a society characterized by the pervasiveness of images and statues without engaging in idolatry when he explains: "Another reason: If they give you a lot of money, you would not enter to your *Avodah Zarah* naked, and polluted (ובעל קרי), and urinating (ומשתין) before her [*the statue of Aphrodite*]. And this [*statue of Aphrodite*] stands upon the gutter and all of the people urinate before her [*the statue of Aphrodite*]." Rabban Gamliel further supports the association of the seeming divinity of an idol with the place at which it is found. He explains that had the bathhouse been erected to house the statue of Aphrodite, this would entail that the bathhouse would be considered a sacred place and thus a building of cultic and religious importance forbidding anyone to engage in certain bodily cleansing procedures such as urinating and defecating even if one had been given a monetary incentive. However, the fact that the bathhouse as it is serves a particular function, which can be deduced by how its attendants use it,

[207] It seems that differentiating between erecting a space for a statue—this makes the statue a cultic object—and making a statue for a space—the statue has an aesthetic value rendering the space permittable for access—hints to the fact that for the rabbinic author of the story the divinity/cultic value of statues was concomitant with the space in which they were located. In this case, Rabban Gamliel's response, according to which it was not the bathhouse that was erected for Aphrodite—in which case the edifice would be a sacred place—but Aphrodite's statue that was casted to decorate the bathhouse, indicates that, to the rabbinic author, the bathhouse is deprived of any cultic character, and that the statue has lost its ritual function as an object of worship. Aphrodite's statue is treated without the proper respect that would allow it to function in ritualistic terms.

witnesses, according to Rabban Gamliel as the author has him explain, the place's lack of sanctity and by extension Aphrodite's statue's lack of divinity since it is placed on the opening of a gutter.

At the same time, in the context of this story, not only the purpose of a place in which a statue is found but also an idol's denigration can also determine its status as a deity. Rabban Gamliel has recourse to Deut 12:3 to argue for the status of Aphrodite's statue in the bathhouse when he says ""It is stated only, "their gods." That which one applies under the category of god, it is forbidden. And that which one does not apply under the category of god, is allowed."[208] Deut 12:3 orders the Israelites upon their entrance into the land of Canaan to destroy those places in which idols were worshipped as gods. Taking this story as a paradigmatic example of how one should behave towards idols, the author depicts Rabban Gamliel to argue that his presence in Aphrodite's bath is legitimate, for this place was not a forbidden area since the statue of Aphrodite was not considered a cultic idol based on the fact that those who would go to the bathhouse did not treat it as such. Yair Furstenberg sees in this answer a representation of the "worldview of the gentile and his attitude toward his gods, [which] is actually based on a familiarity with the same pagan outlook that lies behind the law of nullification of idolatry."[209] This suggests that the status

[208] Deut 12:3. "Tear down their altars, smash their pillars, put their sacred posts to the fire, and cut down the images of their gods, obliterating their name from that site."

[209] Furstenberg, "The Rabbinic View of Idolatry," 358-9. Furstenberg discusses this legal innovation, as he calls it, in the Mishnah, in his analysis of the difference between the Bible and Mishnah Avodah Zarah on idolatry on the basis of "the theological-political discourse of the Greco-Roman world in which the rabbis were operating." Idem, 336. The law of nullification renders an idol permittable for someone to gain benefit from it and raises the question of why the Rabbis would have to have its status annulled in order for them to be able to use an idolatrous object without the suspicion or accusation of engaging in idolatry. The Mishnah itself regulates how an idolatrous object is nullified with the act of nullification to render it permissible for use through certain modifications on the object. The nullification of the idolatrous object must come from the pagan worshipper. Furstenberg explains that when the gentile nullifies idolatry, then the prohibition against a Jew is taken away. See Idem, 338-9 n. 6: "A comprehensive survey of the Talmudic sources relating to the nullification of idolatry (bittul 'avodah zarah), including a description of the development and adaptations of these laws, can be found in Gerald Blidstein, "Nullification of Idolatry in Rabbinic Law," in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 41–42 (1973–74): 1–44." M. Avodah Zara 3:9-4:5 offers different ways of nullifying an idol. In all these cases, an idol through certain acts loses its status of divinity, showing that divinity is not fixed or inherent to the ritual object but it is affixed.

of an idol as god depended on the behavior of the viewer towards it and Rabban Gamliel's final response seems to mirror "the pagan worldview, which sees the status of the gods as dependent upon the appreciation and attitude of the worshipper."[210] The attendants of the bathhouse did not worship the statue of Aphrodite as a cultic object; and since it was those who did not treat it as a deity then it had lost its status, rendering the bathhouse a permissible place for Rabban Gamliel.

In this narrative, it appears that the anonymous rabbinic editor uses Paraklos as the gentile foil to Rabban Gamliel to underline the rabbinic response and attitude to a culture of idols and idolatry that would allow for a rabbinic use of aspects of gentile culture under certain circumstances. In that respect, Rachel Rafael Neis's observation that this rabbinic dialectical narrative "serves as a general example of how Rabbis 'look back'" at symbols of Roman culture and how, by filtering these objects through the lens of the halakhically permitted or forbidden, they rabbinize them"[211] discloses and further buttresses the particular choice of a gentile "other" as the foil whom the rabbinic author uses specifically due to the subject matter of the topic at hand in order to justify a rabbinically legitimate way for living in an idolatrous world without being part of it. In the context of the discussions on the presence of Rabban Gamliel in a Roman bathhouse, having specifically a gentile foil as the Rabbi's interlocutor helps the rabbinic author to offer a rabbinic solution that could "resolve conflict with idolatry by classifying Aphrodite [both] as no idol in those particular circumstances" and as an idol "if worshipped by rabbinic standards" as

[210] Furstenberg, "The Rabbinic View of Idolatry," 360. In all, the story seems to suggest a connection between the divinity of a statue and the space in which it is located. Thus, the divinity of the idols was neither static nor permanent. Whereas the actions of idolaters may be indicative of depriving their gods of their divine status by not treating them as gods, as Furstenberg argues from the reading of Rabban Gamaliel's response and the information that Tertullian gives in his *Apology* (Furstenberg, "The Rabbinic View of Idolatry," 360 n. 58), this might have been the case periodically.

[211] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 198.

Neis correctly observes.[212] To that end, Hayes accurately argues that the Rabbis "negotiated a neutral space in which extensive commercial, business, and legal interactions – and even social contacts – between gentiles and halakhically observant Jews would occur" by "setting out required standards and precautionary criteria, constructing legal discussions and classifications";[213] for the story of Rabban Gamliel in the bathhouse of Aphrodite is an example of neutralization to allow "licit interactions"[214] where the gentile foil (as an ethnic other) seems to be the appropriate interlocutor in the context of the issue at hand, and for this reason he becomes instrumental in the process for the rabbinization of the statue of Aphrodite because he helps the author to argue for the Rabbis' use of the gentile culture for their benefit.[215]

The Rabbinic Foil: Foiling from Inside to Siding with the Preferred Stance

Looking at another example of foiling in rabbinic literature, we may see that a foil may not be only a non-Jewish "other" as we have examined so far. A foil may also be a rabbinic "other" who needs not necessarily be the "enemy" to the rabbinic interlocutor with whom the foil is portrayed to converse, but they can simply highlight the protagonist's position in the narrative

[212] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 200.

[213] Hayes, "The "Other" in Rabbinic Literature," 248.

[214] Hayes, "The "Other" in Rabbinic Literature," 247. See also Gvaryahu, "A New Reading of the Three Dialogues in Mishnah Avodah Zarah," 225 where he deploys m. Avodah Zarah 3:4 as one of the three dialogues in Mishnah Avodah Zarah (the other two are m. Avodah Zarah 2:5 and 4:7) that were added at a later date, and thus are at odds with the material that surrounds them but still in conversation with them. As I explained above, n. 209 on p. 96, m. Avodah Zarah 3:4 offers a lenient look at the laws of idolatry explaining "the laws concerning contact with idolatry to a point that one would be hard-pressed to actually transgress them without engaging in a formal act of worship as defined by the Mishnah" (226). Even in this reading offered by Gvaryahu, the gentile foil is instrumental for the rabbinic author to subvert the rigorous separation between gentiles and Jews that the Mishnah suggests, and to propose a more flexible framework for safe contacts under the imperatives of the Mishnah. Without the use of the foil as the interlocutor to the Rabbis the dynamics of the dialogue would be undermined, for the foil comprises the reference point for the anonymous rabbinic author to suggest more safe contact than it would be allowed.

[215] To that end, Seth Schwartz talks about the Rabbis' "modified rigorism" that allowed them to participate in the life of the cities by rejecting the cultic expressions of pagan culture and tolerating its non-ritualistic ones. Schwartz, "Gamaliel in Aphrodite's Bath," 1:217.

through contrast with their own stance or opinion on a topic. Rabbis appear as a foil to another Rabbi in a dialogue in Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12, an exegetical or halakhic midrash of Palestinian origin on the book of Deuteronomy that may be "best dated to the second half of the third century."[216] In this story, Rabban Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, R. Eleazar ben Azaria, and R. Akiva discuss the (apparent) reward of the gentiles in comparison to the punishment of the Jews:

> Once there were Rabban Gamliel, and Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaria, and Rabbi Akiva entering to Rome. They heard the sound of [the] din of a [large] city from Pitiolis[217] until one hundred and twenty mil. They started weeping and rabbi Akiva [started] laughing.
> *They [Rabbi Gamliel, and Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaria] said to him:* Akiva, for what reason [while] we are weeping, (and) you are laughing?
> *He said to them:* Why are you weeping?
> *They said to him:* And shall we not weep when the *goyim* idolaters who sacrifice to idols and who prostrate themselves to images dwell without trouble [and they are] at ease, while we the house of our God's footstool became aflame and a dwelling for the animals of the field?!
> *He said to them:* [It is] also for this reason [that] I laughed: If he [God] to those who anger [him] gave thus [much], all the more so [he will give] to the doers of his will.[218]

---

[216] Ben-Eliyahu, Cohn, and Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature*, 73. See also, Strack and Stemberger, "Sifre Deuteronomy," *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 270-3 for more detailed information on the work's manuscripts, printed editions, commentaries, translations, and origin.

[217] According to Finkelstein's commentary on Sifre Deuteronomy, *Pitiolis* is the city Puteoli, a port for ships that travel to Rome (נמל לספינות הבאות לרימי). S. Horovitz and Louis Finkelstein, *Sifre 'al Sefer Devarim: 'im Ḥilufe Girsaoṯ Ye-He'erot*. Bet ha-midrash le-rabanim ba-Ameriḳah, 1993 = Sifrei Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 [ed. Finkelstein, 94]. Finkelstein provides the alternative readings of the same word as it is found in other manuscripts. In his *Dictionary,* Jastrow has included the lemma פוטיולין (Putyolin) from which stems the corrupted version *Pitiolis*, in this case, and the name *Puteoli* is another corrupted version of the same word. Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (Judaica Treasure, 2004), 1140. Alan Appelbaum notes that Puteoli is the modern-day town of Pozzuoli which in antiquity it was an important port from the East to Rome and in which an important Jewish community resided. For Applebaum, rabbinic mention to the ancient port of Puteoli demonstrates awareness of sea route from Palestine to Rome. Alan Appelbaum, "R. Matthia ben Ḥeresh: The First European Rabbi?" in *The Faces of Torah: Studies in the Texts and Contexts of Ancient Judaism in Honor of Steven Fraade*, ed. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, Tzvi Novick, and Christine Hayes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 191-2. See also in the same article n. 30 where it mentions modern references regarding Puteoli: "Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 141; Peter Fibiger Bang, *The Roman Bazaar: A Comparative Study of Trade and Markets in a Tributary Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 122. Puteoli is mentioned elsewhere in rabbinic literature as on the way to Rome. See Sifre Deut. 43 and parallels (Gamaliel, Joshua, Elazar, and Akiva). When Josephus went to Rome early in his life, he landed at Puteoli. Josephus, Life 16.3." Appelbaum, "R. Matthia ben Ḥeresh," 192.

[218] Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 [ed. Finkelstein, 94-95]: The narrative in this context is part of the explanation of Deuteronomy 11:15 "And I shall give grass in your field to your beasts."

In constructing the image of the rabbinic foil, the anonymous editor of Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12[219] opens the dialectical narrative by demonstrating the main characters' contrasting attitudes and diverse positions on the topic of the narrative. He, thus, divides the four rabbinic interlocutors into two groups based on their reactions to the sound of human clatter from Rome. The account starts with a description of a scene, in which R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, R. Eleazar ben Azaria, and R. Akiva were entering to Rome (היו נכנסים לרומי) when they heard the sound of a multitude of people from that city from a distance of one hundred and twenty mil, the equivalent of sixty-eight miles.[220] Upon hearing this tumult, R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, R. Eleazar ben Azaria started weeping whereas R. Akiva burst out laughing.[221] The sound of the inhabitants of Rome from a distance as far as sixty-eight miles—a hyperbolic statement whose purpose is to introduce the Rabbis' take on the event of hearing the *din of a* [*large*] *city'* (קול המיה של מדינה)—instigates mixed

---

וכבר היו רבן גמליאל ורבי יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי עקיבה נכנסים לרומי מפיטיוליס שמעו קול המיה של מדינה עד מא ה ועשרים מיל התחילו הם בוכים ורבי עקיבה מצחק.
אמרו לו: עקיבה מפני מה אנו בוכים ואתה מצחק.
אמר להם: אתם למה בכיתם.
אמרו לו: ולא נבכה שהגוים עובדי עבודה זרה מזבחים לאלילים ומשתחוים לעצבים יושבים בטח צחקתי אם שלוה ושאנן ובית הדום רגליו של אלהינו היה לשריפת אש ומדור לחיות השדה.
אמר להם: אף אני לכך כך נתן למכעיסיו קל וחומר לעושי רצונו.

[219] A parallel later version of this narrative is in b. Makkot 24a-b (MS Munich 95):

וכבר היה ר"ג ור' יהוש' ור' אלעז' בן עזרי' ור' עקי' מהלכין בדרך ושמעו קול המונ' של רומי מפלטוס מא' ועשרי' מיל. התחילו הם בוכ' ור' עקי' משחק. אמ' לו: עקי' מפני מה את' משחק.
א' להן: מפני מה את' בוכים.
אמרו לו: מקו' שגוי' הללו משתחוי' לאלילי' ומקטרי' לעצבי' יושבין בט' ושלו' והשקט ואנו מקו' רגלי אלהי' נשרף באש ולמ' נבכה.
א' להן: לכך אני משח' ומה עוברי רצונו כך, עוש' רצונו על אח' כמ' וכמ'.

[220] 1 mil equates to 2000 cubits. Thus, 120 mil multiplied by 2000 equates to 240,000 cubits. 2000 cubits equate to 0.57 miles. Thus multiplying 240,000 cubits by 0.57 miles equates to 68.18 miles. See Jastrow, "מִיל," *Dictionary*, 773.

[221] Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 [ed. Finkelstein, 94]. R. Gamliel and R. Yehoshua are third generation tannaim whereas R. Akiva, and R. Elazar b. Azarya are fourth generation tannaim. Presumably, the story in Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 [ed. Finkelstein, 94-95] takes place in the first half of the second century CE.

reactions. The description of two contrasting emotional responses on the same event sets the ground to construct gradually the persona of the foil and to prepare the reader for the "conflict" between the two groups' beliefs that will unfold at the climactic end of the story.

In Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 the foil is the rabbinic "other" who expresses an opposing attitude and opinion without using polemical language or tone. In the construction of the image of the foil, whose identity unfolds gradually (since the foil can be either R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria or R. Akiva), the author portrays R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria to initiate a conversation with R. Akiva in which they express their puzzlement to the latter's behavior. As the narrative goes, "They said to him: Akiva, for what reason [while] we are weeping (and) you are laughing? He said to them: Why are you weeping? They said to him: And shall we not weep when the goyim idolaters who sacrifice to idols and who prostrate themselves to images dwell without trouble [and they are] at ease, while we "the house which was the footstool of our God" became aflame and a dwelling for the animals of the field?!" The puzzlement which the anonymous rabbinic author of the narrative depicts R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria to express—by creating a strong contrast between theirs and R. Akiva's behavior (עקיבה, מפני מה אנו בוכים ואתה מצחק?) when they ask R. Akiva for the reason of his laughter—and the answer they provide to R. Akiva at the latter's question as to the reason all three of them wept construct their pessimistic image and disposition to what they see as a reality in their time regarding the position of the Jews in comparison to that of the gentiles.

The Rabbis lament that the gentiles' engagement in idolatry does not bring about divine punishment but prosperity which they juxtapose with the punishment that befell upon the Jews in the form of the destruction of their Temple. In other words, the three Rabbis' reaction seems to be justified by the non-punitive outcome of the gentiles' idolatrous conduct. This image is juxtaposed

to the image of the Temple's absolute destruction and its extreme abandonment and it creates in the same narrative a dipole between the absence of God represented by the sheer destruction and abandonment of the Temple that has been transformed to a dwelling place for wild animals (and the parallelism between the Temple and the Jews insinuates the subsequent abandonment of the Jewish people) and the presence of idols justified by the prosperity of idolaters. R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria appear to be used to express the reasonable concerns of the story's anonymous rabbinic editor and, at the same time, to prepare the ground for R. Akiva's answer that builds his own attitude towards the same topic at hand.

In contrast to his interlocutors' attitude on the gentiles' prosperity and the Jews' abandonment by God, R. Akiva's answer provides a different look at the issue at hand. R. Akiva offers a positive alternative to his interlocutors' pessimistic attitude. He, thus, explains that he laughed for the same reason that they wept, arguing that "if he [God] to those who anger [him] gave thus [much], all the more so [he will give] to the doers of his will!"" R. Akiva is portrayed to restore the previous "distortion" of the punishment of the Jews and the prosperity of the gentiles and ends in a positive tone that advocates for the multiplied benefactions upon those who keep God's commandments. According to Reuven Hammer, R. Akiva is presented to take frequently "a position opposite that of his companions, a strange position that astounded them. When he explained his actions, they accepted his reasoning and that brought them comfort" and concludes that "Akiva was already perceived as having had an independent streak, finding hope and comfort in his beliefs and bringing comfort to others."[222]

Nevertheless, whereas one may say that R. Akiva could be seen as the foil to R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria, since their attitude seems most appropriate, it happens

[222] Reuven Hammer, *Akiva: Life, Legend, Legacy* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 38.

quite the opposite. It is precisely this trait of R. Akiva that the anonymous rabbinic author appears to want to highlight and upon which he constructs Akiva's reaction that constitutes the basis for promoting his attitude as legitimate. As Barry Holtz writes, Akiva has been holding the role of the comforter in many cases in several rabbinic stories, and Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 seems to be one of these.[223] This role of the comforter that the anonymous editor holds for Akiva in relation to his companions in Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 helps to underscore: firstly, who the foil or the rabbinic "other" is in this story; secondly, who among the Rabbis holds the correct attitude toward the conundrum of the prosperity of the gentiles; and, thirdly, with whom the anonymous rabbinic editor sides. R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria who are depicted to be concerned with the issue of theodicy, expressing a pessimistic, almost fatalistic, attitude, which comes in contradistinction to R. Akiva's jovial demeanor, are portrayed as the foil to R. Akiva and are presented as the rabbinic or the "internal other."[224]

The Rabbis' function as the foil accentuates R. Akiva's response with which the anonymous editor closes the rabbinic narrative. The rabbinic author through the rabbinic foil makes R. Akiva's retort emerge as the apparent legitimate rabbinic position to the conundrum of the gentiles' prosperousness and inwardly he demonstrates with whose side he sides and wants to promote or, to whose attitude he is sympathetic, to say the least. The rabbinic foil seems to be used by the anonymous rabbinic author to articulate the opinion that idolaters are not punished.[225]

---

[223] Barry W. Holtz, *Rabbi Akiva: Sage of the Talmud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 127. Here Boltz writes that "In both the story about Rabbi Joshua's conflict with Rabban Gamaliel and the story of Rabbi Eliezer's banishment, we see Akiva in the role of comforter. In both cases Akiva goes out of his way to try to assuage the pain that others are feeling. We see this aspect of Akiva's character in other places as well, often offering comfort through inventive interpretations of biblical verses. But with Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, no textual insight can offer comfort, for no comfort can be had. With Eliezer, Akiva's empathy leads him only to shared mourning and tears."

[224] See Hayes, "The "Other" in Rabbinic Literature," 243-69. The story here, as well as its later parallel version in b. Makkot 24a-b, is such a case where in discussions between Rabbis the foil can be a Rabbi.

[225] That idolaters are not punished is also a consistent question in b. Avodah Zarah.

Having laid the claim that idolaters prosper whereas Jews suffer, the editor brings in R. Akiva's opinion to offer a resolution to this problematic reality of his time. The resolution of this conundrum is grounded on a *Qal wa-homer* argument[226] according to which God's followers will be rewarded even more compared to the gentiles who avoided punishment regardless of their idolatrous conduct. R. Akiva's opinion is promoted as rabbinically legitimate through the contradistinction with the attitude of R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria, for it rectifies the quandary posed by his rabbinic interlocutors. The portrayal of R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria as the foil to R. Akiva, does not merely underline the latter's position as distinct from the formers', but also it underscores and promotes it as the legitimate one as it contradicts the negative and despondent attitude of his foil.

Overall, the case study explored in this section shows that the foil can also be a Rabbi and in Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 the anonymous rabbinic editor uses R. Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, and R. Eleazar ben Azaria as foils to R. Akiva to underline the latter's opinion as the one that solves the problem posed by his companions. Taking up the role of comforter, as Boltz has observed, R. Akiva's stance is in contrast with the negative attitude of his interlocutors. Here, the foil is the rabbinic "other" who challenges a behavior which is also part of rabbinic hermeneutics and is utilized by the anonymous rabbinic editor to present what a rabbinically legitimate answer might have been in a plausible question on theodicy which, in this case, dealt with the prosperity

[226] קל וחומר argument (a fortiori) is one of the seven middot (hermeneutical rules) of Hillel. The list was expanded to thirteen (the thirteen middot of R. Ishmael) and later to thirty-two hermeneutical rules (the thirty-two middot of Eliezer ben Yose ha-Gelili). The qal wa-homer argument, as Steinsaltz explains it in plain terms "is a principle of logical argumentation by means of which a comparison is drawn between two cases, one lenient and the other stringent. It asserts that if the law is stringent in a case where it is usually lenient, then it will certainly be stringent in a case where it is usually stringent; likewise, if the law is lenient in a case where it is usually stringent, then it will certainly be lenient in a case where it is usually lenient." Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, *Reference Guide to the Talmud* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2014), 213. Thus, the qal wa-homer argument can be *a minore ad maius* and *a maiore ad minus*, that is "from the lighter (less significant) to the weightier (more significant) and vice versa." (Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 18). See also Louis Jacobs and David Derovan, "Hermeneutics," *Encyclopedia Judaica* 9:25-29.

of the gentiles and the suffering of the Jews. At the end, the rabbinic author offers a resolution that he promotes as correct. Where the foil is another Rabbi, the anonymous rabbinic editor appears to use him in order to show the rabbinic attitude or opinion he sides with or is sympathetic towards.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined discussions from Tannaitic sources between Rabbis and between Rabbis and gentiles (as ethnic and religious others) on topics that deal, in one way or another, with idols and idolatry to investigate both the choice of foils from among any number of groups (as opposed to Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues who created foils out of Jewish characters) and the use of the foil as a discussant to a rabbinic interlocutor. I aimed to show how the anonymous editors of rabbinic multivocal narratives according to the topic at hand used the image of multiple "others" as a foil through the implementation of the ancient rhetorical device of *ethopoieia* in order to claim a rabbinic legitimacy of acting and living in an idolatrous world. As the foil, the "other" interlocutor—whether a Rabbi, or a non-rabbinic, or a non-Jewish person—is depicted to remind the Rabbis of a reality that pertains to the ubiquitous presence of idolatry. The position of the foil makes the Rabbis respond to the conundrum that their interlocutors posed to them, demonstrating what a rabbinic legitimate stance would and/or could be in an idolatrous world. The use of an "other" discussant as the foil to the Rabbis from among any group allows the anonymous authors of rabbinic dialectical stories to demonstrate particular awareness of an issue under discussion and to present a targeted rabbinic response and attitude as the legitimate one given the situation described. In the context of the dialectical narratives on idols that I analyzed in this chapter, the Rabbis, through the image of the foil, defend their access to an idolatrous world without being part of it, while, at the same time, they neutralize the idolatrous space in which they may be found as part of their everyday lives.

So far, the discussions between "Jews" and Christians in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues on the practice of iconolatry and the discussions between Rabbis and "other" interlocutors on idols and the pervasiveness of idolatry suggest similar but also diverse uses of the "other" as a foil by both groups. Christian and rabbinic authors appear to equally use the foil in terms of highlighting the position of the protagonists in their stories. This is not surprising, though, given the function and role of the "other" as a foil. However, Christian and rabbinic authors seem to demonstrate different rationales behind the choice of the foil's identity, which may explain the different goals that each wanted to achieve by using a particular "other" as a foil in these dialectical narratives. In *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the foil is exclusively a "Jew" and is deployed by the Christian authors in topics that concern Christian practice to claim a share in the religious legitimacy that they already recognized to the Jews due to their genealogical affinity with the Israelites. However, in rabbinic multivocal narratives, the foil can be anyone and is used multifariously depending on the foil's identity: when the foil is a non-Jewish "other," the foil is used to underline the rabbinic stance or opinion as the solely correct one; but when the foil is a Rabbi, then the foil is utilized to highlight the anonymous editor's preference of that rabbinic opinion to which he is sympathetic and wants to promote or with which he wills to side.

As I will show in the next chapter, a change occurs in the ultimate goal of the use of the "Jew" as a foil in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues when the topic of discussion between the "Christian" and the "Jew" concerns Christian dogmatic beliefs and not Christian practice. By examining imagined dialectical discussions between "Christians" and "Jews" on the divinity of the Messiah in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, I will show how the Christian authors used the "Jew" as the foil to both themselves and to their interlocutors' (the portrayed Jews') own prophets to argue not a share to a religious legitimacy that they already recognized to the Jews, as was the case in the discussions

on icons and their worship, but a claim to a religious legitimacy of beliefs as a Christian prerogative alone.

Chapter 4: Imagining the "Jew" as the Foil Against Their Own Kin in Dialectical Discussions on (the Divinity of) Christ in *Adversus Iudaeos* Dialogues

Introduction: "Jews" as Foils to "Christians" and the Israelite Prophets

In Chapter 2, I argued that anonymous Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues appeared to deploy the "Jew" as a foil to claim for themselves and for their Christian audience a share in the religious legitimacy regarding the Christian practice of iconolatry. I showed that the Christian authors attributed to the "Jews" a legitimacy of opinion when they portrayed the latter to denounce icon-worship according to the biblical prohibitions against image-making and image-worship in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. At the same time, these Christian authors appeared to claim for themselves and for their audiences a share in the religious legitimacy that they already recognized to the Jews by mirroring their practices, which the "Jewish" interlocutors are depicted to categorize as idolatry, with similar practices of ancient Israelites towards their own sacred items in the Tabernacle and the two Temples.

In this chapter, I return to the discussion on the rhetorical use of the "Jew" as a foil in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues to explore a change that appears in how anonymous Christian authors of these texts appear to have used the image of the "Jewish" interlocutor when the discussions concern Christian dogma and belief. In particular, I examine dialectical conversations between "Christians" and "Jews" on the divinity of Christ/Messiah. The divinity of Christ/Messiah is among the forefront of topics that Christian authors wrote about in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues.

Several of these texts, such as the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*,[227] the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk*[228] the Syriac *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*,[229] and the Latin *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus*,[230] to name but few, open in one way or another with a discussion on whether Jesus is God and whether he should be worshipped as such.

Despite being written over a long course of time, these dialogue texts are similar in their structure, topics, and arguments. One may see homogeneity among them rather than a development and progression of ideas. Their authors, even across different time periods, appear to repeat the structure and themes found throughout these works. This homogeneity may be explained when we take into consideration that several of these texts are based on earlier *Adversus Iudaeos* compositions.[231] For example, scholars have argued that the basis for the *Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus*, the *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus*, and the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* is a second century CE dialectical work, the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*,[232] which was written

[227] For more information about the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (ed. Robertson) see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 29 n. 79 of this dissertation.

[228] On the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (ed. McGiffert) see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 30 n. 81 of this dissertation.

[229] On the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (ed. Hayman, CSCO 338) see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 30 n. 82 of this dissertation.

[230] See "Chapter 1: Introduction," 29 n. 78 of this dissertation for more information about *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* (ed. Harnack).

[231] See Lawrence Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (excluding Justin)," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 581-639.

[232] Lawrence Lanzi 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" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2001) 74-89; Samuel Kraus, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy: Vol. 1 History*, ed. William Horbury (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 29.

in Greek by Aristo of Pella and only fragments survive in a Latin translation from the third century CE.[233]

One common characteristic of these dialogue texts is that each of them is not concerned with only one topic but multiple topics. This raises the question of whether the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues dealt with theological subjects that were at the forefront of theological discussions at the time when each was written. This might have been the case, but not necessarily. For example, while the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* was written at the end of the sixth century CE, around 690 CE,[234] the theological discussions in this text on the virgin birth of Jesus/Christ and the ever-virginity of Mary troubled the Church in the fifth century CE, almost one and a half centuries before the composition of this Alexandrian work. In the case of another text, the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban*, the imagined discussions between a "Christian" and a "Jew" on certain topics have led scholars to date this work between the sixth and the tenth centuries CE. A brief reference in this text to the two wills of Jesus[235] has been seen by some scholars as a possible indication of this work's composition in the seventh century CE, whereas for other scholars a long discussion on the icons (as I analyzed in Chapter 2) is seen as an indicator of the same text's composition in the eighth or ninth century CE.[236] However, at the same time, the *Dialogue of*

[233] Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 585, 588.

[234] Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 603.

[235] A response to the belief that Christ had one will was the formulation of the dogma that since in Christ there are two natures, a divine and a human, there are also two wills, a divine and a human that are distinct but not in conflict with each other. This belief became a dogma in the sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, 680-681 CE. See Neil Brownen, "Monothelitism," *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2012), doi:10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah03173. For a detailed analysis of the dogma on the two wills and the two energies of Christ see Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) where he analyzes the Christology of Maximus the Confessor on the two wills of Jesus and his opposition to the Christian belief of Monothelitism, according to which in Christ there is only one will, the divine.

[236] Albrecht Berger, ed., "The Dialexis," in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation*, ed. Albrecht Berger (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 94-5.

Gregentius with Herban includes topics, such as on the virgin birth of Jesus or on the Christians being the new Israel, that reflect discussions from earlier periods. It is difficult, then, to know with certainty the particular concerns of the authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues because each author does not address only one topic in each work and the topics addressed were not particularly at the forefront of theological discussions taking place when they were written. The dialogue texts, nevertheless, address Christian beliefs and dogmas that dealt in one way or another with Christology as this was developed from the early centuries of Christianity up to the eighth and ninth centuries CE.

It, thus, appears, that the anti-Jewish dialogue authors were interested in consolidating certain beliefs of Nicene and Chalcedonian Christianity and in giving a synopsis of what they considered as the most important dogmas. In that sense, *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues mimic, by and large, one of the purposes of the Ecumenical Councils: to affirm the decisions of previous Ecumenical Councils as a way of showing continuity of orthodoxy in the dogmatic decisions of the Nicene and Chalcedonian Christians. The *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, *mutatis mutandis*, by repeating similar topics and arguments across different time periods, possibly construct a theological coherence and an underlying connection between the various beliefs which are in line with Nicene Christianity and Chalcedonian Christianity and which the authors decided to address in their works.[237]

Although the topics of discussion do not necessarily reflect the period of the different texts' composition, the focus on Jesus as the Messiah in these works is diachronic. This is unsurprising, given that Christological debates played a leading part in the life of the Church from the second to

[237] On a definition of Nicene Christianity and Chalcedonian Christianity see "Chapter 1: Introduction," 33 n. 88 of this dissertation.

the eighth centuries CE; all the Ecumenical Councils that convened from the fourth to the eighth centuries CE dealt with aspects of Christology.[238] The theology on Jesus did not only distinguish the Christians into different groups, depending on their understanding of Jesus and his relation to God, but it comprised also a point of conflict between Christians and Jews.[239] This last point may explain the use of the image of the "Jew" as a foil to his "Christian" interlocutor and may shed light on the process of the Christian authors to argue for a religious legitimacy of beliefs as a Christian prerogative only.

To this end, I analyze the deployment of the image of the "Jew" as a foil in discussions on the divinity of Christ/the Messiah by examining three aspects that are associated with this topic:

---

[238] The first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea I, 325 CE dealt primarily with the relationship of the Son with God the Father introducing the theological concept of "homoousios" - *ὁμοούσιος* that is the Son is of the same substance with the Father, rejecting Arianism, which, although it recognized the Son as God, it considered the Son subordinate to the Father. The second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople I, 381 CE affirmed, among other decisions decreed by the first Ecumenical Council, the condemnation of Arianism, it condemned Apollinarianism, it expanded and adapted the creed of the Council of Nicaea, and declared the Holy Spirit as God equal with the Father and the Son. The third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus 431 CE affirmed again the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, it renounced Nestorianism, which argued for two persons in Christ and called Virgin Mary *Christotokos* (Christ-bearing referring to Mary giving birth to Jesus as human alone), and instead declared the unity of Christ's person as both a perfect God and a perfect Man and pronounced the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos* (God-bearing). The fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon 451 CE declared the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ, stating that the person of Christ is one from and in two natures, renouncing Monophysitism and Nestorianism. The fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople II 553 CE went even deeper to explain the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ in a single person. The sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople III 680-681 CE rejected Monothelitism (that Jesus has one will - *θέλησις* even if he has two natures) and Monoenergetism (that Jesus has only on energy - *ἐνέργεια*) both of which were extensions of Monophysitism, declaring instead that Christ has two energies and two wills. And finally, the seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea II 787 CE declared the restoration of the holy icons, decreeing their veneration and rejecting iconoclasm, which dealt primarily with Christ's person and whether Christ as God could be depicted pictorially or not. See, Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 33-80; A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire,* vol. 1 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952); J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); Lewis Ayes, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy?: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Cyril Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[239] See Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 31-90; see also Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1-14, who discusses that although the Talmudic passages against Jesus are few, nevertheless they can be seen as "powerful evidence of bold discourse with the Christian society" (10) and thus as signals of antagonisms.

1) the birth of Christ from a virgin, 2) the Christ as the Son of God, and 3) one versus two Gods involved in the creation. Through my analysis I have two objectives: Firstly, to show a change in the ultimate goal of the manipulation of the "Jew" as a character that is commensurate with the content of a topic under discussion (a shift from discussing a topic on Christian practice to one of Christian dogma and belief). And, secondly, to argue that in the discussions on the divinity of Christ/the Messiah, the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues appear to have used the "Jew" as a foil to claim ownership of religious legitimacy of belief. To accentuate this claim on religious legitimacy, Christian authors, I argue, used the "Jew" as a foil not only to the imagined "Christian" interlocutors, but also to the "Jews'" own ancestral biblical authors due to their genealogical affinity with them, which the Christian authors attributed to the "Jews" of their dialogues. I demonstrate that by tracing their correctness of belief in the biblical Israelite authors' writings (in the way that these Christian authors interpreted them), the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues willed to highlight and emphasize the legitimacy of their own opinions and thus to assert that only their audience had a correct understanding of the true nature of the Christ/the Messiah and not the "Jews." This process creates by extension a clash between the imagined "Jews" of their works and the sayings of biblical Israelite authors, effecting even further the dramatization of the Christian claim of exclusive ownership of religious correctness of belief ("ortho"- doxy). By quoting Israelite biblical authors, the Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues appropriated them, arguing that what they (the Israelite biblical authors) said about the Messiah reflected their Christian group's understanding of the Christ.

This appropriation of biblical authors and the Christian authors' understanding of their passages which they deployed to support their reading on Christ/Messiah made the "Jews" of their dialogues be portrayed as theologically incorrect, giving rhetorical space to the Christian authors

to claim an exclusive religious correctness of belief in order to create a discourse which for them sounded credible and authoritative. The authors of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues created an effective rhetorical space in which they propagandized for the antiquity and doctrinal validity of their specific theological beliefs. Through their works, they could confront anyone who, for them (the authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues) did not adhere to their own belief system.

The Birth of Christ/the Messiah from a Virgin

In this section, I examine dialectical conversations on the divinity of Jesus between "Christians" and "Jews" in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues by investigating one aspect of this topic: the virgin-birth of Jesus from Mary. The discussions on Jesus's birth from Mary are connected to and comprise part of the larger focus on Jesus's divinity when we take into consideration that, in these fictitious debates, their authors take on the following quandary: did a virgin give birth to a human or to a God? Outside the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the divinity of Christ and his birth from a virgin were two intertwined topics under scrutiny among Christians in late antiquity, revolving around the controversies that arose from giving Mary either the title *Theotokos* (God-bearer) or the title *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer, namely bearing merely a human).[240]

The early Christians' opinions and beliefs on Mary and her giving birth to Christ can be traced much earlier than the fifth century CE. For example, already in the second century CE, Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, makes an interesting parallelism between Eve and Mary: the former's disobedience brought about death in comparison to the latter's obedience that

[240] The theological discussions over Virgin Mary's title *Christotokos* versus *Theotokos* were raised by Nestorius, the Archbishop of Constantinople from 428 CE – 431 CE, who argued that Mary gave birth to Jesus as human and for this reason she should be called *Christotokos* and not *Theotokos* in an effort to distinguish strictly the human and divine natures of Jesus. The Ecumenical Council of Ephesus 431 CE dealt with this theological issue. See Davis, "The Council of Ephesus, 431," 134-69; John Anthony McGuckin, *The Path of Christianity: The First Thousand Years* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 539-59; and Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 188-95.

brought about life (according to Justin's understanding of the role of the two women).[241] And in the same century, we see in the *Shepherd* of Hermas and II Clement an interesting notion of parallelizing the Church as a Virgin Mother, possibly an image that is drawn from Mary, an idea that is later repeated in Eusebius's *Church History* as Andrew Louth argues.[242] The *Protevangelium of James*, also a work from the second century CE, which "narrates events that took place prior to Jesus's birth (although it includes an account of his birth as well),"[243] mentions its author's belief in the virginity of Mary and her conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Clement the Alexandrian, in his *Stromateis* "refers to the persistence of Mary's virginity *in partu*"[244] (that is her remaining a virgin *during* conceiving Jesus) while Origen, in his homilies on Luke and Leviticus as Stephen Shoemaker points out, fluctuates between rejecting the belief in Mary's virginity during conception (in his homily on Luke) and accepting it (in his homily on Leviticus).[245] However, in his commentary on Matthew, which survives in Greek, "Origen seems to indicate that

[241] Andrew Louth, "Mary in Patristics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 56-7 and "Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 100, Opera 1842: II.336–8" as quoted by ibid.

[242] Louth, "Mary in Patristics," 57-9 and his reference to Eusebius's work, "Herbert Musurillo, ed. and trans., "The Martyrs of Lyon" in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 45:77 and 55:79."

[243] Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63.

[244] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 67; and "Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7.16 (Stählin, Früchtel, and Treu, eds., Clemens Alexandrinus, vol. 3, 66)," as quoted by Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 67 n. 6 (on p. 246).

[245] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 67; and "Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Luke* 14 (Rauer, ed., *Origenes Werke*, vol. 9, 100); *Homilies on Leviticus* 8.2 (Baehrens, ed., *Origenes Werke*, vol. 3, 395)" as quoted by Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 67 n. 7 (on p. 246). Shoemaker explains (p. 67) that the discrepancy between the two sources might be the result of the translations of these works into Latin in which they survive, and we cannot know whether the same difference could be attested in the original Greek because it is lost.

[Mary] retained her virginity, although unfortunately the passage is not entirely clear on this point."[246]

Later on, in the fourth century CE, the discussions on Mary's ever-virginity and the virgin birth of Jesus have been underlined by theologians adhering to Nicene Christianity such as Athanasius of Alexandria who in his work *On the Incarnation* (*De Incarnatione*) "emphasizes the virginal conception in connection with the Incarnation,"[247] Ephrem the Syrian, Epiphanius of Salamis, Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Constantinople (also known as Nazianzen), John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Proclus of Constantinople, to name but few, as Luigi Gambero has discussed at length in his work.[248]

Following the resolution of the issue on the divinity of the second person of the Trinity and his relationship with God the Father in the fourth century CE, the oppositions to Mary's ever-virginity were raised anew, being related this time to the issue of the human and divine natures in the person of Christ. The point of contention was the title *Theotokos*. For some scholars, this title dates as early as the third century CE, basing their argument on a prayer to Mary known in Latin as *Sub tuum praesidium,* which was found in a papyrus presumably from approximately the third century CE.[249] Such an early date, though, for both the papyrus and the prayer to Mary in it has

[246] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 67; and "Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on Matthew* 25 (Klostermann and Benz, eds., *Origenes Werke*, vol. 11, 42–3)" as quoted by Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 67 n. 8 (on p. 246).

[247] Louth, "Mary in Patristics," 61.

[248] Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 99-322. See also Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 168-74.

[249] Luigi Gambero, "Patristic Intuitions of Mary's Role as a Mediatrix and Advocate: The Invocation of the Faithful for Her Help," *Marian Studies* 52 (2001): 78-101.

been questioned for valid reasons.[250] On the other hand, Shoemaker gives us the information from Socrates, an ecclesiastical historian from the fifth century CE, that "Origen first used the term [*Theotokos*] for Mary in his commentary on Romans." [251] He explains, however, that on account of both not having the Greek original of Origen's commentary on Romans and of the term missing from its Latin translation, there can be no certainty on whether Origen used the term as early as the third century CE. The fourth century CE, though, saw the usage of this term on a larger scale.[252]

In the fourth century CE, the deployment of the title *Theotokos* (Christ-bearer) by certain theologians could have shown the dynamics of this designation for Mary and the belief of these authors and their followers that Mary gave birth to Jesus as a God. Peter of Alexandria, Alexander of Alexandria, and Athanasius of Alexandria deployed the term *Theotokos* to refer to Mary,[253] with Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Constantinople, and Gregory of Nyssa to also refer to Mary as *Theotokos*.[254]

Others, however, kept a less reverential stance towards Mary. Most importantly, from the first two centuries of early Christianity, Tertullian, a northern African theologian from Carthage who lived from the second half of the second century CE to the first quarter of the third century

---

[250] Richard Price, for example, explains that the dating of the papyrus cannot be from the third century CE on three accounts: firstly, the letter forms in the papyrus point to a later date than the third century CE, let alone that the existence of a prayer to Mary as early as the third century CE is questionable; secondly, papyrological evidence regarding the letter alpha and the shape of vertical strokes "have their closest parallels in Coptic literary papyri of the eighth and ninth centuries;" and thirdly, the *Sub tuum praesidium* is not mentioned before the sixth or the seventh century CE. Richard Price, "The Virgin as *Theotokos* at Ephesus (ad 431) and Earlier," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 67-8.

[251] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 68.

[252] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 68. See also Louth, "Mary in Patristics," 61.

[253] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 166; see also idem, 258 n. 2 "Peter of Alexandria, *On Easter to Tricenius* (PG 18, 517B); Alexander of Alexandria*, Letter to Alexander of Thessalonica* (PG 18, 568)." See also Price, "The Virgin as *Theotokos*," 72.

[254] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 167; see also Price, "The Virgin as *Theotokos*," 72 n. 24-27.

CE,[255] in his work *De Carne Christi* he raises doubts regarding Mary's ever-virginity, arguing against her retaining her status as a virgin after the conception of Jesus (*virginitas post partum*),[256] although it is in the same text in which he talks about Mary's conception of Christ as a virgin (*virginitas in partu*) to argue that Jesus received his real body from her.[257] In the fourth century CE, Helvidius argued against the belief in Mary's ever-virginity, followed by Jovinian whose rejection of the same belief was on the basis of him contending against Docetism, an early Christian belief according to which Jesus "seemed to be, but was not, a human being."[258] Shoemaker clarifies that Jovinian's opposition to the belief in Mary remaining virgin after birth (*virginitas post partum* which proposes the belief in her perpetual virginity) stemmed from assuming that this teaching could support Docetism's belief that "Christ was some sort of immaterial being who passed through her womb without opening it."[259]

The soundest challenge of the title *Theotokos* arose in the fifth century CE by the Syrian monk Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, who criticized it on the grounds that a human could not have given birth to God,[260] and preferred instead the title *Christotokos*, Christ-bearer.[261] As Price describes in much detail, it appears though that after Nestorius's rejection to Mary of the term

---

[255] Christoph Markschies, "Tertullian" in *Encyclopedia of Christianity Online*, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2211-2685_eco_T.25.

[256] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 65; and "Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 23, 1-5; PL 2, 835-36" as quoted by ibid.

[257] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 64; and "Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 18, 1-3; PL 2, 828" as quoted by ibid.

[258] Michael Slusser, "Docetism" *Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, doi:10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah05065.

[259] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 172.

[260] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 208-10.

[261] Price, "The Virgin as *Theotokos*," 71. The title *Christotokos* is in one of Nestorius's letters sent to Cyril bishop of Alexandria, "Second Letter to Cyril 7". Ibid.

Theotokos and the reaction it instigated on part of pro-Nicene theologians, Nestorius, at some point, had started making use of both terms *Theotokos* and *anthrōpotokos* (bearer of human, an alternative for *Christotokos*) to designate Mary as both a mother of a God and a mother of a human, with both titles to have "been used already by both Theodore of Mopsuestia (the real author of what we call 'Nestoriansim') and Theodoret [i.e. Theodoret Cyrrhus]."[262]

The time was ripe, though, for this theological teaching to be brought up for discussion officially. In the discussions in the fifth century CE on Virgin Mary as a bearer of God or bearer of a human, Cyril bishop of Alexandria proved to be the fierce opponent of Nestorius. At stake was not only the political antagonism between the Sees of Alexandria and Constantinople, but the belief that Christ was God. For Cyril, denying to Mary the title *Theotokos* jeopardized the belief that she gave birth to also a God and not only to human undermining the divinity of Jesus. As Price explains, "The personal identity of Godhead and manhood in Christ was essential for Cyril, since on it depends the fact that Christians, through reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, receive in themselves Christ's victory over death and participate in his Godhead, being made 'gods' by grace... The whole scheme of salvation unravels if the Virgin is denied the title of *Theotokos*."[263] In all, the concern that was raised with the discussion on Virgin Mary and her designation as either *Theotokos* or *Christotokos* dealt in reality with the teaching on the two natures of Jesus, divine and human and their hypostatic union (hypostasis for pro-Nicene theologians means person and not nature) in Christ. The third Ecumenical Council that was held in Ephesus in 431 CE addressed the issue, decreeing that in Christ there are two natures, a human and a divine and rejecting that there are two persons (a human and a divine). Accordingly, the Virgin Mary

[262] Price, "The Virgin as *Theotokos*," 72.

[263] Price, "The Virgin as *Theotokos*," 73-4 where he quotes from Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 191-204.

being called *Theotokos* designated that she gave birth to God incarnate, that is God who became human, defining in this way that Jesus (the Son of God or Logos) is one person possessing two natures, a human and a divine.[264]

Within such an intense ecclesiastical environment with conflicting views on Virgin Mary, discussions on the birth of Christ/Messiah from a virgin were included as one of the many topics addressed in the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, a work from the second half of the sixth century CE which originated from Alexandria.[265] Although the discussions on Mary's perpetual virginity and the disagreements between theologians on the use of the title *Theotokos* over that of *Christotokos* reached their peak earlier in the fifth century CE, it could be assumed that this topic might still had been of relevance at the time of the composition of this work, when we take into account the continued interest in the discussions on the two natures of Christ in the sixth century CE. These discussions culminated at the beginning of the second quarter of the sixth century CE in the fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553 CE that confirmed the two natures of Christ (human and divine) and the title of Mary as *Theotokos* who bore God incarnate, one person in two natures.[266] Thus, including the topic of Virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus in the late sixth-century CE *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* in the context of the sixth-century Christological

[264] Davis, "The Council of Ephesus, 431," 134-67.

[265] See Vincent Déroche, "La polemique anti-judaïque au VI^{ème} et VII^{ème} siècle: Un mémento inédit; Les Képhalaia." *Travaux et mémoirs* 11 (1991): 276; Robertson, "The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila," 372-83; and Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 603. Lawrence Lahey remarks that the original is lost and the common materials between the two recensions point to this lost work, which is assumed to have been originated also in Alexandria but earlier, at the beginning of the sixth century CE. The present dialogue shares with the *Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus* (late fourth century CE) and the Latin *Dialogue of Simon and Theophilus* (early fifth century CE) materials which seem to have been drawn from the lost second-century CE Greek *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* (and whose fragments have survived in a Latin translation from the third century CE). The text purportedly records a debate between a "Christian" called Timothy and a "Jew" named Aquila "which took place at Alexandria during the episcopate of Cyril (412-444). Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 603, 604.

[266] Davis, "Council of Constantinople II, 553," 207-57, especially 240-9. The same council condemned the writings of the fifth century CE Antiochean theologians, Theodore Mopsuestia, Theodoret Cyrrhus, and Ibas of Edessa, all of whom, in one way or another, seem to have supported Nestorius's thesis on Christ.

discussions does not seem contextless and it could be understood as holding its relevance at the time of this work's composition, witnessing the affiliation of the work's author with those who called Mary a *Theotokos* and held that she gave birth to God incarnate.

At the same time, in the context of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the imagined discussions between "Christians" and "Jews" on the birth of Christ/Messiah from a virgin are constructed in a way that, by using the image of the "Jew" as a foil to a "Christian" interlocutor, Christian authors ventured to highlight the correctness of their views on the matter. To dramatize the depiction of "Jews'" wrongness of opinion, Christian authors presented the "Jews" as foils to the Israelite biblical authors to whom they recognized a genealogical affinity with their imagined characters, and, in doing so, they employed an expository discourse by which they presented their views on the birth of Christ from a virgin as an established tenet without instructing or disparaging the "Jew"—types of discourse I will discuss in the next two sections. It seems that the author of the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* tracing his argument on virgin Mary and birth of Jesus back to biblical Israelite authors created an effective rhetorical space in which he propagandized for the antiquity and, consequently, the correctness of his and his audience's beliefs.

Following a conversation between Timothy and Aquila on the coexistence of Jesus with God in the time of the creation, a topic that I will analyze in the last section of this chapter, the two interlocutors are depicted to open a discussion on the birth of God from a virgin woman. The "Jew" as a foil is portrayed by the Christian author to react aggressively towards the possibility of God's birth in flesh, and responds, "I am astonished! How are you not ashamed when *you say* [λέγοντες, referring to Christians in general] that God himself entered into a woman's womb and was born?

For if he were born, he [would have] no longer existed eternally; and where is he now?"[267] Negating the Christian author's claim that Christ/Messiah was born as a human and still being a God, the "Jew" presents a conundrum to his imagined interlocutor: How could God be born from a woman and still exist eternally, and whether what was born could be a God. The "Jew" does not seem to imply that what was born was God whose human nature was either less human (Docetism) or was absorbed by his divine nature (Monophysitism),[268] but to suggest that what was born was only human and not God. The "Jew's" negation of the birth of God from a human and retaining his divine nature is the springboard for the Christian author to give to his audience a synopsis of his belief in the virgin Mary, the birth of Jesus, and the unity of the two distinct natures (human and divine) in Jesus's person.

The Christian author deploys the "Jew's" attack to answer through his "Christian" character, preparing the ground to portray the "Jew" as a foil to the "Jew's" ancestral biblical authors. In his response, "Timothy" references the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament to demonstrate his point:

> *The Christian said:* all of these, if you will hear without uproar, the law and the prophets proclaimed, and I shall show you from the divine scriptures[269]…Learn, O Jew, that all these the prophets predicted to us: and that he had to be born from a virgin woman, and [that he had] to be worshipped by the magi, and [that he had] to be sought by

[267] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §5.16-17 (ed. Robertson): "[ὁ Ἰουδαῖος εἶπεν·] Ξενίζομαι. Πῶς οὐκ αἰσχύνεσθε λέγοντες αὐτὸν θεόν, εἰσελθόντα εἰς μήτραν γυναικός καὶ γεννηθέντα;"

[268] "Monophysitism is the belief that in the one person Jesus of Nazareth there is one nature (*monos*, "single"; *physis*, "nature"), as opposed principally to the Chalcedonian formula, the Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), which declares two natures (dyophysitism) coexisting in one person. The Chalcedonian decree, according to the Monophysites, is ontologically speculative and theologically dubious. Monophysitism's principal difficulty is locating the unity of two natures, and resolves any apparent conflict by emphasizing the one divine nature, from the beginning of Jesus' incarnation forward." Ryan A. Neal, "Monophysitism," in *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*, G.T. Kurian (Ed.). doi:10.1002/9780470670606.wbecc0927.

[269] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §5.19 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Χριστιανὸς εἶπεν· ταῦτα πάντα, ἐὰν ἀθορύβως ἀκούσῃ, ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται προεκήρυξαν, κἀγὼ δὲ σοι δεικνύω ἐκ τῶν θείων γραφῶν."

> Herod[270]…and everything was disclosed to us through the law and the prophets; and now listen sagaciously.[271]

Bringing forth the biblical scriptures as the source that would prove the "Christian's" point against that of the "Jew's," the Christian author creates a dipole not merely between the two interlocutors, but also between the "Jew" and the biblical Israelite authors in an apparent effort to highlight his audience's correctness of opinion by proving the "Jew" wrong. "Timothy's" reference to the use of the law, the prophets, and the scriptures (a possible allusion to the *kethuvim*) to prove his point may suggest the importance for him to find support for his beliefs from the totality of the Hebrew scriptures, avoiding to mention the use of Christians' Bible for the same objective. By doing so, he aims to achieve two objectives: on the one hand to present the "Jew" as the foil to his own ancestral biblical authors, and on the other hand to venture to demonstrate the antiquity of his beliefs on the matter. For the Christian author, what the "Jew" is presented to negate has either been decreed by the ancient Israelite law, or it has been prophesied by the ancient Israelite prophets, or it has been mentioned in the writings.

Having explained through "Timothy" that the Hebrew Bible shall constitute the basis for his argument on Jesus's birth from a virgin woman, the author of the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* deploys the image of the "Jew" more openly to present him now in conflict with the Israelite prophets in order to transition to the contrast between the belief of the "Jew" and the sayings of the biblical prophets in the way the Christian author willed to present them (the prophets' words). The author has the "Jew" pose the question of whether Mary retained her status as a virgin after

[270] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §7.6a (ed. Robertson): "μάθε, ὦ Ἰουδαῖε, ὅτι ταῦτα πάντα προεμήνυσαν ἡμῖν οἱ προφῆται, καὶ ἐκ παρθένου γυναικὸς εἶχεν γεννηθῆναι, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν μάγων προσκυνηθῆναι, καὶ ὑπὸ Ἡρώδου ζητηθῆναι..."

[271] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §7.8 (ed. Robertson): "καὶ πάντα ἐδηλώθη ἡμῖν διὰ τε τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, καὶ νῦν ἄκουε συνετῶς."

she gave birth to Jesus,[272] a reference to the Christian belief of Mary's ever-virginity.[273] The "Jew's" concern raises an early Christian position about Mary's perpetual virginity, which, as I discussed earlier, was denied by certain theologians who argued against her virginity after conception.[274] The Christian author, appears to take a position in favor of Mary's virginity *post partum*, being on board with those Christian writers from the fourth and the fifth centuries CE, such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and Jerome,[275] who argued similarly, and whose teachings became part of the tradition that the author seems to support.

In the conversation between the two interlocutors, the "Jew" requests from his "Christian" discussant that he prove the reference of the prophets to the issue at hand. Aquila seems certain that his interlocutor would deploy Isaiah 7:14 (LXX) to address his request, and he objects whether Isaiah's verse would still be applicable after the birth of Jesus: "and now putting forward from the prophets and the law, [do] speak. But I know that you cite the passage of Isaiah saying, *look, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and you shall name him Emmanuel* [Is 7:14]. But [it is] evident that after the birth he would not say that it is such a thing."[276] The use of Is 7:14 (LXX) by Aquila needs to be seen in the context of the discussions on the perpetual virginity of Mary. It is

[272] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §18.1 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Ἰουδαῖος εἶπεν· λέγεται δὲ ταύτην μετὰ τὸ γεγεννηκέναι πάλιν παρθένον εὑρέθησαν, διαμένεις ἕως δεῦρο." "The Jew said: And it is said [that] after having given birth she was found virgin again, to remain until now."

[273] The teaching on the perpetual virginity of Mary started in the second century CE, and is associated with Christian circles' effort to present Mary as "the prototype…of this virginal life." David G. Hunter "Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome," *JECS* 1.1 (1993): 69. On the perpetual virginity of Mary as a theological concept in early Christianity from the second to the eighth century CE see Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).

[274] See Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 29-30.

[275] Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, 167-70.

[276] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §18.5-6 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Ἰουδαῖος εἶπεν· καὶ νῦν ἐκ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν προβαλὼν λέγε. οἶδα δὲ ἐγὼ ὅτι προφέρεις τὴν περικοπὴν τοὺ Ἡσαΐα τὴν λέγουσαν, ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ λήψεται καὶ τέξεται υἱόν. καὶ δῆλον μετὰ τὸν τοκετὸν μὴ εἶναί τι τοιοῦτον λέγει."

not so much a rejection of her being virgin *ante partum*, that is before the conception of Jesus, as a question on her remaining a virgin *post partum*, after having given birth. In that sense, Is 7:14 (LXX) is not used to diminish ethically Mary but only to address the status of virginity after conception. In the "Jew's" view, the biblical verse "*look, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son*" may be interpreted as a virgin woman will conceive a child which will terminate her state of virginity. For this reason, Aquila explains that even if Isaiah might have described the status of the woman before the conception, he would not have insisted on her status as a virgin after the delivery.

In his response to Aquila, Timothy deploys a series of verses of which Is 7:14 (LXX) is part, both to justify that the "Jew" failed to apprehend the prophet's words and, at the same time, to contend that the version of Is 7:14, which Aquila used to argue against Mary's perpetual virginity, also supports Mary's virginity *post partum*. First, presenting the "Jew" as misunderstanding the meaning of Is 7:14 (LXX), the author constructs him as a foil to his ancestral biblical author to enhance the authoritative legitimacy of the reading that would appeal to the Christian author's audience. The "Christian" responds:

> "And the Lord spoke further to Achaz, saying, Ask for yourself a sign of the Lord your God, in depth or in height. But Achaz said, I will not ask, nor will I put the Lord to the test. Then he said: "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to provoke a fight with mortals? How then do you provoke a fight with the Lord? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and you shall name him Emmanouel."[277]

Although the larger context to which these biblical verses belong discusses the reassurance that God gave to King Ahaz regarding the imminent failure of the Syro-Ephraimite threat, with the

[277] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §18.8-10 (ed. Robertson); Is 7:10-14: "Καὶ προσέθετο Κύριος λαλῆσαι τῷ Ἄχαζ λέγων· αἴτησαι σεαυτῷ σημεῖον παρὰ Κυρίου Θεοῦ σου εἰς βάθος ἢ εἰς ὕψος. καὶ εἶπεν Ἄχαζ· οὐ μὴ αἰτήσω οὐδ᾽ οὐ μὴ πειράσω Κύριον. καὶ εἶπεν· ἀκούσατε δή, οἶκος Δαυίδ· μὴ μικρὸν ὑμῖν ἀγῶνα παρέχειν ἀνθρώποις; καὶ πῶς Κυρίῳ παρέχετε ἀγῶνα; διὰ τοῦτο δώσει Κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν σημεῖον· ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει, καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ."

particular verses to describe King Ahaz's decision "to rely on the intervention of the Assyrian king (cg. 2 Kings 16.7-9) rather than on God,"[278] the Christian author puts these verses in the mouth of Timothy to warrant the argument that the sign God was referring to corresponds to the sign of the virginity of Mary after the birth of Jesus. The "Christian" being portrayed to utilize Is 7:14 (LXX) in a way that supports his (the Christian author's) interpretation attempts to argue for Mary's ever-virginity as an event prophesied already by Isaiah when he cites the biblical author's verse, implying by means of it that "a virgin shall conceive, and [a virgin] shall bring forth a son." The use of the conjunction "καὶ" (and) between the two short sentences that make up verse 7:14 (LXX), namely 1. "a virgin shall conceive ***and*****"** 2. "shall bring forth a son" suggests for the Cristian author that a virgin conceives, *and* the same virgin gives birth, alluding, according to his reading, that the woman's virginity remained intact both before, during, and after the conception of Christ/Messiah. Tracing the idea of Mary's ever-virginity to Is 7:14 (LXX), the author assumes for his belief an antiquity that would help him to argue for its legitimacy, showing how the "Jew" misinterpreted the meaning of the verse.

At the same time, we may see Is 7:14 (LXX) from the aforementioned excerpt (*Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §18.8-10 [ed. Robertson]) in the context of intra-Christian group discussions on the humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus that were ongoing in the sixth century CE. As John Sawyer explains, the name *Emmanuel*, which according to Is 7:14 (LXX) is the appellation that would be given to the born son of the virgin woman, was understood by ancient theologians and exegetes such as Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Alexandria, and Bede as signifier of "the two natures of Christ as both divine and human,"[279] while for others, such as Jerome or

[278] Benjamin D. Sommer, "Isaiah," in *The Jewish Study Bible. Jewish Publication Society: Tanakh Translation,* ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 781.

[279] John F. A. Sawyer, *Isaiah Through the Centuries*, (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 56.

John Chrysostom it signified the incarnation of the Word of God and his divine nature.[280] The author of the dialogue shows his allegiance with a certain line of theology which he supports by tracing his argument to the Hebrew scriptures through the image of the "Jew."

In portraying the "Jew" as the foil to his ancestral biblical authors to accentuate the conflict between the sayings of the prophets and Aquila's misunderstanding of them, the author of the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* deploys Habbakuk 1:5 (LXX). God appears to respond to the prophet's complaint about the suffering of the righteous saying, "Look, you despisers, and watch! And marvel at marvelous things and be annihilated! For, I am working a work in your days that you would not believe if someone should tell it."[281] Although the Christian author avails himself of the verse outside of its original context, and despite its New Testament use by the author of the book of Acts 13:41 in the mouth of Paul who "concluded his sermon at the synagogue in Antioch…warning his Jewish audience not to repeat the example of their ancestors by refusing to accept God's most recent activity in Jesus,"[282] its manipulation in this dialectical excerpt aims to support the author's understanding of Mary's ever-virginity as a "marvelous thing" that one "would not believe if someone would tell it." Put differently, for the Christian author and by

---

[280] Sawyer, *Isaiah Through the Centuries*, 56 who writes "For many the name signifies the two natures of Christ as both divine and human (Eusebius, Cyril; cf. Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels* 1:5). Perhaps it is not a personal name at all but, rather, 'describes what kind of a person he will be … "God with us", therefore both God and man' (Luther 84). Karl Barth describes the name Immanuel as the solution to the theological problem raised by the Virgin Birth: the child conceived and born in such a miraculous fashion is 'God with us', that is, 'the Word made flesh' (John 1:14) (*ChDogm* I.2, 178; cf. Augustine, *Sermon* 370.3). The Immanuel sign gives us scriptural authority to call the Son 'God' (Chrysostom; cf. Ps 83:18)."

[281] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §18.11 (ed. Robertson); Hab 1:5: "ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί, καὶ ἐπιβλέψατε καὶ θαυμάσατε θαυμάσια καὶ ἀφανίσθητε, διότι ἔργον ἐγὼ ἐργάζομαι ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ὑμῶν, ὃ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε, ἐάν τις ἐκδιηγῆται." In its original context, Hab 1:5 is part of God's response to Habbakuk's complaint of why the righteous suffer. In his response, God confirms that the righteous will suffer even more whereas the wicked will prosper. See Ehud Ben Zvi, "Habbakuk," in *The Jewish Study Bible. Jewish Publication Society: Tanakh Translation,* ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1220.

[282] M. P. Graham, "Habakkuk, Book of," *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* 1:475. See also Hugh R. Page Jr., "Habakkuk," in *The Prophets*, ed. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber, Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 894.

extension for his imagined "Christian" discussant, Habbakuk also prophesied the perpetual virginity of Mary *post partum*, a reading which the "Jew" is depicted to disbelieve and reject.

These discussions aimed to portray Aquila as his biblical ancestors' foil who failed to comprehend the original meaning of the prophets' words as opposed to Timothy. This may explain why Timothy closes this section by addressing Aquila with a meticulous collation of chosen parts from both Is 7:14 (LXX) and Hab 1:5 (LXX) which Timothy had already quoted: "those things that we speak [are] the things that the Lord said because of your [ὑμῶν] faithlessness. Indeed, for this reason *the Lord will give you [ὑμῖν] [a] sign* [Is 7:14] and that *I am working a work that you would not believe* [Hab 1:5]. Then, what greater signs than these are you seeking?"[283] The collation of the two biblical verses served to intensify the degree of the "Jew's" misunderstanding of his own scriptures. The author constructs the character of the "Jew" as the foil whose incorrectness of opinion enhances the legitimacy of the "Christian's" view and which offers to his own discourse an authoritative flare.

The anonymous author of the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* implements the same tactics when he embarks to discuss proofs from the law about the ever-virginity of Mary and the virgin birth of Christ. Timothy addresses Aquila's request for proofs about Mary's perpetual virginity from books from the law by referencing first the book of Exodus,[284] in particular v. 3:2 (LXX),

[283] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §18.13 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Χριστιανὸς εἶπεν· ταῦτα ἃ λαλοῦμεν, ὅσα ὁ κύριος εἶπεν διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν ὑμῶν· τὸ γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κύριος δώσει ὑμῖν σημεῖον, καὶ ὅτι ἔργον ἐγὼ ἐργάζομαι, ὃ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε· ἆρα τοῦτων ποῖα μείζονα σημεῖα ἐπιζητεῖς;"

[284] Following the use of the book of Exodus by the "Christian," there is a long discussion between the two characters on further biblical proofs for the purported ever-virginity of Mary where the "Christian" makes use of biblical passages from different books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament to argue that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus. These passages are part of the Christian exegetical method of allegory that aims to interpret the hidden meaning of biblical verses. As one may notice, this way of interpretation gave Christian authors large interpretative space for subjectivity, allowing them to read and interpret biblical texts depending on their theological agenda. See Stephen A. Barney, "Allegory," *Dictionary of Middle Ages* 1:178-88. I am focusing on the passage from the book of Exodus, firstly because it is the most relevant among the rest of the verses that the author uses (since the verse from the book of Exodus opens the section in his work on biblical proofs of the ever-virginity of Mary from books of the law whereas

"Now an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a fire of flame out of the bush, and he saw that the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not burning up," concluding with a rhetorical question which he addresses to the "Jew" asking him, "is this then or not a symbol of the childbirth/ or delivery and of the virginity?"[285] Bogdan Bucur has explained that both ante- and post-Nicene theologians have understood Ex 3:2 (LXX) as a Christophany (rather than a Theophany), namely as an appearance of Christ whom they saw as divine, and as a reference to Virgin Mary, showing the connection between the event of the incarnation and her perpetual virginity.[286] It appears that the Christian author of the dialogue associates the scene in the burning bush with the perpetual virginity of Mary and the virgin birth of Jesus (that is his incarnation) to defend and propagandize his belief in both. Aquila, as a foil, is, for the Christian author, the link to the Hebrew scripture to argue in the context of Exodus that the "Jew" failed to comprehend the real (from the Christian author's perspective) meaning of the scene with the burning bush. At the end, the miscomprehension by the "Jew" of what the "Christian" considered the real meaning of Ex 3:2 (LXX) emphasized the "Jew's" incorrectness and the "Christian's" legitimacy of opinion. Having

---

the other verses he quotes afterwards Exodus are from the prophets) to support my case, and secondly because it is a typical verse that late antique Christians had been using as an allegory of the immaculate conception of Jesus.

[285] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §19.1-4 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Ἰουδαῖος εἶπεν· ἐπηγγείλω καὶ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου διδόναι σύμβολα· δὸς ἡμῖν αὐτά. ὁ Χριστιανὸς εἶπεν· τί γὰρ ὡς μὴ εὐποροῦντες ἄλλων ταύτας προεβάλομεν; οὐ πάντως, μέχρι γὰρ σὺ εἴπῃς ἀρκεῖ εἰς κύριον καυχώμεθα εἰπεῖν, οὐ διαλείψωμεν προφέροντες πρὸς τὰ ἔτι κρείττονα σύμβολα. ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὑρίσκομεν ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς Ἐξόδου γεγραμμένον οὕτως· καὶ ὤφθη ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐν φλογὶ πυρὸς βάτου, καὶ ὁρᾷ Μωϋσῆς ὅτι ἡ βάτος ἐκαίετο, ἡ δὲ βάτος οὐ κατεκαίετο. ἆρα ἐστιν τοῦτο σύμβολον τοῦ τοκετοῦ καὶ τῆς παρθενίας, ἢ οὐ;"

"The Jew said: You promised to give symbols from the law. Give these to us. The Christian said: Did we present these as if we do not have plenty of others? By no means! For until you shall say, it is enough, we shall boast in the Lord to speak, [and] we shall not cease to display still better symbols. For behold, we find in the book of Exodus having been written in this way: "Now an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a fire of flame out of the bush, and he saw that the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not burning up. Is this then or not a symbol of the childbirth/ or delivery and of the virginity?"

[286] Bogdan G. Bucur, "Ὁ ὤν εὐλογητὸς Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν: Observations on the Early Christian Interpretation of the Burning Bush Scene," *JAAJ* 6 (2018): 37-82. On rabbinic readings on the incident with the burning bush see Ronit Nikolsky, "'God Tempted Moses for Seven days': The Bush Revelation in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses*, ed. George H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 89-107.

provided proofs from the prophets and the law, as the Christian author ventured to argue in his work, Timothy endeavored to demonstrate the totality of the "Jew's" function as a foil to his ancestral biblical authors, highlighting at once the authoritativeness of the Christian discourse on Mary's virginity after the birth of Jesus.

As the conversation between Timothy and Aquila on Mary's perpetual virginity and the birth of Jesus (now identified as God in the dialogue) is wrapping up in the dialogue, the Christian author sets the scene to finally discuss Is 7:14 (LXX) by engaging in an analysis of Gen 49:9 (LXX). He argues first that Isaac's blessing on his deathbed upon his son Judah in Gen 49:8-12 (LXX) was a reference to Jesus.[287] In so doing, the Christian author associates the birth of Jesus from a virgin by highlighting Gen 49:9 (LXX) from among Gen 49:8-12 where Isaac proclaims, "Ioudas; *from a shoot*, my son, *you went up*."[288] The verse has been understood by early Christian interpreters as a reference to Jesus and the word "shoot" in the verse has been identified as an

[287] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §34.6 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Χριστιανὸς εἶπεν· καὶ ἡ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰούδαν γενομένη εὐλογία οὐκ εἰς τὸν Ἰούδαν αὕτη ἐπληρώθη ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν."

"The Christian said: and the blessing that was given upon Judah, it was not fulfilled upon Judah, but upon Jesus."

Genesis 49:1-33 describes the scene of Isaac's blessing to his sons on his deathbed in Egypt. Gen. 49:8-12, in particular, narrates Isaac's blessing to Judah: "᾽Ιούδα, σὲ αἰνέσαισαν οἱ ἀδελφοί σου· αἱ χεῖρές σου ἐπὶ νώτου τῶν ἐχθρῶν σου· προσκυνήσουσί σοι οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρός σου. σκύμνος λέοντος ᾽Ιούδα· **ἐκ βλαστοῦ, υἱέ μου, ἀνέβης**· ἀναπεσὼν ἐκοιμήθης ὡς λέων καὶ ὡς σκύμνος· τίς ἐγερεῖ αὐτόν; οὐκ ἐκλείψει ἄρχων ἐξ ᾽Ιούδα καὶ ἡγούμενος ἐκ τῶν μηρῶν αὐτοῦ, ἕως ἐὰν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ, καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκία ἐθνῶν. δεσμεύων πρὸς ἄμπελον τὸν πῶλον αὐτοῦ καὶ τῇ ἕλικι τὸν πῶλον τῆς ὄνου αὐτοῦ· πλυνεῖ ἐν οἴνῳ τὴν στολὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν αἵματι σταφυλῆς τὴν περιβολὴν αὐτοῦ· χαροποιοὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ οἴνου, καὶ λευκοὶ οἱ ὀδόντες αὐτοῦ ἢ γάλα."

"Ioudas, may your brothers praise you; your hands beb on the back of your enemies; your father's sons shall do obeisance to you. A lion's whelp you are, Ioudas; **from a shoot, my son, you went up.** When you reclined, you slept like a lion and like a whelp. Who will rouse him? A ruler shall not be wanting from Ioudas and a leader from his thighs until the things stored up for him come, and he is the expectation of nations. Binding his foal to a vine and his donkey's foal to the tendril, he shall wash his robe in wine and his garment in the blood of a bunch of grapes; his eyes are gladdening from wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk."

[288] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §34.7, 13. (ed. Robertson). The author quotes part of Gen 49:9 (LXX) in bold: "Ιούδα, σὲ αἰνέσαισαν οἱ ἀδελφοί σου· **αἱ χεῖρές σου ἐπὶ νώτου τῶν ἐχθρῶν σου· προσκυνήσουσί σοι οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρός σου.** σκύμνος λέοντος ᾽Ιούδα· **ἐκ βλαστοῦ, υἱέ μου, ἀνέβης**." "Ioudas, may your brothers praise you; **your hands beb on the back of your enemies; your father's sons shall do obeisance to you**. A lion's whelp you are, Ioudas; **from a shoot, my son, you went up.**"

allusion to Virgin Mary.[289] Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling inform us that according to Jerome, Ephrem, and Aphrahat, to name but few, "Jesus derived his human existence from Jesse and David through his mother, Mary…"[290] The author of the dialogue continues the same exegetical tradition at the time of the composition of his work, and argues further in favor of identifying behind the word "shoot" Virgin Mary. He explains that the word *shoot-βλαστός* in Gen 49:9 (LXX) could not be referring to Judah's mother, Leah, because (per his interpretation) she had already given birth to three other sons before Judah; Judah was not Leah's firstborn child and, thus, she could not have been characterized as a *shoot-βλαστός.* He then associates the woman in Gen 49:9 (LXX) who gives birth to a son and whom the verse characterizes as a *shoot-βλαστός* with the woman in Is 7:14 (LXX) where she is described as a virgin who shall give birth to a son and whose status explains the woman's characterization in Gen 49:9 (LXX) as *shoot-βλαστός*.[291]

However, the point of contention between the "Christian" and the "Jew" in Is 7:14 is the characterization of the woman. The "Christian" cites Is 7:14 from the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek

---

[289] Emmanouela Grypeou remarks, "A major stream of patristic tradition maintains that the rod coming forth out of Jesse was Mary, the mother of Jesus… Mary is associated with the 'root of Jesse' due to her ancestry from the 'house of David'. The Church Fathers argue that Mary is Judah's 'tender shoot' on account of the undefiled nature of the Virgin Mary. This view is supported by prophetic writings, such as LXX Isa 7:14 (cf. Isa 53:2), in which the birth of the Messiah is foretold, who will be borne by a virgin. Consequently, the 'blossom from this root' was Jesus, whose immaculate conception was implied in Jacob's blessing on Judah." Emmanouela Grypeou & Helen Spurling, "The Blessing on Judah" in *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou & Helen Spurling (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 394.

[290] Grypeou & Spurling, "The Blessing on Judah," 394 n. 84.

[291] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §34.13-14 (ed. Robertson). The "Christian" uses Gen. 29:35 and Is. 7:14 next to each other to associate the *shoot-βλαστός* of Gen 49:9 with the virgin woman of Is 7:14: "ὁ Χριστιανὸς εἶπεν· τὸ μὲν ἐν πρώτοις, οὐκ ἀνέβη ὁ Ἰούδας ἐκ βλαστοῦ· προσθεῖσα γὰρ φησὶν ἡ Λία ἔτεκεν υἱὸν τέταρτον τῷ Ἰακώβ, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰούδαν. πῶς οὖν ἐκ βλαστοῦ γίνεται; οὗτός ἐστιν κατὰ τὸν Ἡσαΐαν τὸν λέγοντα ὅτι παιδίον δοθήσεται ἡμῖν καὶ ἡ μητὴρ αὐτοῦ ἄνδρα οὐ γνώσεται, καὶ πάλιν ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ."

"The Christian said: Firstly, Judah did not go up from a shoot-βλαστός. For it is repeated, Leah bore a fourth son to Jacob and called his name Judah. So, how is he born from a shoot? This is according to Isaiah who says that a child will be given to us and his mother will not know a man, and again *Look, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and you shall name him Emmanouel*."

translation of the Hebrew Bible, where the verse writes for a virgin (*παρθένος*) who gives birth to a son: "Look, the *virgin* (*παρθένος*) shall be with child and bear a son, and you shall name him Emmanouel."[292] The "Jew," on the other hand, uses the translation of Aquila of Sinope (A)[293] who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek as an alternative version of the Septuagint to replace it at least among the Greek-speaking Jews.[294] The version of Is 7:14 (A) that the "Jew" seems to quote partially from writes "girl" (*νεᾶνις*) instead of "virgin" (*παρθένος*), "the Jew said: behold, the girl (*νεᾶνις*) Isaiah said, not the virgin (*παρθένος*)."[295] Interestingly enough, the "Christian" is portrayed to justify partially the "Jew's" reference to "νεᾶνις – girl, young woman" on the grounds of the language when he says, "However, if he [Isaiah] said *girl* (νεᾶνις), it is *girl* in Hebrew; but

---

[292] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §34.14 (ed. Robertson): "ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει, καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ."

[293] (A) is the abbreviation for Aquila of Sinope's version of the Hebrew Bible into Greek.

[294] Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 111. Ancient authors have given information about Aquilas's life and his translation such as Epiphanius of Salamis, who provides information in his *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* (On Weights and Measures) on the story of the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek as well as on the various Greek versions. According to Epiphanius of Salamis, Aquilas lived in the second century CE and became a convert to Judaism [James Elmer Dean, ed., *Epiphanius' Treatise on Weights and Measures: The Syriac Version* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935), section 13, pp. 29-32]. Marcos informs us that "Jerome in his commentary on Ezekiel 3:5 and Augustine [in his] *De Civitate Dei* 15,23" give us information of the preference of Jewish circles to Aquilas's translation over that of the Septuagint and in y. Megillah 1.9 there is mention of the acceptance of Aquilas's translation by the Jews. Idem, 112. To this, we should include Justinian's Novella 146 that regulated the use of Aquila's translation and of the Septuagint in the synagogues. See ibid. n. 18 where Marcos cites the modern translation of Novella 146: "P. Kahle, in *The Cairo Geniza*, Oxford 1959, 315-17." See also Jenny R. Labendz's more recent article on Aquila's translation of the Bible where she catalogues rabbinic and Christian views of Aquila's Bible translation, concluding that rabbinic authors saw merit in his translation which they used wherever it was necessary, whereas for some Christians, the heresiologists, his translation was a heretical work, and for others it was an important text as a "witness to the original Hebrew Bible and a useful tool in correcting the Septuagint translation." Jenny R. Labendz, "Aquila's Bible Translation in Late Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Perspectives," *The Harvard Theological Review* 102.3 (2009), 387. At the end, Labendz's words epitomize the Jewish and Christian feelings towards Aquila's translation, "In the eyes of the rabbis, Aquila composed a *translation* of Scripture; in the eyes of some Christians, he *corrupted* Scripture." Labendz, "Aquila's Bible Translation," 383. See also, Reinhart Ceulemans, "The Septuagint and Other Translations" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 42-44.

[295] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §34.15 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Ἰουδαῖος εἶπεν· ἰδού, ἡ νεάνις εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας, μὴ ἡ παρθένος." Aquila's version of Is 7:14 writes: "διὰ τοῦτο δώσει (κύριος) αὐτὸς σημεῖον· ἰδοὺ ἡ ***νεᾶνις*** ἐν γαστρὶ συλλαμβάνει, καὶ τίκτει υἱὸν, καὶ καλέσεις ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, Ἐμμανουήλ." Frederick Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum Quae Supersunt: Veterum Interpretum Graecorum in Totum Vetus Testamentum Fragmenta* (Oxinii: e Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1875), 443.

in order that I may be comprehended by you in this way, the *girl* (νεᾶνις) is interpreted/translated (ἑρμηνεύεται) *virgin* (παρθένος)."[296] The primary meaning of the verb *ἑρμηνεύεται* is "to interpret, to expound, to comment" with its secondary meaning to be "to translate."[297] Thus, there are two readings of the "Christian's" response to the "Jew." It either writes "the girl (*νεᾶνις*) is interpreted (*ἑρμηνεύεται*) virgin" or "the girl (*νεᾶνις*) is translated (*ἑρμηνεύεται*) virgin." The difference is significant. If the verb *ἑρμηνεύεται* means here "to be interpreted" then the Christian implies that the word *νεᾶνις – girl* which is the word the "Jew" uses with reference to Is 7:14 denotes a *girl* with the implication of being a virgin. However, if the verb *ἑρμηνεύεται* means here "to be translated" then the "Christian" argues that *νεᾶνις - girl* does mean *παρθένος – virgin*. In the former case we have an interpretation of the word *νεᾶνις – girl* alluding to a virgin woman, whereas in the latter case we have a literal meaning of the word *νεᾶνις* to mean virgin woman. The second reading of the word *νεᾶνις* is not supported lexicographically, leaving the first reading of the word *νεᾶνις* as an option, in which case the "Christian" wants to argue that νεᾶνις is translated into *παρθένος-virgin* (there is a Greek noun to denote the virgin which is παρθένος and not *νεᾶνις*) when in actuality he is paraphrasing the word, interpreting it to mean *virgin*. The author appears to be using purposefully the ambiguous verb *ἑρμηνεύεται* to denote to the "Jew's" use of the word *νεᾶνις* both the meaning *girl* with an allusion to the status of virginity and the meaning *virgin*.[298]

---

[296] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §34.16 (ed. Robertson): "ὁ Χριστιανὸς εἶπεν· εἰ μέντοι νεάνις εἶπεν, νεάνις ἐν τῷ ἑβραϊκῷ ἐστίν· ἵνα δὲ καὶ οὕτως συμπεριενεχθῶ σοι, ἡ νεᾶνις παρθένος ἑρμηνεύεται."

[297] *ἑρμηνεύεται* from verb *ἑρμηνεύω*. According to Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, eds., "ἑρμηνεύω," *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 690, *ἑρμηνεύω* in classical Greek means, 1. interpret, translate; 2. explain, expound; 3. speak clearly, articulate. According to Lampe, "ἑρμηνεύω," *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 549, *ἑρμηνεύω* in Ecclesiastical Greek means 1. interpret, expound, comment; 2. denote; 3. translate. In both cases, the meaning of verb *ἑρμηνεύω* as "to translate" is secondary.

[298] Put differently: The "Jew" is portrayed to use a different version of the translation of Is 7:14 where the verse writes *νεᾶνις*. The "Christian" uses the Septuagint version of Is 7:14 where the verse writes *παρθένος*. For the Christian author, the word *νεᾶνις* that the "Jew" uses means the word *παρθένος* that the "Christian" deploys.

Finally, to substantiate the aforementioned reading of equating the meaning *girl* with the meaning *virgin*, Timothy quotes Deuteronomy 22:28 (LXX) that discusses the case of the rape of an unmarried virgin woman and the obligations of the male rapist towards his victim.[299] Deut 22:28 (LXX) writes, "But if someone finds the *girl*, the *virgin*, who is not engaged, and, after he forces her, lies with her and he is discovered, the man who lay with her shall give fifty silver didrachmas to the young woman's father, and she shall become his wife. Because he humbled her, he shall not be able to send her away for all time."[300] The deployment of Deut 22:28 (LXX) by the "Christian" is not fortuitous: the double attribution of the words *girl* and *virgin* to the same woman who was the victim of rape allows him to argue that the pair *νεᾶνις -παρθένος* (*girl-virgin*) means that a *νεᾶνις* (girl) is *παρθένος* (virgin) and that a *νεᾶνις* (girl) equates to *παρθένος* (virgin).[301] Concluding that *girl* means *virgin*, the "Christian" points out to his interlocutor that Is 7:14 (in both LXX and A versions) talks about Mary who was both a young woman/*girl* and a *virgin* who gave birth to Jesus. Timothy's interpretation alludes to the fact that the Jews misunderstood their own prophet's real meaning of Is 7:14 (LXX and A), according to the Christian author of the dialogue, which he had grasped and could provide to his interlocutor. The author of the dialogue aimed to connect the woman of Is 7:14 (LXX and A) with virgin Mary in order to fit his theological

[299] *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* §34.17 (ed. Robertson): "φησὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Δευτερονομίῳ ἐὰν δὲ εὕρων ἄνθρωπος παρθένον, νεᾶνιν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, καὶ ταπεινώσει αὐτὴν βιασάμενος, καὶ γνωθῇ τῷ πατρὶ καὶ τῇ μητρὶ αὐτῆς, δώσουσιν αὐτὴν αὐτῷ εἰς γυναῖκα."

[300] Deut 22:28. "᾽Εὰν δέ τις εὕρῃ τὴν παῖδα τὴν παρθένον, ἥτις οὐ μεμνήστευται, καὶ βιασάμενος κοιμηθῇ μετ᾽ αὐτῆς καὶ εὑρεθῇ, δώσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ κοιμηθεὶς μετ᾽ αὐτῆς τῷ πατρὶ τῆς νεάνιδος πεντήκοντα δίδραχμα ἀργυρίου, καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσται γυνή, ἀνθ᾽ ὧν ἐταπείνωσεν αὐτήν· οὐ δυνήσεται ἐξαποστεῖλαι αὐτὴν τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον." (But if someone finds the girl, the virgin, who is not engaged, and, after he forces her, lies with her and hea is discovered, the man who lay with her shall give fifty silver didrachmas to the young woman's father, and she shall become his wife. Because he humbled her, he shall not be able to send her away for all time). It is interesting to notice that the LXX in Deut 22:28 uses the noun *παῖδα* accompanied by *παρθένον* whereas the Christian author uses the noun *νεᾶνιν* accompanied by the same noun *παρθένον.*

[301] Namely, νεᾶνις = παρθένος

agenda. According to this agenda, Mary, a young woman/girl, is a virgin ante, in, and *post partum* who gave birth to a son.

The sixth-century author of the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* appears to be in line with those theologians who dogmatized in favor of Mary's perpetual virginity and her birth to Christ. By offering a succinct analysis of his belief in Mary, tracing its correctness to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, the author either could be responding at the time of the composition of his work to the need to object to those voices that negated this belief or could be giving a brief summary of his views on this subject.[302] The Christian author appears to have deployed the image of the "Jew" as a foil that functioned as a rhetorical device to claim a religious legitimacy of his audience's belief in the birth of their Christ/God from a virgin and in the ever-virginity of Mary before, during, and after conception. For this reason, he presented the "Jew" as foil to the prophets and the law by depicting him as not understanding the real (as viewed by the "Christian") meaning of the quoted biblical verses that (for him) talked about the aforementioned issue, and by portraying Timothy as having perceived the real understanding of these same verses.

[302] Sawyer, *Isaiah through the Centuries*, 55-6 explains "The role of this famous verse in Christian tradition begins at the very beginning of the New Testament, where it is quoted in relation to the story of the Virgin Mary's miraculous conception of a son who will be called Immanuel (Matt 1:22–25). The Greek has parthenos 'virgin', and it is this version that has been almost universally adopted in Christian translations right down to the modern period. The Church Fathers defend it against Jewish claims that the original Hebrew ('almah) does not refer to a virgin: the Septuagint is older and more reliable than the translations of the Jewish scholars (Eusebius, Theodoret; cf. Justin, *Dialogue* 43; 71). Furthermore, the text does not say that the young woman was not a virgin (Cyril, Eusebius, Jerome), and 'what sort of a sign would it be if a young woman who was not a virgin bore a son?' (Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:34–35; cf. Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 84; Chrysostom; Luther). The view that the young woman was the wife of Ahaz is also dismissed: 'who ever called Hezekiah Immanuel?' (Cyril). The virgin birth is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (cf. Matt 1:23) (Augustine, Sermon 370.3; Leo the Great, Sermon 23.1). Ambrose suggests that the Virgin Mary had read the prophecy and realized it was fulfilled in her (Commentary on Luke 2:15). For others, such as Gregory of Nyssa, it is more than a prophecy: it is the formulation of a doctrine (On the Birth of Christ). Adolf Harnack even suggested that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth originated as 'just a postulate' of this verse (Harnack 1893: I, 113; cf. *ChDogm* I.2, 178."

The Christ/Messiah as the Son of God

Moving to another aspect of the subject on the divinity of the Christians' Messiah, that of his characterization as the Son of God, we find this topic discussed among other subjects in the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk*. The author of this work, engages similarly the image of the "Jew" as the foil to both a "Christian" interlocutor and to biblical Israelite authors to provide a summary of his opinion and to argue for the religious accuracy of his belief that the Messiah is the Son of God and divine.

The title Son of God has a long history in the life of formative and early Christianity, comprising one of the Christological titles that have been given to Jesus. The earlier usage of the designation in the context of Christianity is found in the New Testament, in particular in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and in other Pauline letters, and later on in the four canonical gospels.[303] Gerard O'Collins remarks that Jesus "Even if historically he never called himself 'the only' Son of God (see John 1: 14, 18; 3: 16, 18), …[he] presented himself as Son and not just as one who was the divinely appointed Messiah (and therefore 'son' of God)." [304] The title appears to have stood on the divine side rather than on the human.[305]

The subsequent centuries witnessed continued theological discussions regarding Jesus's humanity and divinity. In the second century CE, the idea that Jesus was a second God and in some sense subordinate to the Father did not diminish his divinity (Justin), whereas the belief that the Son was pre-existent with the Father and still assuming real flesh was addressing some concerns

[303] O'Collins, *Christology*, 121-2.

[304] O'Collins, *Christology*, 131.

[305] O'Collins, *Christology*, 140.

on how the Son could have received a real human body (Irenaeus).[306] In the third century CE, Tertullian's contribution on arguing for the divinity of the Son of God was theologically instrumental,[307] whereas Origen's views, which favored some sort of diminishing the Son's divinity to elevate his humanity, should be seen within the parameters of the theological concerns of his time and the theological challenges to which he was responding.[308] The fourth century CE addressed by definition the issue of the divinity of the Son of God and his relationship with God the Father, with the Council of Nicaea I, in 325 CE (first Ecumenical Council) decreeing that the Son of God is God of the same substance with the Father.[309]

By the fifth century CE, the discussions on the Son of God were connected with the number of natures in Jesus, arguing that in him there are two natures, a human and a divine (third Ecumenical Council, Ephesus 431 CE),[310] and that Jesus, the Son of God, is truly God and truly human (fourth Ecumenical Council, Chalcedon 451 CE).[311] In the sixth century CE the Christological discussions on the Son of God addressed again the unity of the person in Christ against the existence of two persons due to the existence of two natures in him (fifth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople II, 553 CE),[312] whereas in the seventh century CE it was decreed that

[306] O'Collins, *Christology*, 176.

[307] As O'Collins, *Christology*, 179 explains on the contribution of the third-century Tertullian against fourth-, and fifth-century heresies, when he writes that "Tertullian can be seen to have ruled out in advance four major aberrations to come: Arianism, by maintaining that the Son is truly God ('Light from Light'); Apollinarianism, by defending Christ's integral humanity;18 Nestorianism, by insisting on the unity of Christ's one person; and Eutychianism, by excluding any mixture of divinity and humanity to form some tertium quid."

[308] O'Collins, *Christology*, 177-80.

[309] Davis, "Council of Nicaea I, 325," 33-80.

[310] Davis, "The Council of Ephesus, 431," 134-69.

[311] Davis, "The Council of Chalcedon, 451," 170-206.

[312] Davis, "Council of Constantinople II, 553," 207-57.

Christ is both God and human of two natures, (a human and a divine), having two energies or actions (a human and a divine) and two wills (a human and a divine).[313] It may be seen, thus, that the discussions on the divinity of Jesus and the particularities of the number of natures and their existence or unity in him across the first seven centuries CE determined the stance of the various ecclesiastical writers who argued for particular positions.

The eighth century CE, as I discussed in Chapter 2, dealt with a different topic, the veneration of the icons, and, in particular, the pictorial depiction of the image of Christ. The discussions on the issue had started already in the fourth century CE, but they culminated in the eighth and ninth centuries CE with the Council of Nicaea II, in 787 CE (seventh Ecumenical Council) and the final restoration of the images in 843 CE. The rejection of the pictorial depiction of Christ by those Christians and theologians who opposed to image-making and image-worship was based on the premise that a pictorial representation of Christ could depict only his human and not his divine nature. Such a situation was seen by them as misrepresenting the image of Christ by reducing his divinity. On the other hand, the proponents of icons and their worship argued that an icon of Jesus depicted the incarnate God. For them, the icon of Christ demonstrated that Christ is God who received flesh and appeared on earth.[314]

Given that the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* was composed in the eighth century CE, the discussions in this work on the Son of God being divine and human can be connected to the discussions in the eighth century CE around the pictorial depiction of Jesus, for, as I explained above, they dealt with the issue of whether Jesus can be depicted if he is God and whether, if he is pictorially represented, it is only his humanity that is portrayed with pigments.

---

[313] Davis, "Council of Constantinople III, 680," 258-89.

[314] Davis, "The Council of Nicaea II, 787," 290-322. See also Leonela Fundic, "Iconology/Icons/Iconicity," *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00001658.

The anonymous author of this work, in discussing through the image of the "Christian" and the "Jew" the topic of Christ as the Son of God, appears to be in line with those Christian writers who understood Christ as divine and human. He might be responding to the theological discussions that were happening in the eighth century CE, as it could be deduced by the opening of his work with a discussion on the icons and the depiction of Jesus.[315] As I will show in this section, the anonymous author of this dialectical text provides a summary of his belief on the divinity of the Son of God (which we need to see in relation to the discussion at the opening of his work on the icons) and deploys the "Jew" as the foil whom he is portrayed to instruct through the image of the "Christian" in order to trace to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament the justification of his views and thus to argue for their correctness.

Following the debate on the image-making and image-worship, the author of the dialogue goes on to portray the two discussants conversing on the topic of the Son of God. In so doing, he presents the "Jew" asking the "Christian" why Christians blaspheme by believing that God has a son. The "Jew's" question allows the "Christian" to use Psalm 2:7 in his response. The two interlocutors engage in a swift dialectical crosstalk,

> *The Jew said:* For what reason do you blaspheme saying (βλασφημεῖτε λέγοντες in plural) [that] God has a son?
> *The Christian [said]:* It is not only us who say this, but above all your scripture (ἡ γραφὴ ὑμῶν); for it says, "*The Lord said to me, 'My son you are; today I have begotten you*."[316]
> *The Jew [said]:* The Psalm talks about Solomon.
> *The Christian [said]:* How much part of the world did Solomon possess?
> *The Jew [said]:* [Solomon possessed] neither half nor one third of the world.
> *The Christian [said]:* **Then, listen now sensibly and learn that the Psalm does not talk about Solomon but about Christ** (περὶ Χριστοῦ λέγει ὁ ψαλμός); for it said that "*The Lord said to me, 'My son you are; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you nations as your heritage, and as your possession the ends of the earth. You shall shepherd them with an iron rod, and like potter's vessels you will shatter them. And now, O kings,*

[315] I analyzed this topic in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[316] The "Christian" cites the Septuagint version of Ps 2:7: "Κύριος εἶπε πρός με· υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε."

> *be sensible.*"[317] Tell me now: you said to me [that] Solomon did not possess the ends of the earth; when did he shepherd them with an iron rod? When did he shatter the enemies themselves like potter's vessels? Never.[318]

The anonymous author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* deploys Ps 2:7 (a Christological verse from a Christian perspective) to argue on two frontiers: on the one hand that Christ is the Son of God, and on the other hand that Christ is also God. As Constantin Oancea points out, Ps 2:7 (LXX) in its original context was understood as a reference to the king in Zion who was the son of God by God's degree and not by nature, as it was determined by God's covenant to establish the House of David.[319] In the Christian setting, however, New Testament writers used Ps 2:7 (LXX) to describe their understanding of Jesus's divine sonship. This is an interpretation that the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* continues to use for his own purposes.[320] Ecclesiastical writers understood Ps 2:7 (LXX) as an allusion to

---

[317] Ps 2:7-10. "Κύριος εἶπε πρός με· υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε. αἴτησαι παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ, καὶ δώσω σοι ἔθνη τὴν κληρονομίαν σου καὶ τὴν κατάσχεσίν σου τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς. ποιμανεῖς αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ, ὡς σκεύη κεραμέως συντρίψεις αὐτούς. καὶ νῦν, βασιλεῖς, σύνετε, παιδεύθητε, πάντες οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν."

[318] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §2 (ed. McGiffert): "Ὁ Ἰουδαῖος εἶπε· διὰ τί βλασφημεῖτε λέγοντες υἱὸν ἔχει ὁ θεός; ὁ χριστιανός· οὐχ ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν οἱ λέγοντες τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ γραφὴ ὑμῶν· λέγει γὰρ "Κύριος εἶπε πρός με υἱός μου εἶ σὺ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε." ὁ Ἰουδαῖος· περὶ Σολομῶντος λέγει ὁ ψαλμός. ὁ χριστιανός· πόσου μέρους τοῦ κόσμου ἐκυρίευσεν ὁ Σολομῶν; ὁ Ἰουδαῖος· οὐδὲ τοῦ ἡμίσεος, οὐδὲ τοῦ τρίτου μέρους τοῦ κόσμου. ὁ χριστιανός· ἄκουσον οὖν ἄρτι νουνεχῶς καὶ μάθε ὅτι οὐ περὶ Σολομῶντος, ἀλλὰ περὶ Χριστοῦ λέγει ὁ ψαλμός· εἶπε γὰρ ὅτι "Κύριος εἶπε πρός με υἱός μου εἶ σὺ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε· αἴτησαι παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ καὶ δώσω σπι ἔθνη τὴν κληρονομίαν σου, καὶ τὴν κατάσχεσίν σου τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς· ποιμανεῖς αὐτοῦς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ, ὡς σκεύη κεραμέως συντρίψεις αὐτοὺς καὶ νῦν βασιλεῖς σύνετε." εἰπέ μοι ἄρτι, σὺ εἶπάς μοι οὐ κατέσχε Σολομῶν τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς, πότε ἐποίμανεν αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ; πότε ὡς σκεύη κεραμέως συνέτριψεν αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἐχθρούς; οὐδέποτε."

[319] Constantin Oancea, "Psalm 2 im Alten Testament und im Frühen Judentum," *Sacra Scripta* 11.2 (2013): 170, where he writes "Auch hier ist die Gottessohnschaft des Königs nicht physisch gedacht. Der König ist nicht der Sohn Gottes seinem Wesen nach, sondern er wird Sohn aufgrund von Jahwes Dekret. Das ist Bundessprache: Zwischen Jahwe und dem König besteht fortan eine Beziehung, die beide in je spezifischer Weise verpflichtet. Ähnlich wie in Ps 2 ist auch in Ps 89 der Beschluss Jahwes über Davids Erwählung und Salbung (V 4-5.21.29.37-38) durch eine Aussage über ihre Vater-Sohn Beziehung erweitert (V 27-28). Ps 89 ist mit Sicherheit nachexilisch (V 39ff.). Sowohl Ps 2 als auch Ps 89 nehmen eine geprägte Bundesvorstellung wieder auf, welche die Verheißung der ewigen davidischen Dynastie mit der Gottessohnschaft des Königs zusammenbrachte. Beide Psalmen stellen meiner Meinung nach eine Relektüre von 2 Sam 7,14 dar."

[320] Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll "Psalms in the New Testament" in *The Oxford Handbook of Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 270-80. See also Susan Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 14-15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23; and Alan Kam-Yau Chan, *Melchizedek*

Christ as God,[321] applying "a prophetic-typological reading of the Old Testament"[322] and, in all, they saw in Ps 2 a reference to Christ as God's anointed one, applying it either against the Jews or most importantly against Christians who denied Jesus's divine sonship and divinity by stressing out his humanity on the grounds of the adoption of the Messiah about which the verse talks.[323] It might be the case, then, that the author rejects possible reading of the verse as an indicator of Jesus's humanity only, and not of his divinity. Such a reading of Ps 2:7 might have been possible in the eighth century CE Christological discussions on the pictorial depiction of Jesus's humanity, against which the author seems to argue.

To support the correctness of his view, the author constructs the image of the "Jew" as the foil to the biblical author of Ps 2. Presenting the "Jew" to accuse Christians of blaspheming God by believing that God has a son when for him (that is the "Jew") the verse should be interpreted literally as a reference to David's son, Solomon, allows the author through the "Christian" interlocutor to deploy Psalms whose biblical Israelite provenance and its being part of the Jewish canon he underlines in order to argue that Ps 2:7 had already talked about the Son of God before

---

Passages in the Bible: A Case Study for Inner-Biblical and Inter-Biblical Interpretation (Warsaw: De Gruyter, 2016), 167 where he explains that "In Ps 2:7-8, the messianic king is characterized as Yahweh's "son" and as "heir" of the nations. These two notions, the sonship and heirship, are now conferred upon Jesus by the author of Hebrews." For general introductions on the use of Psalm 2 see Kelli S. O'Brien, *The Use of Scripture in the Markan Passion Narrative* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 155-66; and "Sam Janse, *"You are My Son:" The Reception History of Psalm 2 in Early Judaism and the Early Church* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009)" as quoted by Ahearne-Kroll "Psalms in the New Testament," 279 n. 9. Without disregarding the messianic allusions of Ps 2:7, Israel Knohl, "Religion and Politics in Psalm 2" in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible Septuagint and Dead Sea Scroll in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, ed. Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft , Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Weston W. Fields (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 726-27 argues for the use of the phrase "son of God" as a political device intended for the Israelites rather than for the Judah's enemies in an effort to "strengthen the rule and legitimacy of the king among his people in a time of an external threat" (727). As Kohn points out, the portrayal of the Judean king as the son of God follows a long line of an ancient cultural tradition where kings were called son of God as "a political tool for supporting a ruler in his struggle with his enemies" (726).

[321] Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries*, 31, 56, 57.

[322] Gerard Rouwhorst and Marcel Poorthuis, "'Why do the Nations Conspire?: Psalm 2 in Post-Biblical Jewish and Christian Traditions" in Empsychoi Logoi—Religious Innovations in Antiquity (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 436.

[323] Rouwhorst and Poorthuis, "'Why do the Nations Conspire?," 437-9.

Christians made use of it. Stressing both the biblical Israelite origin of the book of Psalms, by highlighting that it is the Jews' scripture, and the reference in it via Ps 2:7 (LXX) to a certain son of God (a reading which is loaded with the Christian author's reading as a reference to the Messiah) the Christian author constructs gradually the "Jew" as the foil to the psalmist to present that the "Jew" misunderstood his own scripture in order to dramatize rhetorically his incorrectness and the legitimacy of the "Christian's" interpretation.

To further enhance the legitimacy of the reading of Ps 2:7 (LXX) aligning with the tradition of those Christian writers who read it as a reference to Christ as the Son of God and God himself and not to Solomon, the author adds an instructional flare in the communication between the two discussants, having the "Christian" instruct the "Jew" on his understanding of Ps 2:7-10 (LXX): "**Then, listen now sensibly and learn that the Psalm does not talk about Solomon but about Christ**;… **Tell me now**: you said to me [that] Solomon did not possess the ends of the earth; when did he shepherd them with an iron rod? When did he shatter the enemies themselves like potter's vessels? Never."[324] The discussion here is not on whether Christ is the Son of God but on the identity of the addressee behind these words: was it Christ or Solomon? The author illustrates the "monk" inviting the "Jew" to pay attention in a most diligent way to his upcoming exegesis of Ps 2:7-10 (LXX) that would allow him to learn the verses' hidden message as a reference to Christ. The author through his "Christian" persona's response to the "Jew" retorts to two challenges by arguing: 1) that the verse "*My son you are; today I have begotten you*" describes Christ as the Son of God and divine himself, and 2) that Ps 2:8-9 (LXX) are not an allusion to Solomon (a possible explanation on part of those who denied the Christological reding of the verse) but to Christ.

[324] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §2 (ed. McGiffert): "ἄκουσον οὖν ἄρτι νουνεχῶς καὶ μάθε…εἰπέ μοι ἄρτι, σὺ εἶπάς μοι οὐ κατέσχε Σολομῶν τὰ πέρατ τῆς γῆς, πότε ἐποίμανεν αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ; πότε ὡς σκεύη κεραμέως συνέτριψεν αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἐχθρούς; οὐδέποτε."

Concluding his interpretation with two rhetorical questions, whose goal is to justify that Solomon had never had dominion over the entire world and to insinuate that the "Christian's" understanding of Ps 2:7 (LXX) as a reference to Christ was correct while the "Jew's" opinion that the verse referred to Solomon was wrong, the "monk" intensifies, through the careful choice of his words, the instructional attitude towards the "Jew" as the foil whom he wants to enlighten on the correct meaning of the verse (as the "Christian" regards), claiming at the same time the religious legitimacy of his own belief.

In the next phase of the discussion through Ps 2:7-8 (LXX) on Christ as the Son of God and divine, the author depicts the "Jew" and the "monk" to converse on whether the relationship between Christ and God is on equal or unequal terms in order to provide a summary of his belief on the topic of Christ being God and co-eternal with the Father that goes in hand with that of Christ as the Son of God. The "Jew" raises the issue of the equality of the relationship between God and the Son whom the "monk" recognizes as the Christ. Citing Ps 2:7-8 (LXX), the "Jew" ponders "How does it [the psalm] say, *The Lord said to me, ask of me*? For if he is son, as you say (ὡς λέγετε), how does God say, *ask of me*, as [if he speaks] to a servant? And again, how does it [the psalm] say, *today I have begotten you*? But you say (ὑμεῖς λέγετε) that he was born before the world."[325] The "Jew" is raising two issues, both of which deal with Christ's relationship with God. First, whether Christ is subordinate to God, and second whether he existed before time along with God. The "Jew" draws the conclusion of Christ's subordination to God from how Ps 2:8 (LXX) portrays God speaking to his addressee, namely as if one addresses themselves to a servant and not to a child. For the "Jew," the phrase "ask of me anything" demonstrates the permission one

[325] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §3 (ed. McGiffert): "Ὁ Ἰουδαῖος· πῶς λέγει "εἶπε Κύριος πρός με αἴτησαι παρ᾽ ἐμου"; καὶ γὰρ εἰ υἱός έστιν, ὡς λέγετε, πῶς λέγει ὁ θεὸς ὡς πρὸς δοῦλον αἴτησαι παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ; καὶ πάλιν πῶς λέγει "ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε"; ὑμεῖς δὲ λέγετε ὅτι πρὸ τοῦ κόσμου ὅλου ἐγεννήθη."

gives to their discussant, hinting that one of the two parties talks from a seat of power. From Ps 2:7 (LXX) the "Jew" draws the assumption of Christ's birth in time and not eternally on the grounds of writing that God begot the son in time, implying that God already preexisted of the son and the son was begotten at a particular temporal point. In both cases, the "Jew" is portrayed to question Christ's divinity and his preexistence with God, reminding early Christological controversies that, for example, denied "Christ's eternal sonship" such as Arianism.[326] Providing a summary of his belief on Christ as the Son of God, God, and co-eternal with the Father one may deduce that the author is addressing from the side of those Christian writers who defended the pictorial representation of Christ those who denied it and argued that an icon depicts only his human nature and lowers his divine nature. Again, the "Jew" is deployed as the foil to buttress the author's correctness of belief by maintaining that his understanding of Ps 2:7-8 (LXX) aligns with the original meaning of the Psalmist, and by pointing to the contradiction between the meaning of Ps 2:7-8 (LXX) the way he understands it, and the interpretation that the "Jew" has given to the same verses.

By having the "Jew" act as the foil, the Christian author has gradually set the scene to present his perspective on the "Jew's" observations. The "monk" explains,

> "*The Christian:* Concerning the father saying to the son, *ask of me and I will give you nations*, **do not be scandalized;** for many times the father says to his son out of great love, ask me what you wish and I shall offer to you; again, concerning saying, *today I have begotten you*, he talks about his birth in flesh; for he was born from the holy *Theotokos* [God-bearer] and ever-virgin Maria."[327]

[326] Rouwhorst and Poorthuis, "'Why do the Nations Conspire?," 437. Arianism, "the theological positions or teachings of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius" held that the Logos or the Son was not co-eternal with God and that the Son was created. Although he is divine, "he is subordinate to God." Hanns Christof Brennecke, "Arianism," *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00000280.

[327] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §3 (ed. McGiffert): "ὁ χριστιανός· περὶ τοῦ εἰπεῖν τὸν πατέρα πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν, "αἴτησαι παρ᾽ἐμοῦ, καὶ δώσω σοι ἔθνη," μὴ σκανδαλίζου· πολλάκις γὰρ λέγει πατὴρ πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πολλῆς ἀγάπης, αἴτησαί με ὃ θέλεις καὶ παράσχω σοι· πάλιν περὶ τοῦ εἰπεῖν, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε," περὶ τῆς κατὰ σάρκα γεννήσεως αὐτοῦ λέγει· εὐδοκία γὰρ πατρὸς ἐτέχθη ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου καὶ ἀεὶ παρθένου Μαρίας."

The "monk" argues for three decreed beliefs: First, that the Father and the Son are equals without the Son being subordinate to the Father, as he explains the father's request from his son in Ps 2:8 (LXX) to ask of him anything the son wills. Second, that the mention in Ps 2:7 (LXX) to the son's birth from the father with the use of the temporal adverb "today" applies to the birth of the Christ in time and in flesh, and not to his creation by the Father. And third, that Christ was born in flesh from the *Theotokos* and ever-virgin Mary. In a succinct fashion, the author gave the orthodox Christians' dogma on the divinity of Christ being co-eternal with the Father, on the humanity of Christ receiving flesh through Mary, and on the designation of Mary as ever-virgin and God-bearer who gave birth to incarnate God, alluding to the dogma that in the person of Christ there are two natures. Drawing from Ps 2:7 (LXX), the main aspects of the Christology of the Christian writers who accepted the seven Ecumenical Councils at a period when the issue of the two natures in Christ was at stake through the Christological discussions on the making and worship of images, the author ventures to prove the doctrinal correctness of his beliefs by tracing them as already foretold through the psalmist verse and by using the "Jew" as the link to the Hebrew scriptures that supposedly support his (the author's) theological views. In so doing, the author devises an imaginative space of instructing the "Jew" through which he advocates for his audience for the religious legitimacy of his theological beliefs.

Closing the discussion on Christ as the Son of God which the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* ties with the topic of Christ's divinity, the author portrays the "Jew" to acquire more information on whether Christ was co-eternal with God and the "monk" to explain that the proof he shall provide will come from his discussant's scriptures.[328] The

[328] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §4 (ed. McGiffert): "Ὁ Ἰουδαῖος· εἰ καὶ πείθεις με ὅτι ἐγεννήθη ἐκ Μαρίας, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔχεις μοι δεῖξαι ὅτι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ κόσμου ἐγεννήθη, ὅτι καὶ θεός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ὡς λέγεις. ὁ

"Christian" identifies openly the Hebrew Bible as the Jews' scripture to argue that he receives proofs from this text in order to argue that the Son is co-eternal with the Father. By a double rhetorical move through which the author uses the "Jew" both as the link to the Hebrew scriptures and as the foil to his own ancestral biblical authors, the author aims to denote legitimacy to his own beliefs. To make the religious validity of his opinions more prominent in the context of using the "Jew" as the foil, the author mentions explicitly that he will venture to prove that what has been said about Christ is true and as already having been proclaimed by the scriptures of the Jews, which comprises an implication to the genealogical affinity between the "Jew" and the ancient Israelite writers.

In this context, the "Christian" deploys Ps 109:1-4 LXX (110:1-4 MT)[329] to argue that the psalmist had already talked about Christ in his text. The discussion between the two interlocutors

---

χριστιανός· μὴ ὅλα ὁμοῦ ἐρώτα ἀλλὰ ἓν καὶ ἕν· καὶ ἐλπίζω εἰς τοὺς οἰκτιρμοὺς τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι ἐκ τῶν γραφῶν ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν προφητῶν ὑμῶν παριστῶ πάντα τὰ περὶ Χριστοῦ ὄντα ἀληθῆ, καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν προκηρυχθέντα."

"The Jew said: although you persuaded me that he [Christ] was born from Mary, however you have not proved to me both that he was born before the world [i.e. before the ages], and that Christ is God as you say. The Christian [said]: do not ask all together, but [ask] one at a time; and I hope for God's mercies that from your [ὑμῶν] scriptures and your [ὑμῶν] prophets I shall prove that everything about Christ is true, and that they have been proclaimed about him by them."

[329] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §5 (ed. McGiffert): "Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τῷ Κυρίῳ μου· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου. ῥάβδον δυνάμεως ἐξαποστελεῖ σοι Κύριος ἐκ Σιών, καὶ κατακυρίευε ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἐχθρῶν σου. μετὰ σοῦ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τῆς δυνάμεώς σου ἐν ταῖς λαμπρότησι τῶν ἁγίων σου· ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐγέννησά σε. ὤμοσε Κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται· σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ."

"The Lord said to my lord, "Sit on my right until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." A rod of your power the Lord will send out from Sion. And exercise dominion in the midst of your enemies! With you isd rule on a day of your power among the splendors of the holy ones. From the womb, before Morning-star, I brought you forth. The Lord swore and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek"." In the Hebrew Bible this is Psalm 110 as opposed to the LXX in which it is Psalm 109 due to the different numbering. C.T.R.Hayward, *Targums and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 379 explains that Psalm 110 "is a royal Psalm, headed 'for David' (Ps. 110:1); and it speaks of conflict involving enemies and kings (vv. 2, 3, and 5); the humbling of nations (v. 6); and an oath sworn to 'my lord' by YHWH that he is a priest for ever 'according to order of Melchizedek'." See also ibid., n. 8 where Hayward talks about the exegetical difficulty of Psalm 110: "The text of this Psalm, and scholarly attempts to offer an historical-critical account of it, are fraught with difficulties, one of the best accounts of which remains H.-J. Kraus, Psalmen, 2 vols., BKAT (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), vol. 2, pp. 752–764." On an analysis of Psalm 110 from a literary perspective see Chan, *Melchizedek Passages in the Bible*, 97-118.

is telling of the author's appropriation of the "Jew" as a foil and of his interest in the topic at hand to argue for the co-eternality of Christ with God:

> *The Christian:* However, I want to learn this from you [ἐξ ὑμῶν]: David who is a king, and a prophet, and a saint, whom did he have [as] a lord and a master?
> *The Jew:* This question does not hold; for David did not have any other lord but God who created the heaven and the earth.
> *The Christian:* You spoke correctly. Therefore, he talks about Christ that he is his lord, because he was born before the ages. For in the one-hundred and ninth psalm it says thus: "*The Lord said to my lord, Sit on my right*." Behold, then, he himself acknowledges the son [as] lord. For [it was] to him [to whom] the father said after his holy incarnation and ascension, "*Sit on my right until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet*;" "*among the splendors of the holy ones. From the womb, before Morning-star, I brought you forth.*" For who was born before the Morning-star? Does he talk about Adam? Not at all. For he [Adam] came into being two days after the morning star and the luminaries…Adam was formed on the sixth day. But the luminaries came into being on the fourth day and God talks about his own son that "*before Morning-star, I brought you forth, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek*." That is a priest of the nations. And also, Melchisedek was a priest of the nations and he offered both bread and wine, **as your [ὑμῶν] scripture witnesses again…**[330]

To try to justify that Christ is the Son of God, the "Christian" makes a collation of the different verses from Ps 109:1-4 (LXX) (110:1-4 MT), a Messianic psalm[331] that "identifies the Messiah as

[330] *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* §5 (ed. McGiffert): "[ὁ χριστιανός] Πλὴν τοῦτο θέλω μαθεῖν ἐξ ὑμῶν· ὁ Δαβίδ βασιλεὺς ὢν καὶ προφήτης καὶ ἅγιος, τίνα κύριον καὶ δεσπότην εἶχεν; ὁ Ἰουδαῖος· τοῦτο ἐρώτημα οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ Δαβίδ γὰρ κύριον ἄλλον οὐκ ἔχει, εἰ μὴ τὸν θεον τὸν ποιήσαντα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ὁ χριστιανός· ὀρθῶς εἶπας. ἰδοὺ οὖν αὐτὸς λέγει περὶ Χριστοῦ ὅτι κύριος αὐτοῦ ἐστιν, ὅτι καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων ἐγεννήθη· ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἑκατοστῷ ἐννάτῳ ψαλμῷ λέγει οὕτως, "εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου, κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου·" ἰδοὺ οὖν αὐτὸς τὸν υἱὸν κύριον ὁμολογεῖ· πρὸς αὐτὸν γὰρ εἶπεν ὁ πατὴρ, μετὰ τὴν ἁγίαν αὐτοῦ σάρκωσιν καὶ ἀνάληψιν, "κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου·" "ἐν ταῖς λαμπρότησι τῶν ἁγίων σου, ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐγέννησά σε." τὶς γὰρ ἐγεννήθη πρὸ ἑωσφόρου; ἆρα περὶ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ λέγει; οὐδαμῶς· μετὰ δύο γὰρ ἡμέρας τοῦ ἑωσφόρου καὶ τῶν ἀστέρων ἐγένετο. ἀλλ᾽ ἆρα περὶ τοῦ εἰλημμένου ὑμῶν λέγει; ἀλλ᾽ υἱὸν Δαβίδ λέγει εἶναι· ὁ δὲ Δαβὶδ μετὰ πολλοὺς τοῦ Ἀδὰμ ἐγεννήθη· ὁ δὲ Ἀδὰμ τῇ ἕκτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐπλάσθη· οἱ δὲ ἑωσφόροι τῇ τετάρτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγένοντο ὁ δὲ θεὸς λέγει περὶ τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ ὅτι "πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐγέννησά σε, σὺ εἶ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὴν αῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ," τουτέστιν ἱερεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν· καὶ γὰρ ὁ Μελχισεδὲκ ἱερεὺς ἦν τῶν ἐθνῶν, καὶ ἄρτον καὶ οἶνον προσέφερεν, ὡς μαρτυρεῖ πάλιν ἡ γραφὴ ὑμῶν·..."

The emphasis here is not so much on the Christian's argument as much as on his effort to emphasize the provenance of this reading, namely that it is written in the scriptures of the Jews. Nowhere does he say that it is a Christian interpretation, but he claims that what his audience believes about Christ is what is written already there.

[331] Barry C. Davis, "Is Psalm 110 a Messianic Psalm?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 160-73.

an appointed king in waiting (vv. 4-5), [and] a present priest like Melchizedek (vv. 4-5)."[332] Ps 110:4 (MT) was read by the New Testament authors as a reference to the divine nature of Christ[333] and its long interpretative tradition by early Christian writers witnesses its use to denote Christ's divinity.[334] As Predrag Dragutinović writes, Ps 110 (MT) and in particular verses such as v. 3, from the fourth century CE onwards, have been used to support the belief in the divine origin of Christ and his incarnation[335] with the particular Psalm to have been seen as a highly Christological text. In line with the previous interpretative tradition, the "Christian" reads the biblical verses in a way that justifies his belief in the divinity of Christ, his existence with the Father before time, and his birth in flesh in time, arguing that Christ is both God and human. The use of Ps 110:1-4 (MT) in the context of the discussions of the eighth century CE comes to summarize the belief that in Christ there are two natures that cannot be separated, responding in a way to those that found problematic the pictorial representation of Jesus on the grounds that it was only the human nature that could be represented on icons, accusing icon worshippers of reducing the divinity of Jesus. By means of his interlocutors and in particular the "Jew, whom he constructs as a "foil" to his own

[332] George A. Gunn, "Psalm 2 and the Reign of the Messiah," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169 (2012): 438.

[333] Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries*, 15. Gillingham offers among other psalms an overview of Psalm 110; thus, in the context of the New Testament, Ps 110 is used to talk about: 1) Christ as the son of David in the gospel of Mark (16); 2) Jesus as the son of David and still his Lord in the gospel of Matthew (18); 3) Jesus's superiority in comparison to David in the book of Acts (20) and in Romans (21); 4) Christ's exaltation in Ephesians (22).

[334] Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries,* gives an overview of the early Christian writers who quote Ps 110 in their works to refer to the divinity of Christ, such as Justin the Martyr (25), Irenaeus (25), Tertullian (26), Hippolytus of Rome (26), Athanasius of Alexandria (29), Diodorus of Tarsus (32), Theodore of Mopsuestia (32), and John the Chrysostom (33).

[335] See for example Athanasius's Letter to Marcellinus on the Psalms. Predrag Dragutinivić, "Psalm 110 im Neuen Testament und in der Frühen Kirche ein Stück Frühchristlicher Theologiegeschichte," *Sacra Scripta* 11.1 (2013): 95-111. According to Dragutović, "Ps 110 wird also in der patristischen Zeit durchaus christologisch gedeutet. Abgesehen von den verschiedenen Akzentsetzungen, die vor allem auf die innerkirchliche Debatten zurückzuführen sind, ist eine christologische Deutung überall festzustellen. Die Hervorhebung des V. 3 ist ein novum im Vergleich zu den Auslegungen im Neuen Testament und den Apostolischen Väter. Auch bei den Autoren, die die Psalmen nicht einfach christlich vereinnahmen, sondern sie ich ihrem eigenen Recht verstehen wollten, bleibt der Psalm 110 ein par excellence zu Christen sprechender Text." Idem, 110.

(the Jew's) scriptures, the Christian author claims a legitimacy of his opinion by tracing back to the Hebrew scripture/Old Testament his belief in the two natures of Christ.

It seems that in order for the author of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* to advocate for his belief in Christ as God and Son of God, he created a narrative where he presented the "Jew" as the foil to his ancestral biblical authors by arguing that the "Jew" misunderstood what his ancestors talked about and prophesied. At the same time, the Christian author constructs the "Jew" as being instructed by his "Christian" interlocutor on the real (as the Christian views it) meaning of the quoted biblical verses. He underscores to the "Jew" that the biblical verses derived from the "Jews'" scriptures and not from the Christians'. Having constructed and deployed the "Jew" as the instructed foil, the Christian author aims to claim for himself and for his audience exclusive religious legitimacy of opinion on the matter of Christ as the Son of God and God himself.

(One) God(s), the Father and the Son, Involved in the Creation

In several *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the conversations on the divine nature of Jesus usually lead to discussions on the number of Gods involved in the creation.[336] In these cases, the Christian authors portray a "Jew" to wonder whether there are two Gods,[337] if Christ is to be understood also as one, whereas the "Christian" interlocutor appears to advocate for the existence of one and not multiple Gods, even if he recognizes Christ as divine. Fundamentally, this topic is

[336] For example, the *Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus* (ed. Conybeare) and the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (ed. Robertson) have the longest discussions on the topic, whereas the *Trophies of Damascus* (ed. Bardy), the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* (McGiffert), the *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (ed. Hayman), and the *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* (ed. Berger) refer to this subject in passing and not in as much detail from a rhetorical perspective as in the first two works or in the Latin *Dialogue of Simon and Theophilus* that I analyze in this section.

[337] In the context of the creation of the world.

concerned with the monarchy of God while retaining the belief that Christ is the Son of God and God himself against voices that believed that recognizing Christ as God introduced two Gods in the Godhead. We find such discussions, among other topics, in the Latin *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus*.

The *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* is the oldest surviving Christian anti-Jewish dialogue written in Latin with a possible date of composition around the early fifth century CE.[338] Similarities between this work and the *Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus* and the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* suggest that all three works share a common source, the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus,* that survives in fragments in Latin and whose Greek original from the second century CE is now lost.[339] Lahey sees this work in the context of possible usage by Christians "for interaction with Jews" on the basis of its "numerous connections with Jewish thought."[340] Whether this is the case or not, it cannot be said with certainty, however, one may heed the historical context of this work's composition.

Being dated in the early fifth century CE Latin West, presumably Gaul,[341] the *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* seems to emerge right after a fertile century of intense theological debates that culminated in the first two Ecumenical Councils (Council of Nicaea I, 325 CE and council of Constantinople I, 381 CE) which dealt (among other issues) with two main theological subjects

[338] The use in this work of another Latin version of the biblical text than that of Jerome's Vulgate may also suggest the dating of this text. According to William Varner, the Latin biblical verses that the author of this text uses are not from the Vulgate but from a "Latin Biblical text in existence prior to that of Jerome's *Vulgate*… While it is possible that Jerome's *Vulgate* was in existence at the time of ST's composition, it had not attained the level of acceptability that came in later centuries. This is evident from the use of Old Latin renderings rather than Vulgate renderings in the dialogue." William Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues: Athanasius and Zacchaeus, Simon and Theophilus, Timothy and Aquila: Introductions, Texts, and Translations* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 90.

[339] Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 597.

[340] Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 597 and n. 69 and 70.

[341] Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 596; Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 90.

that concerned early- and late-fourth century CE Christians: the divinity of Jesus Christ the Son and his relationship with the Father (Council of Nicaea I, 325 CE) and the divinity of the Holy Spirit and its relationship with both the Father and the Son (Council of Constantinople I, 381 CE). The controversy that the first Ecumenical Council was called to resolve had to do with the nature of the Son and his relationship with the Father in order to address Arius and his followers' beliefs about the Son being subordinate to the Father, being created by the Father, and not truly God even if he was called God. The Council of Nicaea I, 325 CE decreed that the Son was of the same substance with the Father (homoousios - *ὁμοούσιος*) and also a true God without introducing two Gods in the Godhead.[342] In the last quarter of the fourth century CE, the Council of Constantinople I, 381 CE dealt with the negation of the deity of the Holy Spirit and with the belief that Jesus did not possess a human soul. Whereas it resolved the first issue by decreeing the divinity of the Holy Spirit and its designation as God equal with the Father and the Son, the other matter in question was to be resolved by the council of Ephesus in 431 CE, half a century later.[343]

The *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* emerged from a theological environment where the discussions on the nature of Christ the Son monopolized the attention of the Christians at the time. Such discussions, on the other hand, could have drawn the attention of non-Christian groups. Whether Evagrius, the so-called author of this text, was addressing other Christians outside his own views or non-Christian groups which understood Jesus as a second God is hard to tell. In either case, this text, as other *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues that concern the present topic and other subjects similar to the ones that I have discussed in this chapter, (for similar topics appear across

[342] Davis, "Council of Nicaea I, 325," 33-80.

[343] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christianity (600-1700)*, vol. 2 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 27-28. See also Davis, "Council of Constantinople I, 381," 81-133.

Adversus Iudaeos dialogues), may be seen as "*Jills of all trades*": they are written in such a way and they have included an array of topics that could address challenges that could stem either from non-orthodox Christian groups or from non-Christian groups.

With regard to the discussions on the creation and the number of Gods involved in it, the Christian author of the Latin dialogue supports his belief on the basis of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament by deploying the "Jew" as a foil to his own (the Jew's) scriptures in order to argue for the correctness of his views and of his audience's.[344] In his portrayal of the "Jew" as the foil in the discussions on the divinity of Christ and his identity as God but not as a second God, the Christian author engages in derogatory discourse to discredit the credibility of the "Jew" and to intensify the correctness (as he views it) of his belief for his audience. In so doing, he starts by picturing biblical authors to refute the "Jew's" beliefs; he continues with a depiction of the "Christian" interlocutor accusing the "Jew" of faithlessness as the root of the "Jew's" disbelief in their own ancestral biblical authors' sayings; and he concludes by admonishing the "Jew" for being erroneous in his views.

At the opening of the *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus,* the Christian author underscores the disagreement between the "Jew" and the "Christian," both of whom are depicted to quote biblical verses as if their biblical authors uttered them, in order for each one to justify their views on the number of Gods involved in the creation. The "Jew" negates Christ's divinity,[345] and, citing

---

[344] At the same time, the fact that the author of this text employs the same tactics with other authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues may support my argument that on the one hand these texts give a summary of their authors' beliefs and religious affiliation, and on the other hand that they are written in such a way that they could confront anyone outside the author's Christian group.

[345] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* §I.2-3 (ed. Harnack): "Sim.: Quem colis? Th.: Deum. Sim.: Ego tecum de Christo crucifixo contendo, quem vos dominum dicitis. Th.: Sane dicimus et audenter probamus, dominum deum esse."

"Sim.: Whom do you worship? Th.: God. Sim.: I contend against you about the crucified Christ, whom you call lord. Th.: We speak reasonably, and we demonstrate boldly that the lord is God."

Deuteronomy 32:39 and Isaiah 44:6 next to each other, he attempts to prove the legitimacy of his view against that of the "Christian's." Simon argues against Theophilus, "Sim.: The resounding voice of the sacred and worthy of veneration Deuteronomy says: *For, look, I am [alone], and no other god exists besides me* (Deut 32:39). And Isaiah says: *I am the first and I am the last, and no other god exists besides me* (Is 44:6)."[346] Deut 32:39, which is part of the song of Moses and describes God in first person singular to state his monarchy, in conjunction with Is 44:6 with which Deut 32:39 resembles[347] and describes God's uniqueness, are used to argue that God is one in response to the "Christian's" belief that the Son is also God.[348] From Simon's perspective, the idea that the Son is also God disturbs God's monarchy by introducing two Gods. The verses he utilizes come to support the idea that in the Bible there is no reference to a second god.

Theophilus's response, on the other hand, references Is 7:9, presenting now the prophet as the interlocutor of the "Jew" whom Isaiah himself purportedly refutes,

> *Th.:* Most sacred is Christ's voice, which, if you wish to understand, it is necessary to believe first, and only then will you be able to comprehend [it]. **For Isaiah refutes you when he says**: Unless *you will believe, you will not comprehend.*" Therefore, without doubt we know, and we perceive, and we worship the omnipotent, invisible, without end, [and] incomprehensible God, [and] in turn we acknowledge [that] Christ [is] God and the son of God. That which he says, *I am the first and I am the last*, signifies the two comings of Christ.[349]

---

[346] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* §I.4 (ed. Harnack): "Sim.: Sacri venerandique Deuteronomii vox resultans dicit: *Videte quoniam ego sum, et non est alius praeter me deus* [Deut 32 :39]. Et Esaias dicit: *Ego primus et ego novissimus, et praeter me non est deus* [Is 44:6]." The author has used Deut 32 :39 and Is 44:6 as the "Jew's" response that Christ is not God.

[347] Compare Deut 32:39: "*For, look, I am [alone], and no other god exists besides me*" with Is 44:6: "*I am the first and I am the last, and no other god exists besides me*."

[348] As Sawyer, *Isaiah through the Centuries*, 258 explains with regard to Is 44:6 MT "I am first and I am the last, and there is no got but ME," the verse is quoted in Exodus Rabbah II.5 "to show that God has no father (before him), no son (after him) and no brother (beside him)."

[349] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* §I.4 (ed. Harnack): "Th.: Sacratissima Christi vox est, quam si tu volueris cognoscere, oportet te primum credere et tunc demum poteris intellegere. Esaias enim redarguit te dicens: *Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis* [Is 7 :9]. Indubitanter igitur deum ornnipotentem, invisibilem, immensum, inconprehensibilem novimus et scimus et colimus, deinceps Christum Deum et dei filium profitemur. Quod antem

Although in its original context Is 7:9 talks about the defeat of the northern kingdom of Israel to reassure king Ahaz that the Syro-Ephraimite coalition against the kingdom of Judah would not succeed, urging him with this verse to believe in God's words, the Christian author employed the verse in relation to the "Jew's" supposed lack of understanding that Christ is also God. So much so does he present the "Jew" as the foil, that he deployed Isaiah as if the prophet himself is in conversation with the "Jew" in order to refute Simon's opinion that the phrase "*and besides me there is no God*" signifies the existence of one God only and that Christ is not God. Sawyer explains that although in the Hebrew Bible Is 7:9 reads, "*If you will not **believe**, for you cannot be **established***" recognizing the "wordplay on two Hebrew verbs which have the same root",[350] (the verbs are תַּאֲמִינוּ and תֵּאָמֵנוּ stemming from a common root, אמן), the Church Fathers "following the Septuagint, have: '*If you do not believe, you will not understand'*, a text which is then cited frequently by them in discussions of the relationship between faith and reason."[351] Bringing as an example the use of the verse by Eusebius, Sawyer remarks that for Eusebius the inability of the Jews to "understand Isaiah's words is that they do not believe in Christ."[352] We see precisely this reading and explanation of Is 7:9 in paragraph four which closes with the author suggesting through Theophilus that via Is 44:6, "*I am the first and I am the last, and no other god exists besides me*," it is Christ himself who speaks about his two advents (per the author's interpretation), which the "Jew," portrayed as the foil to his own ancestral biblical author, failed to understand.

---

dicit: *Ego primus et ego novissimus* [Is 44:6a], duos adventus Christi significat." Here the author cites Is 7:9 and 44:6a as the "Christian's" response to the "Jew."

[350] Sawyer, *Isaiah through the Centuries*, 53.

[351] Sawyer, *Isaiah through the Centuries*, 54.

[352] Sawyer, *Isaiah through the Centuries*, 54.

Interestingly, the author does not support the belief in the divinity of Christ in dogmatic terms, by referencing for example the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, but only on the basis of scriptural exegesis.

In devising the image of the "Jew" as the foil against the biblical authors and in continuation with presenting Isaiah to refute the "Jew's" view according to which Is 44:6"*I am the first and I am the last, and no other god exists besides me*" was not a reference to the two comings of Christ but to God's strict monarchy and the rejection of the divinity of Christ, the author employs prophet Zechariah in the context of Deut 32:39 and Is 44:6 to further support his opinion that Christ is God. To the "Jew's" question on the reason for which both Deut 32:39 and Is 44:6 close with a similar statement that negates the existence of other gods, Theophilus answers that it was Christ himself who uttered "*and no other god exists besides me*," in order to warn against the antichrist who would declare himself a god and about whom Zechariah had talked in his book, Zech 11:16, 17.[353] The author offers a biased interpretation that aligns with his goal to claim for his audience a religious legitimacy of belief in the divinity of Christ without introducing two Gods in the Godhead. Calling forth Zech 11:16-17 whom he illustrates as if the prophet spoke about the

[353] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* §I.5 (ed. Harnack): "Sim.: Quid illud quod ait: *Praeter me non est deus?* Th.: Christus deus, dei filius, de se dixit, quia praevidebat antichristum venturum et se Deum dicturum. De quo Zacharias propheta dicit: *Ecce suscito pastorem in terra, et quod deficiet non denotabit et disparsum non requiret et contribulatum non salvabit et integrum non consummabit et carnes electorum comedet et talos eorum evertet. Et gladius eorum super brachium eius est et super oculum dexterum ipsius; brachium ipsius arefiens arefiet et oculus ipsius dexter obcaecatus obcaecabitur* [Zech. 11:16,17]. Proinde Christus dicit: *Ego primus et novissimus et praeter me non est deus*."

"Sim.: What is that which he says: *Besides me there is no God?* Th.: Christ God, the Son of God, said about himself, because he foresaw the antichrist to be about to come and to declare himself a God. About him Zechariah the prophet says: *Behold, I am raising a shepherd in the land and he will not take note of whom will withdraw, and will not look after the dispersed, and he will not save the afflicted, and he will not complete the unimpaired, and he devours the flesh of the chosen ones, and he will destroy their heels. And their sword is over his arm and over his own right eye; his own arm will be totally withered and his own right eye will be totally blinded* [Zech. 11:16,17]. Therefore, Christ says: *I am the first and the last and besides me there is no God* [Is 44:6]."

antichrist against whom Christ purportedly warned through Is 44:6 (according to the author),[354] the author intensifies the position of the "Jew" as the foil to the biblical Israelite prophets whose message he is portrayed to not comprehend. In its biblical context, Zech 11:16-17 talks about "an anti-shepherd, God's worthless shepherd who abandons the flock."[355] In the dialogue text, Theophilus uses the image of the evil shepherd to identify him as the antichrist. Making first the connection between Deut 32:39 and Is 44:6 with Zech 11:16, 17 and then using Zech 11:16, 17 as the response to Deut 32:39 and Is 44:6 Theophilus gives the verse an eschatological aspiration to explain that Christ is God but not a second God and that Christ is one with the Father, in accordance with Deut 32:39 wording according to which there is no god besides God.

So far, the author of the *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* (through the conversation) paved the way to discuss the topic of the number of Gods involved in the creation (Gen 1:1) in the context of the divinity of Christ and his designation as God. On the basis of the earlier discussion with Theophilus, the author has Simon assume that the "Christian" talked about two Gods. [356] To this allegation Theophilus responds with Genesis 18:3,4[357] to argue that God is one and not many:

---

[354] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* §I.5 (ed. Harnack): "Th.: Proinde Christus dicit: *Ego primus et novissimus et praeter me non est deus*."

[355] Stephen L. Cook, "The Metamorphoses of a Shepherd: The Tradition History of Zechariah 11:17+13:7-9," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55.3 (1993): 455. As Robert L. Foster, "Shepherds, Sticks, and Social Destabilization: A Fresh Look at Zechariah 11:4-17," *JBL* 126.4 (2007): 745 discusses, "The prophet symbolizes the worthless shepherds (11:15), who do not care for those being destroyed or seek the young or heal the broken or feed those sheep specially set apart (11:16). The shepherds, all of the ones prior to the time of Zech 11:4-17,46 proved worthless, not caring for those in need. The governors managed to care for themselves but failed to intervene on behalf of the poor in the land, who were being bought and sold into slavery by the elite."

[356] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* §I.6 (ed. Harnack): "Sim.: Ergo tu duos deos facis?"

[357] Gen 18:1-4, "Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." On the interpretation of the three angels in early Christian literature where the three angels were seen either as God accompanied by two angels, or the Son of God, or a prefiguration of the Trinity from the second to the seventh century CE see Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, "Abraham's Angels: Jewish and Christian Exegesis of Genesis 18-19," in *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late*

"There is one God, from whom [is] Christ and in whom [is] God, just as at the oak of Mambre were seen by Abraham three [persons], to whom running he greeted [them as] one saying: *If I have found favor before you, let me take water so that your feet be washed and you refresh [yourselves] under the tree.*"[358] Theophilus's use of Gen 18:3,4 reflects a trinitarian understanding of God that appears from the fifth century CE onwards and is based on the premise that God is one in three persons. Grypeou and Spurling underline the Christian reception of the verse, and explain that in the fourth century CE John Chrysostom understood the biblical event as a "revelation of Christ in the shape of man," and Ephrem the Syrian and Ishodad of Merv perceived the episode as God's revelation to Abraham and a "prefiguration of Christ's coming" respectively.[359] From the fifth century CE onwards, however, trinitarian interpretations of the scene were the theological norm. Cyril of Alexandria, for example, interpreted the incident at Mamre as a "revelation of the Holy Trinity and accordingly Abraham, although he saw three persons, addressed them as if they were one. The three men also talked as one person."[360] Taking this into consideration along with the time of the composition of our dialogue, we could assume that Theophilus might be referring to

Antiquity, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 189-97; Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Early Christian Reception of Genesis 18: From Theophany to Trinitarian Symbolism," *JECS* 23.2 (2015): 245-72; and, Grigory Benevich, "Maximus Confessor's Interpretation of Abraham's Hospitality in Genesis 18 and the Preceding Orthodox Tradition," *Scrinium* 13 (2017): 44-47.

[358] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* §I.6 (ed. Harnack): "Th.: Deus unus est, ex quo Christus et in quo deus, sicut Abrahae ad ilicem Mambrae tres visi sunt, quibus occurens unum salutavit dicens: *Si inveni gratiam ante te, accipiam aquam et laventur pedes vestri, et refrigerate sub abore* [Gen 18:3,4]."

[359] Grypeou and Spurling, "Abraham's Angels," 195. "John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen*. LVIII.11-12, and *Spuria Contra Theatra*, PG 56, col. 564; Ephrem the Syrian, *Comm. Gen.* XV.1; Ishodad of Merv, *Commentary on Genesis*" as quoted by Grypeou and Spurling, "Abraham's Angels," 195.

[360] Grypeou and Spurling, "Abraham's Angels," 195. "Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Julianum* I" as quoted by ibid. Grypeou and Spurling quote Thunberg according to whom, "the fact that Abraham addressed his guests as one person (…) is the basis of the Christological and Trinitarian interpretations of Gen 18." L. Thunberg, "Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen 18," *Studia Patristica* 8 (1966): 560-70 as quoted by Grypeou and Spurling, "Abraham's Angels," 195.

the theological idea of the unity of the three persons in the Godhead when he uses Gen 18:3, 4, reflecting the belief of the author and of his audience.

To construct the legitimacy of his views and to present them as exclusively authoritative, the author moves on with his representation of the "Jew" as a foil by portraying Simon to ask his interlocutor to interpret whether God made Christ God.[361] It is hard to not think that Simon's request is reminiscent of the positions of the followers of Arius, that Christ was made God, depriving him from being a true God, according to the Nicenes' theology, but calling him such only by name.[362] At the same time, his statement that he is willing to believe that Christ is the Son of God and God himself if Theophilus shows to him that he was made God is confusing, because he is willing to believe in a pro-Nicene theological belief (Christ is a real God) if his interlocutor proves to him a non-Nicene theological belief, (Christ was made God, which is an Arian thesis). It almost seems that Simon's request is a trap because it equates the two theological positions, that is: if one proves that God made Christ God then Christ is God and the Son of God. At the end, the "Jew" appears to seek to find out whether Christ was made God and not whether he is God.

To Simon's request, Theophilus responds with a juxtaposition between Moses, a prefiguration of Christ (for the author of the dialogue), and Christ himself. Having recourse to Ex 7:1 the "Christian" admonishes the "Jew" for lacking to understand his ancestral prophets,

> [O] **nonbelieving Jew, now are you disputing the prophets?** However, receive this answer to your question. God is being addressed to Moses when he says: *Behold*, *I have assigned you a god to Pharaoh and Aaron your brother will be your prophet*. **Understand** that Moses was a type of Christ, a god for the nonbelieving gentiles. How much more is

[361] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* II.7 (ed. Harnack): "Sim.:…but that [thing] I want you to explain to me, if in any place suitably God made by his own self Christ [a] God, only then will I consider [thoroughly] to believe Christ God and son of God."

"Sim.: …sed illud volo edisseras mihi, sicubi in loco deus per semetipsum deum Christum constituit, tunc demum Christum deum et dei filium credere cogitabo."

[362] Davis, "Council of Nicaea I, 325," 52.

> Christ a God for those who believe? For just as Moses freed the people from Egypt from the roughest slavery of Pharaoh, so also Christ freed his people from the slavery of idols and from the dominion of the devil.[363]

Theophilus ventures to show the difference between a human being assigned as god and Christ who (for him) is God. Using Ex 7:1 Theophilus explains that Moses was made a god by God in the sense of being appointed as a leader for the Israelites to free them from Egypt. Thus, for the Christian author Moses assumes the role of Christ and functions as his prefiguration. Christ, on the other hand, was not made a god, according to the author, but he was a true God with the power to free humans from sin. Ultimately, Ex 7:1 is used to underline the correctness of the "Christian's" opinion in contradistinction to that of the "Jew," tracing to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament the author's view. The words the author puts in the mouth of the "monk" when he calls Simon faithless and rebellious against his own prophets amplify the image of the "Jew" as being in opposition to his own ancestors. The use of a derogatory discourse aims to discredit the "Jew's" view and to support the "Christian's" position according to which Christ was God and not a made or assigned God.

Continuing the previous conversation where the "Christian" argued for Christ's divine status being prefigured by Moses and distinguishing the made as god Moses from Christ being a real God, the "Jew" now raises the issue of the creation of the cosmos by one God in relation to the "Christian's" belief that Christ is also God. For Simon, the "Christian's" belief poses the problem of two Gods being involved in the creation. Simon asks Theophilus, "Therefore, if Christ is God and the son of God, then how has it been written in Genesis: *In the beginning God made*

[363] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* II.7 (ed. Harnack): "Th.: Incredule Iudaee, iam et de prophetis disputas? Accipe tamen interrogationi tuae responsum. Deus ad Moysen loquitur dicens: *Ecce dedi te deum Pharaoni et Aaron frater tuus erit tuus propheta* [Ex. 7:1]. Pervide, hunc Moysen typum Christi fuisse, gentium incredibilium deum. Quanto magis Christus credentium est deus? Sicut enim Moyses populum de Aegypto, de durissima Pharaonis servitute Iiberavit, ita et Christus populum suum de idolorum servitute et de diaboli potestate Iiberavit."

[*fecit deus* - singular number] *the heaven and the earth*? Undoubtedly, it could have said: *In the beginning God* the Father and God the Son *made* [*fecit deus pater et deus filius* where fecit is still in singular] *the heaven and the earth.*"[364] The "Jew's" question is plausible: if Christ were God, as the "Christian" argues, then Gen 1:1 would have mentioned also Christ the Son of God and God himself being involved as well in the act of creation. The "Jew" goes even further to suggest that the verb *fecit* would still retain its grammatical type in singular form, implying that the Father and the Son are of the same substance and thus would not introduce two Gods since the verb *fecit* would remain still in singular number. However, per the "Jew's" perspective, his question implies that since there is no mention to God the Son in Gen 1:1 (according to those pro-Nicene Christians who argued that God the Father and God the Son is of the same substance and thus constitute one God and not two) but only to God, then there is one God alone and that Christ should not/could not be considered God as the "Christian" claims. Simon rejects the divinity of the Son and recognizes only one authority for the creation of the world.

Building on his derogatory discourse to construct the "Jew's" image as the foil to his own scriptures in order to discredit his understanding of Gen 1:1, the Christian author has Theophilus disparage Simon on the basis of his (Simon's) interpretation of Gen 1:1. Theophilus counterargues,

> **You err, [O] Jew; you will never find out, unless you understand,** the origin of the truth. Because if you wanted to believe, you would be able to discover also at the beginning of his appearance, who Christ is, the Son of God. On this condition, it says, *In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth*, that is both in Christ's decision and according to his will he deemed worthy to make human in his image. For he says: *Let us make human*, and again below he says: *God made human in the image and likeness of God; male and female he made them.*[365]

---

[364] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* II.8 (ed. Harnack): "Sim.: Si ergo Christus deus est et dei filius, quomodo ergo in Genesi scriptum est: *In principio fecit deus caelum et terram*? [Gen 1:1]. Poterat utique dixisse: In principio **fecit *deus pater et deus filius*** caelum et terram."

[365] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* II.8 (ed. Harnack): "Th.: Erras, Iudaee, nec umquam invenies veritatem, nisi veritatis intellegas originem. Nam si velles credere, poteris et in principio eius invenire, quis est Christus, dei filius. Sic enim *in principio*, ait,*fecit deus caelum et terram*, hoc est in Christi arbitrio et ad eius voluntatem et ad cuius

The "Christian" accuses the "Jew" of his incorrect (as the author presents it) understanding of Gen 1:1, attributing it to the "Jew's" faithlessness, and consequently, questioning his credibility. First, he sees in the creative act of the creation of the world both God the Father and Christ the Son. By arguing that the world was made by God in Christ's decision, the "Christian" insinuates that the singular form "God made-*fecit deus*" in Gen 1:1 refers to both God the Father and Christ the Son, whose consubstantial relationship makes them one and not two Gods in order to justify the use of both God the Father and Son the God as Simon argued. It is interesting to notice that in the interpretation which Theophilus offers regarding the Son being in the act of the creation *in the beginning*, although he is not mentioned explicitly as the Son of God next to the God the Father, the author appears to follow an exegetical tradition that understood the phrase *in the beginning* (ἐν ἀρχῇ LXX - *in principio*) as a reference to Christ in that the world was created in the Son and that the Son was the agent of creation. As Philip Alexander observes, we find this interpretation already in Origen's *Homily I on the Pentateuch*.[366] In this work, which was translated in Latin by Rufinus, Origen connects Colossians 1:15-17,[367] where we find the very first reference to Christ as the agent of creation, with Gen 1:1[368] that the author of the *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* makes use

imaginem hominem facere dignatus est; dicit enim: *Faciamus hominem*, et rursus infra dicit: *Fecit deus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem dei*; *masculum et feminam fecit eos*."

[366] Philip Alexander, "'In the Beginning': Rabbinic and Patristic Exegesis of Genesis 1:1," in *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 17.

[367] Col 1:15-17, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And he is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

"ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν."

[368] As quoted by Alexander, "'In the Beginning'," 17 see Origen, *Homily I on the Pentateuch*: "'In the beginning (in principio) God created the heavens and the earth' (Gen 1:1). What is the 'beginning' (principium) of all things if it be not our Lord and the Saviour of all Christ Jesus, 'the firstborn of every creature' (Col 1:15). Therefore in this

of to argue here, similarly with what Origen writes, that God created the world "in Christ's decision and according to his will." The author of our dialogue appears to refer to the Son's consubstantiality with the Father to justify why the Son is not referred explicitly in Gen 1:1 otherwise it would warrant the "Jew's" reading, which now is unwarranted since the Christian author demonstrated that it was not the "Jew" but the "Christian" who understood the original meaning of Gen. 1:1.

To further substantiate this reading on the presence of both God the Father and Christ the Son in the act of creation, Theophilus cites Gen 1:26, 27 where the form of the verb changes from plural to singular. Gen 1:26 talks about the creation of human using the plural form of the verb, "Let us make human," *faciamus hominem*, whereas Gen 1:27 talks about the making of the sexes using the singular form of the construct verb and subject, "male and female *he made* them"-masculum et feminam *fecit* eos. In so doing, it appears that the Christian author wants to defend his understanding of the presence of Son the God in the act of creation as a legitimate reading of his belief in the divinity of Christ. If we follow the interpretation of the author of the dialogue, the interchangeable use of singular and plural numbers of the verb *facio* in Gen 1:1 (singular verb-*fecit*), Gen 1:26 (plural verb-*faciamus*), and Gen 1:27 (singular verb-*fecit*) substitutes the need to an explicit reference to the Son in the creation story. If God the Son was referred to in Gen 1:1, 26, 27 it would support the "Jew's" reading that there are two Gods instead of one. The use of the verbs, though, in singular and plural numbers points to the presence of the Son in the creation and to his role as the agent of the creation but not as a second God but as one God with God the Father.

'beginning,' that is in his Word, God made heaven and earth, as John the Evangelist also says at the opening of his Gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word, etc.' (John 1:1). So here it does not intend some sort of temporal 'beginning'; rather it means that 'in the beginning,' that is 'in the Saviour,' heaven was made, and earth and all other things that were made." Alexander, "'In the Beginning'," 17 compares Origen's excerpt with "Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 1.4.15; Augustine, *de Genesi ad litteram* 1.2; Epiphanius, *Pan*. 2.73.7.

Finally, to the "Christian's" response regarding the involvement of the Son of God along with God the Father in the creation process, Simon suggests another consideration, namely that the plural verb *faciamus* – "let us make" may be referring to a discussion between God and the angels in human's creation.[369] It is hard to not see in the "Jew's" response an allusion to rabbinic midrashic traditions with respect to the creation of human. For example, the tradition that God consulted the angels which appears in Genesis Rabbah 7:4, an Amoraic aggadic midrash[370] from the beginning of the fifth century CE, resembles Simon's alternative suggestion to Theophilus's belief. Whatever source, written or oral, the author of the Latin *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* might have been aware of and might have been consulting, he aims to downgrade the "Jew's" view in order to emphasize the correctness of his own opinion.

The "Jew's" suggestion that the plural number of the verb let us make-*faciamus* refers to the angels and the conversation God had with them before human's creation meets the "Christian's" emphatic reaction. Using harsh language once again, Theophilus responds,

> **You err, [O] Jew!** To whom among the angels did God ever say: *You are my son, I begot you today* [Ps. 2:7]? And again, in the psalm he says: *I will make that person the first man, distinguished compared with/to all the kings of the earth* [?] [Ps. 88:28]. However, he orders the angels to worship Christ. And again, it says in the Song of Deuteronomy: *Rejoice nations with him and all the angels of God may worship him* [Deut. 32:43].[371]

[369] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* II.9 (ed. Harnack): "He could have said this to his angels" ("Sim.: Potuit hoc et ad angelos dixisse").

[370] Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, Yehudah Cohn, and Fergus Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135-700 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press published for The British Academy, 2012), 81; see also H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, ed. and trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 279.

[371] *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* II.9 (ed. Harnack): "Th.: Erras, Iudaee! Cui umquam angelorum dixit deus: *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te* [Ps 2:7]*?* Et rursus in psalmo dicit: *Ponam principem illum, excelsum prae omnibus regibus terrae* [Ps 88:28]. Angelis autem iubet, ut Christum adorent. Et iterum in Cantico Deuteronomii dicit: *Laetamini gentes cum eo et ado rent eum omnes angeli dei* [Deut 32 :43]."

The "Christian" discussant in support of his view that angels were not involved in the creation of human and that it could not be them to whom God was speaking cites three biblical verses, all of which refer to Christ (from a Christian perspective). Putting aside Ps 2:7 whose reading I discussed above and the same reading is employed here as well, I will focus on Ps 88:28 (89:27 MT) and Deut 42:43. Whereas Ps 88 refers to king David and the restoration of the Davidic dynasty[372] and Deut 32:43 (which is part of the song of Moses that Moses addressed to the Israelites before his death) is a call "not only to Israel but to the heavens and the gods"[373] to praise God reassuring "Those who want to maintain covenant fidelity with God [that they should] follow the imperatives of the Song, praising and waiting in hope for YHWH to act on their behalf,"[374] the Christian author has given all three verses a messianic character by seeing in them a reference to Christ. In the case of Ps 88:28 (89:27 MT), a messianic psalm as a whole,[375] it was understood as proclaiming the coming of Christ.[376] The author uses v. 28 in particular, "*I will make that person the first man, distinguished compared with/to all the kings of the earth*," to point out the superiority of the Son compared to the angels in order to argue that it could not be the angels who were consulted, for they are inferior to the Son. The author applies a similar reading to Deut 32:43 for which he points out that the angels adored God the Son and, consequently, they could not be God's agents in

[372] William C. Pohl IV, "A Messianic Reading of Psalm 89: A Canonical and Intertextual Study," *JETS* 58.3 (2015): 512. In Vulgate and the Septuagint this is Psalm 88 and in the Hebrew Bible it is Psalm 89. Ps 88:28 (89:27 MT) is part of the oracle that runs from verse 20-38 and "rehearses the Davidic covenant, emphasizing its eternal nature—a truth rooted in God's very own kingship, character, and deeds" (Idem, 512. See also n. 23). Richard Clifford, "Psalm 89: A Lament over the Davidic Ruler's Continued Failure" *The Harvard Theological Review* 73.1 (1980): 45 explains that verse 28 talks about David's exaltation "to the kings of the world."

[373] Matthew Thiessen, "The Form and Function of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1-43)," *JBL* 123.3 (2004): 420.

[374] Thiessen, "The Form and Function of the Song of Moses," 424.

[375] Pohl IV, "A Messianic Reading of Psalm 89: A Canonical and Intertextual Study," *JETS* 58.3 (2015): 525.

[376] Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries*, 29.

human's creation. In all three scriptural verses, the author applies a biased analysis to present the "Jew's" understanding of them as invalid. This is another way for the author to assure for his audience the legitimacy of belief in the number of Gods involved in the creation, arguing, at the same time, that Christ is God but not a second God.

In all, for the author of the *Altercation of Simon and Theophilus*, as well as for other authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the discussion on the number of Gods involved in the creation is part of the larger topic on the divinity of Christ that concerned late antique Christians. The author chose derogatory discourse to present the "Jew" as the foil to both his "Christian" interlocutor and the biblical authors. Embracing this discourse, the author intensifies the representation of the "Jew" as incorrect in his views on the topics at hand in order to assert ownership of religious legitimacy of belief for the audience for whom he wrote. Writing in the early fifth century CE context, the author could have had in mind several audiences of opponents to his beliefs, giving a succinct summary of his theological opinions through his work and affording us a glimpse of his religious affiliations. More than this, however, his work, as well as other *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, may tell us about what their function might have been, namely being "*Jills of all trades*" that could have addressed more than one audience, Christian or non-Christian groups, that their authors might have had in mind when writing these dialogues.

Conclusion

In examining the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, we have seen that the Christian authors used the "Jew" as a foil to their "Christian" interlocutor differently when matters under discussion are religious practices versus dogma and beliefs. In Chapter 2, I showed that in discussions on topics of practice, such as iconolatry, Christian authors used the "Jew" as the foil to their "Christian" characters to claim a share in the religious legitimacy of practice by mirroring their (the

"Christians") practices to the practices of ancient Israelites. In the present chapter, I argued that when the discussions concern matters of Christian belief and dogma, the use of the "Jew" as the foil changes. Examining the imagined conversations in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues on the topic of the divinity of Jesus or Christ, I showed that the Christian authors appeared to deploy the "Jew" as a foil to claim exclusive ownership of religious legitimacy of opinion. To achieve this, the Christian authors recognized the genealogical affinity between the "Jews" of their works and the biblical Israelite authors and they portrayed the "Jews" of their texts as foils to their own ancestral biblical authors by arguing that the "Jews" misunderstood the messages of their own ancestors regarding Christ/Messiah.

This claim is epitomized in the *Dialogue of Gregentius and Herban* when Gregentius and Herban discuss Christ as the Son of God:

> *The archbishop said:* And so, verily, who told you that the only begotten son and word of God is not the God of Jacob? If you do not get angry, he is the God and the lord of Abraham, and Isaac, and Joseph, and Moses. For who did deceive you [to think] that someone brought forth the cutting off of us Christians from the faithful Jews [who lived] before the presence of Christ? God forbid! For by all means we revere faithfully those [the ancient Jews], since they observed piously the law of God; but not only do we feel disgust at you who appeared faithless and senseless after the presence of Christ, but also we feel a greater loathing.
> *Herban said:* For what reason is this?
> *The archbishop said:* Because whom the law and the prophets bore witness to be about to come, after he came you refused and did not accept.[377]

Here Gregentius deploys Herban the "Jew" and, through him, his coreligionists as foils to the ancient Israelites on the subject of Christ as the Son of God, to argue not only that the Christians for whom he writes were in line with the ancient Israelites regarding the belief in Christ, but also

[377] *Dialogue of Gregentius and Herban*, Dialexis Γ΄ 73-82 (ed. Berger): ""Ὁ ἀρχιεπίσκοπος ἔφη: "Καὶ μὴν τίς σοι ἀνήγγειλεν, ὅτι ὁ μονογενὴς τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστι θεὸς Ἰακώβ; Ἂν μὴ χολᾷς, καὶ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰωσὴφ καὶ Μωσέως οὗτος ἐστὶ θεὸς καὶ κύριος, Μὴ γὰρ τίς σε ἐπλάνησεν, ὅτι τῶν πρὸ τῆς παρουσίας Χριστοῦ πιστῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀποκοπὴ τίς πέφυκεν ¨ημῶν τῶν χριστιανῶν; Μὴ γένοιτο. Πάνυ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἐκείνους πιστῶς σεβαζόμεθα ὡς τὸν νόμον τοῦ θεοῦ εὐσεβῶς τηρήσαντας ὑμᾶς δὲ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς παρουσίας Χριστοῦ ἀπίστους καὶ ἀγνώμονας ἀναφανέντας οὐ μόνον μυσάττομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ πλεῖον βδελυττόμεθα." Ἑρβᾶν λέγει: "Δι᾽ ἥν αἰτίαν τοῦτο;" "Ὁ ἀρχιεπίσκοπος ἔφη: "᾽Επειδὴ ὃν ἐμαρτύρησεν ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται ἤξειν, ἐλθόντα ἠρνήσασθε καὶ οὐ προσεδέξασθε"."

that they correctly understood the message of the biblical Israelite authors as opposed to the "Jews" who, although they are affiliated genealogically with them, failed to understand it. The Christian dialogue author, by means of the "Jew" as a foil to his own kin, creates an imagined narrative that offers his Christian audience ownership of religious legitimacy of opinion on matters of dogma and belief. This is the reason why the "Jew" has been chosen as the interlocutor in these works; the "Jew" provides the link to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The Christian authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues by tracing their beliefs back to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, presenting the biblical Israelite authors as if they first articulated the beliefs of the Christian group whose dogmas the dialogue authors follow, they create an effective rhetorical space in which they propagandized not only the correctness but also the antiquity of their beliefs. Their works having been written in a way that provides a synopsis of the most important theological teachings and dogmas of Nicene and Chalcedonian Christians have such an adaptability that they could be addressing not only one but several audiences.

In the next chapter, I return to Jewish dialectical narratives to examine their use as foils to "other" non-rabbinic stories.

Chapter 5: Rabbinic Dialectical Narratives as Foils to "Other" Stories

Introduction: Foil Dialectical Narratives

The process of foiling the "other" in rabbinic dialectical narratives—rabbinic dialogues in which two or more interlocutors are portrayed in conversation with each other—may be indicative, as I have argued in Chapter 3, of the Rabbis' efforts to underline what the rabbinically legitimate stance was on certain topics. In Chapter 3, taking dialectical narratives on idols as a case study, I showed that the anonymous rabbinic editors appear to deploy any "other" as a foil character to the Rabbis. In the texts I analyzed, the foil to the rabbinic interlocutors was either a religious "other" (pagan), or an ethnic "other" (gentile), or even other Rabbis. Further, I argued that, in deploying these "other" characters as foils to the Rabbis, the anonymous rabbinic editors' goal appears to have been twofold: on the one hand, they intended to show the rabbinically legitimate stance towards idolatry, and on the other hand they desired to underline the rabbinic opinion with which they agreed, when the dialectical discussions were between Rabbis. I again return to rabbinic literature to investigate another type and function of foil(ing): the dialectical narrative as a foil to "other" stories.

In literature, a foil is not always a character, as is often the case and as we have seen and analyzed so far in the previous chapters; a foil can also be a dialectical narrative (or story, or plot) itself. Just as a foil is "a character whose qualities or actions serve to emphasize those of the protagonist or of some other character by providing a strong contrast with them,"[378] as I discussed

[378] Chris Baldick, "Foil," *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 132.

in previous chapters, so also narratives, either as dialogues or narrations, may function as foils to other narratives to emphasize certain qualities or ideas through contrast.

There are several instances in literature in which scholars have recognized and analyzed narratives, stories, subplots, or even a scene in a play as foils to other narratives, to a main story, to a main plot, or even to another scene. For example, Saʿdiyya Shaikh analyzes creation stories as foil narratives that are used to interpret construction of gender. In his study of Ibn ʿArabī's[379] teachings on men and women through the examination of creation stories, especially that of the creation of Adam and Eve, Shaikh explains that "Creation stories within various religious traditions generally constitute a foil against which religious communities decode and reinforce particular forms of gendered social structures and hierarchy."[380] And at another point where Shaikh discusses "Ibn ʿArabī's alternative narratives of creation that offer different and novel models for understanding gender," he remarks that Ibn ʿArabī's "innovative introduction of the creation stories involving Jesus' birth from the Virgin Mary serves as a foil against which to interpret the gender dynamics characterizing the dominant myth of Adam and Eve."[381]

One may also see in a work a master or dominant narrative and foil narratives to that dominant narrative.[382] S. Douglas Olson in his discussion on the stories around Agamemnon in

---

[379] Ibn ʿArabī was an Arab Muslim scholar who was born in Murcia, Spain in 1165 and died in Damascus, Syria in 1240 CE. He "was a prolific, influential, and controversial scholar whose writings, based on close readings of the Qur'an, combined the perspectives of jurisprudence, philosophy, *kalam,* and Sufism. His more complete name is Muhammad ibn ʿAli ibn Muhammad ibn al-ʿArabi al-Ta'i al-Hatimi." William C. Chittick, "Ibn Al-ʿArabi (1165–1240)," *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* 1:333. https://link-gale-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/apps/doc/CX3403500206/GVRL?u=lom_umichanna&sid=GVRL&xid=85bed8d9.

[380] Saʿdiyya Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ʿArabī, Gender, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 141.

[381] Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy*, 173.

[382] Jessica Miller, "Passionate Virtue: Conceptions of Medical Professionalism in Popular Romance Fiction," *Literature and Medicine* 33.1 (2015): 84 in her discussion of medical professionalism in modern romance fiction, taking the *Penhally Bay* series as a case study, notices the existence of foil narratives to the master narrative of this series when she writes that "underneath the master narratives of romantic courtship and nostalgic

Homer's *Odyssey* notices how a sub-story can function as a foil to a larger story and brings as an example the Oresteia-story (part of the larger Agamemnon narrative) which "is told repeatedly in the course of Homer's Odyssey, by narrators as diverse as Zeus, Athena, Phemius, Nestor and Agamemnon himself, and has become a modern critical commonplace that the tale serves there as a foil for the larger story of Odysseus and his family."[383]

For the case in which a narrative from one work functions as a foil to another narrative from another work, one may read from James Joyce's collection of fifteen short stories, *Dubliners.* According to Hans Walter Gabler, the opening story, titled "The Sisters," "can be and has been successfully read against the foil of the Biblical narrative of Jesus visiting Mary, Martha and their resurrected brother Lazarus."[384] Gabler explains that this story, as the rest of the narratives in the same collection, is a retold account and states that, "Writing against the foil of intertexts becomes central to Joyce's art of narrative,"[385] recognizing for the famous Irish novelist the importance of outside narratives as foils to compose his retold stories.[386]

---

professionalism subsist a few foil narratives that suggest the authors are attempting, within the constraints of series guidelines, to recognize, and even accommodate, some critiques" alluding to the auxiliary role of such accounts that help shed light on underline issues such as "Changes in the structure and delivery of health care, and internal debates among medical professionals about how to respond to those changes" which are not touched upon explicitly but the foil narratives do in a less apparent fashion. Miller underlines that "the dominant narrative in the *Penhally Bay* series is nostalgia for a perceived past in which a personal relationship with a capable, caring physician determines everything significant about a patient's medical course." Ibid.

[383] S. Douglas Olson, "The Stories of Agamemnon in Homer's Odyssey," *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 120 (1990): 58.

[384] Hans Walter Gabler, "The Rocky Road to Ulysses," in *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018), 8.

[385] Gabler, "The Rocky Road to Ulysses," 8.

[386] Gabler, "The Rocky Road to Ulysses," 16. As opposed to Joyce's use of foil, in this chapter I explain that it is the rabbinic dialectical stories that are foils to "other" or source stories becoming retellings of the latter to underline the contrast between "others" writing absurd stories and believing them and the Rabbis writing stories that were to be read as absurd to show that such stories are not to be taken at face value.

Another example of a non-character foil that we find in literature is the subplot as a foil to a main plot. Victor Stadley Armbrister in his discussion on subplots in Elizabethan plays, in which dialogues comprise one of their characteristics, notices for the subplot a number of functions which include when the subplot provides "a contrast or foil to the main plot."[387] On that respect, John Ellis remarks that the subplot interprets the main plot by contrasting it, rendering it, thus, a foil to the main plot.[388] We may see a similar function in the rabbinic dialectical narratives as foils to "other" stories which they interpret them by contrasting them, as I will show in this chapter.

Within the discussion of dialectical narratives as foils, one may question whether a foil dialectical narrative is different from a parody or satire. Such a distinction is important to make, especially in the context of the rabbinic dialogues under examination in this chapter, because they have been seen thus far by scholars only as parodies. Foil and parody or satire are different, with the distinction between the two to be dependent on the relationship between the two characters, or the two plots, or the two (dialectical) narratives (in the case of the texts I will examine) that are juxtaposed with each other. Richard Levin, differentiates between foil and parody "on the basis of the negative or positive qualities of the analogy"[389] and explains that "If the negative aspect of the analogy is stressed, it seems more appropriate to speak of this plot as a 'foil' rather than just another

[387] Victor Stradley Armbrister, *The Origins and Functions to Subplots in Elizabethan Drama*, (Vanderbilt University, 1938). According to Armbrister, the other functions of the sublot are "(1) to complement the main plot action… (3) to afford comic relief, (4) to present comedy for its own sake, and (5) to offer opportunity for realism and satire."

[388] John Ellis, "The Gulling of Gloucester: Credibility in the Subplot of King Lear," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 12.2 (1972): 275. A sublot as a foil to a main plot appears in graphic novels as K. Dale Koontz has noticed and she refers to "the "subplot foil" of "Tales of the black Freighter" contained in Alan Moore's *Watchmen* which informs and comments on the main plot of that graphic novel." K. Dale Koontz, "Heroism on the Hellmouth: Teaching Morality Through Buffy" in *Buffy in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching with the Vampire Slayer*, eds. Jodie A. Kreider and Meghan K. Winchell (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010), 66. See also Christina Luckyj, ""Great Women of Pleasure": Main Plot and Subplot in The Duchess of Malfi," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 27.2 (1987): 267-83 where a scene in a work can be a foil to another scene.

[389] Marion Gail Noble, "Aspects of Parody in Shakespearean Drama" (PhD diss. The University of Toronto, 1993), 45.

direct contrast, in the strict sense that it is a devalued background added to bring out the superior qualities of 'centerpiece' characters belonging to a very different order of being."[390]

On the other hand, in his reference to parody, Levin writes that "if there is a positive emphasis on the similarity between the two actions, the result is not just parallelism but 'parody,' because the clown [satirical] matter will assimilate the main plot and draw it down its own level."[391] Ruth Nevo refers to Levin's previous work on the multiple plots in Renaissance drama and his categories "for a theory of clowns" and discusses how clowns (as a character in these works) function as foil and parody, writing that "as in any analogy, either difference or similarity can be stressed, or both, alternately."[392] To show that a clown (as a character in Elizabethan plays) can operate either as a foil or a parody of a king, Nevo explains that,

> "If… it is the difference that is stressed… then the clowns are acting as foils. If, on the other hand, it is the striking resemblance between the doings of the manifestly lower characters and the behaviour of the gentry that is stressed, then the higher characters will be disparaged, debased, assimilated and drawn down to the level of the foolish or ridiculous, and the clowns will have functioned as parodies."[393]

In a clearer fashion, David Shulman, discussing the difference between foil and parody with regard to characters, emphasizes the distinction between the two categories and observes that "the foil serves to heighten, by contrast, the serious nobility of the hero; the parody, expressive of a deeper similarity between the clown and his mocked companion, ultimately assimilates the latter to the comic perspective of ridicule and wry debunking."[394] To bring it together, a parody occurs when

---

[390] Richard Levin, *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 111.

[391] Levin, *The Multiple Plot*, 112.

[392] Ruth Nevo, *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1980), 31.

[393] Nevo, *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare*, 31.

[394] David Dean Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 27.

a character, story, narrative, or plot is a satirical exaggeration of another character, story, narrative, or plot, but a foil goes further to highlight a contrast.

In this chapter I discuss rabbinic dialectical narratives as foils to extra-rabbinic stories. The rabbinic excerpts which I examine are dialogues in which two or more interlocutors are in conversation with each other and they narrate a story. Because these dialogues narrate a story, I describe them as dialectical narratives, like in Chapter 3. For the purpose of my argument, from now on I will be calling these dialogues interchangeably either foil dialectical narratives, or dialectical foil narratives, or dialectical narratives as foils to "other" stories to signify that these dialogues are narratives in a dialogue format and function as foils to "other" stories. As I will show, dialectical foil narratives build on external or "other" stories from (outside) the text or the source in which the dialectical foil narrative exists. In creating dialectical narratives as foils to extra-rabbinic stories, the anonymous rabbinic editors of such accounts established a contrast between their dialectical accounts and "other" stories, which in turn they saw as foils to their system of beliefs.

These "other" stories could be New Testament accounts that gave rise to beliefs and teachings of certain Christian groups. They stimulate us to ask whether the Rabbis could have been aware of Christianity—in particular, of certain Christian texts. Modern scholars have extensively discussed the possibility that Rabbis could have been cognizant of Christians, of certain Christian texts, or of Christian teachings in an empire that gradually elevated Christianity to its imperial ideology.[395] The Rabbis lived in a discursive environment in which some degree of interaction

[395] See for example Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004); Adam H. Becker, "Beyond Spatial and Temporal Limes: Questioning the 'Parting of the Ways' outside the Roman Empire," in *The Ways the Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 373-92; Gerald Rouwhorst, "Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity," *Vigilae Christianae* 51.1 (1997): 72-

with "other" groups—non-rabbinic, and non-Jewish—was inevitable. Thus, the textual information from classical rabbinic literature has given rise to examinations of the Rabbis and rabbinic literature in light of their immediate cultural and political settings, such as in the Greco-Roman or Sassanian contexts.[396]

To that end, rabbinic awareness, or even partial knowledge of certain Christian accounts from the New Testament corpus may not seem strange altogether. Rabbis might have even leveraged that knowledge of certain New Testament accounts to their advantage. Peter Schäfer explains that the discussions in the Babylonian Talmud about Jesus "reveal knowledge—more often than not a precise knowledge—of the New Testament"[397] and he points out that, although it is not possible to know what version of the New Testament they utilized or if they could even avail of themselves a copy of the New Testament, it appears from those references that access to this

93; William Horbury, *Jews and Christians: In Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Naomi Koltun-Fromm, "A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996): 45-63; Naomi Koltun-Fromm, *Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia: A Reconstructed Conversation* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011); Adiel Schremer, "The Christianization of the Roman Empire and Rabbinic Literature," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, ed. Lee Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 349-66; Burton L. Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995); Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Joshua Ezra Burns, *The Christian Schism in Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Holger Michael Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Dan Jaffé, ed., *Juifs et chrétiens aux premiers siècles: Identités, dialogues et dissidences* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2019).

[396] For example, see Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999); Richard Kalmin, *Migrating Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (with a new Introduction by Dov Zlotnick; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1994); Peter Schäfer ed., *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998-2002); Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003).

[397] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 122.

Christian text was more than a possible scenario.[398] Peter Schäfer and, later on, Holger Michael Zellentin explain that the Babylonian Rabbis might have gained access to New Testament stories either through Tatian's *Diatessaron*, a harmonized version of all the four gospels from the second century CE, [399] or the New Testament *Peshitta*, "a revision of the Old Syriac version of the New Testament that became the standard version around 400"[400] that includes the translation of the Greek gospels into Syriac, providing an alternative reading of the four gospels to that of the *Diatessaron*.[401] The rabbinic awareness of certain New Testament stories might have extended even to an understanding of their patristic interpretation.[402] At the same time, as we lack concrete evidence for whether the Rabbis could have had access to actual copies of the New Testament in either Syriac version (*Diatessaron* or New Testament *Peshitta*), it would be safer to assume that,

[398] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 122.

[399] Tatian, a disciple of Justin, composed a harmonization of all four gospels, the *Diatessaron*, at the end of the second century CE. There is no evidence whether it was written in Greek or in Syriac and no manuscript has survived. Through Aphrahat and Ephrem's commentaries on the *Diatessaron* in which the two ecclesiastical writers make use of this work it is possible to reconstruct this text partially. Kyriakos Savvidis, (Bochum), "Diatessaron" *Brill's New Pauly*, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e316750.

[400] The New Testament Peshitta was completed around the fifth century CE and replaced the Diatessaron with regards to the Gospel narratives. It comprised "a thorough revision of the so-called Old Syriac version (or Vetus Syra) [which]… was based on a more literal translation technique and on slightly different Greek New Testament manuscripts." Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Peshitta and Other Syriac Versions" *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref:obso/9780195377378.001.0001/acref-9780195377378-e-122.

[401] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 123; and Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 142. Zellentin writes that "Tatian's Diatessaron[.]…was composed in Syriac, a dialect closely related to Babylonian Jewish Aramaic, and easily accessible to speakers of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic as well… Therefore, the Diatessaron or its popular or patristic interpretation might have been the textual sources used by the rabbinic author of the parody. Another possible source is the Peshitta, the Syriac translation of the four individual canonical Greek Gospels. In many regions of the Sasanian Empire, the Peshitta began to replace the Diatessaron in the fifth century, but this process culminated in the subsequent century. Given the relative textual stability of the wording of the canonical gospels throughout Late Antiquity, a degree of textual speculation and an accumulative approach in reconstructing the texts imitated by rabbinic gospel parody is warranted." Ibid.

[402] Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 142 where he explains, "I hold that some Babylonian rabbis had first-hand or mediated familiarity with Christian foundational texts and their patristic or popular interpretations. Moreover, the keen rabbinic exegetes had an eye for tensions within Christian texts and between foundational texts and their interpretation."

at least, they could have possibly heard New Testament stories, which could have been transmitted orally.

The three dialectical narratives I analyze come from two rabbinic texts, b. Bekhorot 8b and b. Shabbat 104b (= b. Sanhedrin 67a), and each appears to allude to "other" stories from the New Testament: Mary giving birth to Jesus, Jesus calling his disciples the salt of the earth, and Jesus's origins as the son of human or the son of God. I set aside questions such as whether Jews and Christians were actually in contact, whether they polemicized against or attacked each other, or how knowledgeable the Rabbis were of Christianity. These are topics that scholars have discussed and continue to debate. Instead, I propose this approach: If we hypothesize that Rabbis were aware of certain Christian narratives, and that the rabbinic dialectical accounts in b. Bekhorot 8b and b. Shabbat 104b are based on New Testament stories, then what could be other reasons for which Rabbis created such dialectical narratives beyond parodying those stories and attacking Christianity? Could these accounts have had no other functions? And what may we reasonably conclude about the processes of their creation? Schäfer has argued that the Rabbis

> "…fought back with the means of parody, inversion, deliberate distortion, and not least with the proud proclamation that what their fellow Jews did to this Jesus was right: that he deserved to be executed because of his blasphemy, that he will sit in hell forever, and that those who follow his example up until today will not, as he has promised, gain eternal life but will share his horrible fate. Taken together, the texts in the Babylonian Talmud, although fragmentary and scattered, become a daring and powerful counter-Gospel to the New Testament in general and to John in particular."[403]

He, thus, suggests that these accounts constitute a polemical reaction—or, at least, a response—to Christianity in the form of a counter-narrative, in the sense of an alternative narrative, to the gospel stories which he examines in his work and alludes to their function as parodies of New Testament stories. Likewise, Zellentin has argued that Rabbis demonstrated clear knowledge of Christian

[403] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 129.

texts in parodying them, and that this parody may "help us better understand the Rabbis' critical views of themselves and their opponents and allow us to relate conflicts within rabbinic circles to the Rabbis' conflicts with those beyond, and vice versa."[404] Put differently, these scholars have argued that rabbinic parodies afford us a glimpse into the Rabbis' stance to groups within and beyond their class.

I am taking one step further to show that certain rabbinic dialectical narratives were composed not merely as parodies but as foils to "other" stories, an important distinction[405] that can help us see how the rabbinic editors used these dialectical narratives to legitimize their opinion on certain topics. I argue that the Rabbis composed foil dialectical narratives to "other" stories not merely to mock or to satirize them but to highlight the contrast between their dialectical narratives and the source stories, and through that contrast to emphasize the difference between "others'" perception of and stance towards certain narratives (perceived by some as true and believable) and Rabbis' own perception of and stance towards those same narratives through their retelling (perceived by Rabbis as absurd and non-believable). In so doing, the Rabbis appeared to demonstrate a difference between themselves and "other" groups who wrote narratives insinuating either the different opinions on certain stories or a dipole between Rabbis, as wise, and "others" whose beliefs seem absurd.

In the next section, I will analyze b. Bekhorot 8b and the rabbinic employment of a dialectical narrative as a foil to what might be the story of Mary giving birth to Jesus and Jesus's statement to his disciples that they are the salt of the earth.

---

[404] Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 236.

[405] This is a distinction that literary scholars, such as those I summarized above, have noted in their respective studies.

Foil Dialectical Narratives: Contrasting Attitudes to "Other" Irrational Stories

B. Bekhorot 8b recounts two stories of fiction or falsehood (דכדי מילי) per the author's own words. Both stories are narrated in the form of a discussion between R. Yehoshua ben Hananiah and the elders of the school of Athens:

> They [the elders of the school of Athens] said to him: Tell us words of fiction (מילי דכדי).
> [R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah] he said to them: there was a mule (כונדתא) that gave birth and there was a slip (פיתק') to it and it was written on it, "there is a claim of one thousand zuz against their father."
> They said to him: And can a mule give birth?
> He said to them: Behold, they are words of fiction.
>
> [Words of fiction continue]
>
> [R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah asked the elders of the school of Athens]: [Regarding the] spoiled (סריא) salt, wherewith do they salt it (מלחי ליה)?
> [And responding to his own question] he said to them: With the afterbirth (בשילית') of the mule.
> They said to him: And is there an afterbirth to the mule?
> He said to them: And does [the] salt get spoiled?[406]

These two dialogues in b. Bekhorot 8b belong to a larger sugya in which the Mishnah poses for discussion a case of kashrut, in particular whether a kosher fish (טהור) swallowed by a non-kosher fish (טמא) and whether a non-kosher fish swallowed by a kosher fish are permitted to be eaten in each case.[407] These dialectical narratives are part of a series of conversations between R.

---

[406] B. Berokhot 8b (MS Munich 95):

אמרו ליה. אימ' לן מילי דכדי.
א' להו. ההוא כונדתא דילידא והוה לה פיתק' וכתו' בה דהוה מסיק בהו אבא אלפא זוזי.
אמרי ליה. וכונדתא מיילדה.
א' להו: הי נינהו מילי דכדי. מילחא סריא במאי מלחי ליה. א' להו: בשילית' דכונדתא.
אמרי ליה: ומי איכ' שיליא לכונדתא.
א' להו: ומילחא מי סריא.

[407] M. Berokhot 1:2 (MS Kaufmann A 50):

דג טמא שבלע דג טהור מותר באכילה. וטהור שבלע דג טמא אסור באכילה לפי שאינו גידוליו.

Yehoshua b. Hananiah (רבי יהושע בן חנניה) and the elders of the school of Athens (סבי דבי אתונא) which were instigated after the Roman Emperor (קיסר) challenged R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah to go to Athens and prove who among the two parties (R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah or the elders in Athens) was wiser.[408] The protagonist of the rabbinic accounts is R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah, a third generation tanna who lived in the second century CE with "Hundreds of statements in halakhah and Aggadah…ascribed to him in both the Mishnah and the Tosefta,"[409] and about whom there are numerous discussions between him and other Rabbis or non-Jewish "others"[410] such as the Roman Emperor Hadrian and his daughter, or the elders of the school of Athens as in the present story. The story could not have taken place, but the dating of R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah and the materials used might demonstrate an early origin of the particular dialogues.

This particular dialectical narrative as a whole, divided into two stories, is a bizarre account in which the anonymous elders of the school of Athens ask R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah to narrate to them fictitious accounts. For the sake of my argument that the two dialectical narratives are foils to "other" stories, it is important to keep in mind that they are part of the competition between R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah and the Athenian sages on who is wiser between them. The main focus of R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah's accounts is a mule that gives birth to some offspring (this is the first dialectical narrative) and the mule's afterbirth or placenta is used to restore the saltiness of the salt after it had lost it (this is the second dialectical narrative). For Peter Schäfer, the brief account of a mule giving birth can be seen "as a parody of Jesus' miraculous birth from a virgin"[411] and its

[408] B. Berokhot 8b (MS Munich 95).

[409] Stephen G. Wald, "Joshua ben Hananiah," *Encyclopedia Judaica* 11:450.

[410] See the informative article by Moshe David Herr, "The Historical Significance of the Dialogues between Jewish Sages and Roman Dignitaries," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 123-50.

[411] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 24.

adjacent story regarding the spoiled salt can be understood as a "pungent parody of the New Testament claim of Jesus' followers as the new salt of the earth."[412] Schäfer concludes that these two brief accounts "offer another biting ridicule of one of the cornerstones of Christian theology."[413] By seeing the two dialectical narratives as parodies, Schäfer recognizes a process in which the anonymous rabbinic editor created rabbinic retellings of certain New Testament accounts and by means of resemblance he brought the original stories down to the level of the farcical or satire, equating them with his satirical accounts. We can assume then, per Schäfer's argument, that through parody the rabbinic author demonstrated the similarity between the parody narrative and its mocked source account.

However, seeing these dialectical narratives as foils to a well-known Christian storyline which the two stories contrast may help us understand another method of rabbinic legitimization of opinion through emphasizing the different stances towards irrational stories: an irrational story for the Rabbis is non-believable in contrast to "others" who consider such an irrational story sensible and credible.

The first rabbinic dialectical narrative under examination appears to have some semantic relations to the New Testament story of virgin Mary's conception of Jesus. Before I discuss the relationship of the rabbinic dialogue as a foil to the New Testament story, I will provide an overview of those elements from New Testament accounts that may be detected in the first rabbinic dialogue.

The story of Mary giving birth to Jesus, within the corpus of the New Testament, is given in the Gospels of Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38 with few elements differing between the two

[412] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 23-4.

[413] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 24.

accounts. In the Gospel of Matthew, Mary is referred in the third person and Joseph has the leading role. Matthew 1:18-25[414] narrates Mary's pregnancy, emphasizing that it occurred before the couple had sexual intercourse and pointing out that the child in Mary's womb was through the Holy Spirit. According to the story, an angel encourages Joseph to not hesitate to wed Mary, reassuring him that she conceived of the Holy Spirit and that the son, whose name would be Jesus, would save people from sin. The author of the story underlines the prophesy in Isaiah 7:14 (LXX), which he interprets as if the prophet talked about a virgin woman conceiving a son, in order to buttress the validity of the event. Per the New Testament account, Joseph acted as the angel urged him and the narrative closes with the ambivalent statement that Mary and Joseph had no sexual intercourse until Mary gave birth to Jesus. The information of Jesus's conception is located at the very beginning of the account; it is repeated a second time by the angelic messenger to denote validity to it; and, at the end, it is further supported by an intertextual use of Is 7:14 (LXX) which underlines (per the author's use) Mary's virginity. These stages of the narration of Mary conceiving Jesus help its author bring to prominence that her pregnancy was not the outcome of

[414] Mt 1:18-25 "Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ γένεσις οὕτως ἦν. μνηστευθείσης τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ Μαρίας τῷ Ἰωσήφ, πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εὑρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου. Ἰωσὴφ δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς, δίκαιος ὢν καὶ μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν δειγματίσαι, ἐβουλήθη λάθρᾳ ἀπολῦσαι αὐτήν. ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμηθέντος ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου κατ' ὄναρ ἐφάνη αὐτῷ λέγων· Ἰωσὴφ υἱὸς Δαυίδ, μὴ φοβηθῇς παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκά σου· τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἁγίου. τέξεται δὲ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν· αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν. τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· *ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν,* καὶ* καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ,* ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός.* ἐγερθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰωσὴφ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου ἐποίησεν ὡς προσέταξεν αὐτῷ ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου καὶ παρέλαβεν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκεν υἱόν· καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν."

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man,* and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus."

sexual intercourse. The New Testament story of Mt 1:18-25 has embedded in it the element of the miraculous as well as the element of the irrational (the latter even more so), for conceiving a child of the Holy Spirit already tests the possibility and credibility of such an event.

The other New Testament account that narrates Mary's pregnancy is located in the Gospel of Luke 1:26-38,[415] where Mary as a character has a more prominent role and we can even "hear" her engaging in a dialogue with the angel on the event of her upcoming conception. Luke gives us some background information about this Mary: she was a virgin and was engaged to a certain Joseph from the Davidic line (a piece of information that Matthew omits). The angel's announcement to Mary concerned the conception of a son by the agency of the Holy Spirit, with the child to be designated as the Son of God. The main foci in Luke's version are: 1) Mary's status as a virgin and the conception of a son despite her virginity; and 2) the way of conception and the

[415] Lk 1:26-38. "Εν δὲ τῷ μηνὶ τῷ ἕκτῳ ἀπεστάλη ὁ ἄγγελος Γαβριὴλ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ᾗ ὄνομα Ναζαρὲθ πρὸς παρθένον ἐμνηστευμένην ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὄνομα Ἰωσὴφ ἐξ οἴκου Δαυὶδ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς παρθένου Μαριάμ. καὶ εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπεν· χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ. ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ διεταράχθη καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἴη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος. Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος αὐτῇ· μὴ φοβοῦ, Μαριάμ, εὗρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ. καὶ ἰδοὺ συλλήμψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ καὶ τέξῃ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν. οὗτος ἔσται μέγας καὶ υἱὸς ὑψίστου κληθήσεται καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τὸν θρόνον Δαυὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰακὼβ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας καὶ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔσται τέλος. εἶπεν δὲ Μαριὰμ πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον· πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω; καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῇ· πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι· διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται υἱὸς θεοῦ. καὶ ἰδοὺ Ἐλισάβετ ἡ συγγενίς σου καὶ αὐτὴ συνείληφεν υἱὸν ἐν γήρει αὐτῆς καὶ οὗτος μὴν ἕκτος ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τῇ καλουμένῃ στείρᾳ· ὅτι οὐκ ἀδυνατήσει παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶν ῥῆμα. εἶπεν δὲ Μαριάμ· ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη κυρίου· γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου. Καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτῆς ὁ ἄγγελος."

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one,* the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!" But when she saw *him,* she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "*The* Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

relation of the child to God. Luke emphasizes these two features to underline that Jesus's conception happened through the Holy Spirit, with Matthew and Luke's narratives to contribute to the gradual dissemination of certain Christian groups' belief in the story of a woman conceiving through the Holy Spirit. Even more so in Luke's account, compared to that in Mt 1:18-25, the information regarding Mary's conception and her child's identity as the son of God test the rationality of the story, let alone its reality.

Despite the scarcity of information about Mary and her conception of Jesus in only two of the four canonical gospels, the story was taken on by authors who composed texts either in the first two to three centuries CE, and which were not included in the New Testament canon, or much later in time after the New Testament canon had by and large been established. For example, in the *Protevangelium of James*—a second-century apocryphal work written in Greek and translated in other ancient languages, among which include Syriac,[416] that narrates the story of Mary and which gave rise to the later Christian beliefs about her ever-virginity, a teaching that raised a lot of theological controversy in the fifth century CE in the Eastern Roman Empire precisely due to its irrationality, as I analyzed in Chapter 4—there is reference to Mary conceiving a child of God's Word.[417] And in *Ode* 19:6-9 from the *Odes of Solomon*, another work composed between the second and the third century CE and preserved mostly in Syriac,[418] there is allusion to Mary giving

[416] M. Starowieyski, "Protevangelium of James," *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* 3:330-1. See also Tony Burke, "Mary in Apocrypha," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 41.

[417] Oscar Cullmann, "The Protoevangelium of James," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, English translation ed. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), §11.1-3, p. 430.

[418] Kristian Heal, "Odes of Solomon," *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity* 2:1094. See also James H. Charlesworth, trans., "Odes of Solomon," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 727.

birth to Jesus through the reference to a virgin's womb conceiving and giving birth.[419] Later on, the story of Mary's conception of Jesus through the Holy Spirit appears in the East Syriac work *The History of the Virgin Mary*, a pastiche of stories from canonical and non-canonical works[420] from before the seventh century CE.[421] References as such in these works, among others, to the belief in Mary giving birth to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit are a few indicative examples of the dissemination of the New Testament narrative which assumed an afterlife and exceeded the textual confinements of the two gospels in which it first appeared. At the same time, the dissemination of this story demonstrates not only certain Christian authors' belief in a miraculous story that is deprived of rational explanation, it is accepted as is, and it is reproduced in writing, but also the perception of this account by a certain Christian audience as credible.

The importance of the story of Mary giving birth to Jesus may be seen by the theological discussions that it instigated between different Christian groups and continued up to the seventh and eighth centuries CE. As I explained in Chapter 4, Christians deployed the narrative of Mary being virgin and giving birth to Christ. Some Christians expanded this story to discuss various aspects of the original narrative that involved Jesus. To that end, Mary gradually was becoming a perpetual virgin retaining her virginity before, during, and after Jesus's conception (*ante partum*, *in partu*, and *post partum*) giving birth to the son of God. At the end, an obscure and irrational for the common sense narrative gave rise to the theology of Mary being (called) *Theotokos,* that is

[419] *Odes* 19:6-9 "The womb of the Virgin took (it) [that is the milk of the two breasts of the Father], and she received conception and gave birth. So the Virgin became a mother with great mercies. And she labored and bore the Son but without pain, because it did not occur without purpose. And she did not seek a midwife, because he caused her to give life." Translated by James H. Charlesworth, "Odes of Solomon," 752-3.

[420] Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The History of the Blessed Mary and The History of the Likeness of Christ*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (London: Luzac and Co., 1899), VIII. For a detailed information on this work, its editions, and manuscripts see Tony Burke, "History of the Virgin (East Syriac)." *e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha*. Accessed 03-05-2020, http://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/history-of-the-virgin-east-syriac/.

[421] Burke, "Mary in Apocrypha," 43.

bearer of God, which in turn contributed to certain Christian groups' belief in Jesus being both fully God and fully human.[422] Seeing Mary as perpetually virgin who gave birth to Jesus-God rather than to Jesus-human was not met without reaction, especially from those Christians from the eastern provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire that comprised the Church of the East and resided in Syria and Babylonia.[423] In all, the account of a virgin woman *ante partum*, *in partu*, and *post partum*, giving birth to God was not a story that could go unnoticed, drawing only little attention, but it was developed into a story that could be heard and could be noticed inside and outside the borders of the Eastern Roman Empire.

To return now to the first dialectical narrative in b. Bekhorot 8b, it is composed as an irrational account. The elders of the school of Athens (סבי דבי אתונא) are requesting from R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah (רבי יהושע בן חנניה) to narrate to them a fictional story:

> They [the elders of the school of Athens] said to him: Tell us *words of fiction* (דכדי מילי).
> [R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah] he said to them: there was a mule (כונדתא)[424] that gave birth and there was a slip (פיתק') to it and it was written on it, "there is a claim of one thousand zuz against their father."
> They said to him: And can a mule give birth?
> He said to them: Behold, they are words of fiction.[425]

---

[422] As I explained in detail in Chapter 4, the discussion on Virgin Mary concerned the third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus 431 CE, and her designation as *Theotokos* was being reaffirmed in the subsequent Ecumenical councils.

[423] See Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 164-66.

[424] See Michael Sokoloff, "כּוּנַדְתָּא," *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 564.

[425] B. Berokhot 8b (MS Munich 95):

אמרו ליה. אימ' לן מילי דכדי.
א' להו. ההוא כונדתא דילידא והוה לה פיתק' וכתו' בה דהוה מסיק בהו אבא אלפא זוזי.
אמרי ליה: וכונדתא מיילדה.
א' להו: הי נינהו מילי דכדי.

R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah's fictional story involves a mule giving birth and around the neck of the born subject there was a slip with a debt. In the dialogue between the two interlocutors, the Athenian elders ask whether a mule can be fertile in order to justify R. Yehoshua's story that she gave birth, with the latter to respond that he just narrated a fictional story per their request. Per the story's plot, whereas it is the Athenian elders who asked to hear a fictional story from their interlocutor, it is those same elders who seem to have not been able to understand R. Yehoshua's story as such. Their confusion raises the question of whether they initially perceived R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah's story as partially true and, if this is the case, what it could mean R. Yehoshua's necessity to confirm that his story contained words of falsehood or fiction (מילי דכדי), in correspondence to the request for its narration.

The anonymous rabbinic editor seems to have composed a foil dialectical narrative to the source or "other" story of which he could have been aware, in order to heighten by contrast the fact that Rabbis could never consider irrational stories credible. From the very beginning, R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah states that the story he was going to narrate belongs to the sphere of fiction and through the allusion this story might have had to the New Testament story of Mary giving birth, another irrational story, the anonymous rabbinic editor compares the two to communicate his opinion of the impossibility of a virgin birth from a woman (comparable to the impossibility of a mule giving birth) who could not have given birth without sexual intercourse, as the New Testament narratives in Mt 1:18-2 and Lk 1:26-38 imply, and as certain Christians believed and made into a Christian dogma. A mule (כונדתא) giving birth is as impossible as a virgin giving birth, but whereas the rabbinic story was made by the rabbinic editor as a fictional account and not believable in order to rest their case, the New Testament story although unreasonable became believable to "others."

The follow-up question of the Athenian elders to R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah on whether a mule can indeed give birth is suspicious if we read it in the context of the semantic connections between the Rabbi's story and the Christian (in)famous storyline of virgin Mary giving birth. When the Athenian elders ask R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah to confirm whether a mule can give birth, it appears that they forgot that it was themselves who requested from their interlocutor to recount a false story. The anonymous rabbinic author presents the elders to believe momentarily that there could be a case according to which a mule could have given birth, although a mule, as a hybrid animal, is sterile. Such a representation of the naivety of the Athenian elders who are portrayed to wonder whether a mule can give birth could serve the author of the rabbinic dialogue to criticize individuals' belief in a virgin woman conceiving and giving birth. R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah's unequivocal proclamation that in the case of the mule such a birth is impossible, for what he narrated was merely a fictional story, may demonstrate his own sentiments to the event of Mary's conception without sexual intercourse.

Instead of seeing the rabbinic dialectical narrative as a parody to ridicule a Christian teaching and bring it down to the level of R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah's story, we may see it as a foil in that the focus is shifted from satirizing the source story to emphasizing by contrast how Rabbis would not believe in nonsensical accounts, let alone building upon them important teachings. R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah's reminder that his story comprises "words of fiction" in the context of an ongoing competition insinuates the contrast between those who believe irrational stories and those who do not. All the more, we need to keep in mind that this rabbinic dialectical narrative is part of a competition between the Athenian sages and R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah to prove who is wiser. Such a competition entails, by definition, a contrast between the two parties to prove the point of the anonymous rabbinic editor of the series of dialogues between R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah and

the Athenian sages that R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah is wiser than his gentile interlocutors. Seeing the dialectical narrative as a parody overlooks the competition aspect of the rabbinic dialogue, for it merely ridicules a story without helping prove that R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah is wiser. However, seeing the dialectical narrative as a foil to an "other" story shows how it not only emphasizes by contrast who is wiser among the two interlocutors, but it also emphasizes by contrast the attitude of Rabbis and "others" towards senseless stories.

The second rabbinic dialectical narrative I examine from b. Berokhot 8b is another peculiar story that discusses the restoration of the salt's saltness. Also here, before I discuss the relationship of the rabbinic dialogue as a foil to another New Testament story, I will provide an overview of those elements from the New Testament account that may be seen in the rabbinic dialogue under scrutiny. In my translation of the dialogue,

> [R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah asked them]: [Regarding the] spoiled (סריא) salt, wherewith do they salt it (מלחי ליה)?
> [And] he said to them: With the afterbirth ('בשילית) of the mule.
> They said to him: And is there an afterbirth to the mule?
> He said to them: And does salt get spoiled?[426]

Schäfer explains succinctly that in this rabbinic dialectical narrative there is an allusion to Jesus's saying to his disciples that they are the new salt of the earth according to Mt 5:13,[427] a suggestion that Robert Herford Travers made first, spotting also first the allusion to Christianity and to Mt

[426] B. Berokhot 8b (MS Munich 95):

מילחא סריא במאי מלחי ליה. א' להו. בשילית' דכונדתא.
אמרי ליה. ומי איכ' שיליא לכונדתא.
א' להו. ומילחא מי סריא.

[427] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 23-4.

5:13.[428] Parallels of Jesus's saying in Mt 5:13 appear in Mark 9:50 and Lk 14:34-35.[429] Mt 5:13 and Lk 14:34-35 are semantically closer to each other and more polemical compared to Mk 9:50.

The rabbinic dialectical account starts with R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah's question on how the saltness of the salt may be restored. This line reminds Jesus's question in Mt 5:13 where he asks, "but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?" This phrase is worthy of analysis for the paradoxical information that the salt can lose its saltness. The author of Mt 5:13 has chosen the verb "μωρανθῇ" - *mōranthē* to denote the adulteration of the salt's flavor. D. A. Carson explains that the same verb "μωρανθῇ" - *mōranthē* is used in Romans 1:22 and 1 Corinthians in the sense "to make or become fool,"[430] and concludes by arguing that "disciples who lose their flavor are in fact making fools of themselves,"[431] implying a semantic relationship between the

---

[428] R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975), 224 n. 1.

[429] Mt 5:13. "Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἁλισθήσεται; εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθὲν ἔξω καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων."

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."

Mk 9:50. "καλὸν τὸ ἅλας· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας ἄναλον γένηται, ἐν τίνι αὐτὸ ἀρτύσετε; ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἅλα καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις."

"Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.""

Lk 14:34-35. "Καλὸν οὖν τὸ ἅλας· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἀρτυθήσεται; οὔτε εἰς γῆν οὔτε εἰς κοπρίαν εὔθετόν ἐστιν, ἔξω βάλλουσιν αὐτό. ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω."

"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

[430] D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in *The Expositor's Bible* Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 139. According to Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, eds., "μωραίνω," *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 1158, *μωραίνω* in classical Greek means, 1. *to be silly*, *foolish*, *drivel*; 2. *make foolish*, *convict of folly*; 3. *to become foolish*, *be stupefied*. According to Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, ed., "μωραίνω," *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1961), 895 *μωραίνω* in ecclesiastical Greek means 1. *make foolish*, *convict of folly*; 2. *become foolish*, *become insipid*.

[431] Carson, "Matthew," 139. Carson mentions the possibility of the Greek verb to "hide an Aramaic pun: תפל (tāpēl, "foolish") and תבל (taḇel, "salted")."

salt losing its flavor and the disciples becoming fools by failing in their mission (in both cases is implied the use of the same verb "μωραίνω" - *mōrainō*). Hans Dieter Betz chooses a similar interpretation of the phrase, contending that it refers to the "failing disciple," and discerning a parallelism with the salt that has lost its flavor.[432] Put differently, the disciples of Jesus are compared to the salt by all accounts; failing their mission they will resemble the salt that has lost its qualities of saltiness and preservation and is subsequently disposed as useless. Ulrich Luz mentions two ways that the same phrase on the salt losing its flavor or "becoming dumb" could be interpreted: either the New Testament author "simply understood it as a figurative way of referring to an impossible situation, since chemically salt cannot lose its quality"[433] or he "must be thinking of a real situation [that is]… of the physical disintegration of salt by moisture that takes place when salt…is stored in the open [where] …the moisture can affect the more easily dissolved parts of the salt mixture and detract from its taste."[434] Luz, though, puts the emphasis on the threat at the end of Mt 5:13 as the main focus of Jesus's warning about the disposal of Jesus's disciples by the world if they fail in their mission.[435] The use of the metaphor of the salt losing its saltness has been seen as a warning to Jesus's disciples to remain faithful to their mission lest they be treated like the tasteless salt. The rabbinic line does not make any mention to disciples but the mention to the afterbirth of the mule for the restoration of the salt's flavor seems like an insinuated reference to

[432] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, ed. Adela Yabro Collins, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 159.

[433] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 206.

[434] Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 206.

[435] Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 206.

Jesus, as I will explain below, especially in light with the previous dialectical account of the mule giving birth.

In her interpretation of Mk 9:50 that constitutes a parallel verse to Mt 5:13,[436] Adela Yarbro Collins comments that Jesus's exhortation to his disciples to have the salt in themselves "may be read as a metaphor for protecting oneself against corruption" that it was described in the previous verses 42-48.[437] Likewise, Walter W. Wessel interprets the verse as Jesus's warning to his disciple to retain the spirit of self-sacrifice that is mentioned in verse 49 without which they could lose their worthiness.[438] The metaphor of the salt and its association with the disciples is more easily comprehensible here, for Jesus underlines the irreversible situation of restoring the saltness of the salt if it loses its flavor, implying a similar outcome for his disciples if they lose the "spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice."[439] The absurdity of the metaphor of the salt becoming unsalted still remains and is equally not addressed in Mark.

---

[436] Mk 9:50. "καλὸν τὸ ἅλας· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας ἄναλον γένηται, ἐν τίνι αὐτὸ ἀρτύσετε; ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἅλα καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις."

"Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.""

[437] Adela Yabro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 455.

[438] Walter W. Wessel, "Mark" in *The Expositor's Bible* Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 709.

[439] Wessel, "Mark," 709. Similarly, C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, ed. C. F. D. Moule, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 316 explains that "the disciples of Jesus are set, like salt, as a source of life and health in the midst of a world that left to itself must go bad. But they are warned of the possibility of their losing the very property which makes them precious, and so becoming futile like salt that has lost its saltness. It seems likely that the saltness of the salt stands for that for which the disciples are to be prepared to lose their lives (viii. 35), and of which they are not to be ashamed (viii. 38), i.e. the gospel, Jesus' words, Jesus himself." Cranfield, *Mark*, 316 also informs us that the verbal phrase "ἄναλον γένηται" in Mark and "μωρανθῇ" in Matthew and Luke "appear to be variant translations of the same Aramaic word, which has both the sense of' fool' and that of 'unsavoury'."

In the third parallel occurrence of the parable of the salt in Lk 14:34-35,[440] Walter L. Liefeld admits the obscurity of the phrase and explains that the overall meaning of the story is the uselessness of a salt when it loses its saltness.[441] Joel Green, on the other hand, wonders whether "Jesus [was] making reference to the absurdity of salt's losing its saltiness"[442] and adds a reference to b. Berokhot 8b according to which "comparing the idea of salt's losing its savor with that of a mule bearing a foal, points in this direction," [443] that is of Jesus's referring to the absurdity of the event of the salt getting spoiled. As Green maintains, Jesus makes an analogy between the loss of the salt's saltness and those who would wish to become his disciples without being committed to God's purpose, pointing out the absurdity of both.[444] It appears that the New Testament metaphor has been understood and interpreted in relation to Jesus's disciples and the attentiveness they had to demonstrate lest they lose their vigor in their mission.

The verb "μωρανθῇ" - *mōranthē* seems to be an important component of the meaning of the aforementioned verses in relation to the salt losing its saltiness and in connection to the disciples and does create a pun not in Aramaic, as Carson suggested,[445] but in Greek which can transmit the absurdity and irrationality of the verse. I would translate the phrase in Mt 5:13 as: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt *loses its mind* [literal rendition of the verb μωρανθῇ -

---

[440] Lk 14:34-35. "Καλὸν οὖν τὸ ἅλας· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἀρτυθήσεται; οὔτε εἰς γῆν οὔτε εἰς κοπρίαν εὔθετόν ἐστιν, ἔξω βάλλουσιν αὐτό. ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω."

"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

[441] Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke" in *The Expositor's Bible* Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 980.

[442] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 567.

[443] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 567.

[444] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 568.

[445] Carson, "Matthew," 139 and earlier n. 429 on p. 189.

mōranthē; figuratively it would be: becomes unsalted, but the Greek transmits the sense of the absurdity of the hypothetical case] in what will it be salted [again]?";[446] and Lk 14:34 as: "Thus, the salt is good; but *if even* the salt [itself] *loses its mind* [see my explanation above], in what will it be seasoned?"[447] I propose the following possible way to understand this obscure phrase: here Jesus is referring to the absurdity of the salt losing its saltness and of his disciples failing in their mission. Put differently, Jesus brings up an absurd example, the loss of the salt's flavor, to point out the importance of the salt and consequently the importance of the disciples. It is as if he emphasizes to them two things: 1) just as if the salt loses its saltness it does not serve its mission, so also if the disciples fail they will not serve their mission and will be disposed like the spoiled salt; and 2) just as it is absurd to believe that the salt can lose its saltness, so also it would be absurd to believe that his disciples could fail in their work. By bringing up an absurd example, Jesus warns the disciples in order to point out their importance that is measurable to the importance of the salt, and to underline the significance of attentiveness to their mission cautioning them to not lose their salt, figuratively speaking. An extreme absurd example succeeds in making the message of the importance of not failing come across. It may be argued that the authors of Matthew, Mark, and Luke could have portrayed Jesus's reconfirmation and belief in the role and success of his disciples. The Church had based her mission on the role of Jesus's disciples whom she considered the salt of the earth, and not a new salt, and by whom she saw her spread in the first centuries CE.

To return now to the second dialectical narrative in b. Bekhorot 8b, we should examine it within the same parameters with the previous rabbinic account. The anonymous rabbinic author has R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah narrated a second false story to respond to the initial request of the

[446] Mt 5:13. "Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἁλισθήσεται;"

[447] Lk 14:34. "Καλὸν οὖν τὸ ἅλας· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἀρτυθήσεται;"

Athenian elders regarding recounting to them words of fiction or falsehood (מילי דכדי) in the context of their competition of who is wiser. R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah asks how the salt's saltness can be restored, to answer his own question that it can be restored by the placenta of a mule.[448] R. Yehoshua's absurd self-talk raises the follow-up query by the Athenian elders on whether a mule can have an afterbirth. This question is answered with another rhetorical question on part of R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah on whether it is possible for the salt to lose its saltness. R. Yehoshua implies that the salt cannot lose its saltness and the mule cannot give birth, let alone have an afterbirth with which to restore something that cannot decay.

Similarly with the previous dialectical narrative, the anonymous rabbinic editor re-imagines the incident and with his dialectical narrative as a foil to the New Testament story he interprets it by contrast. Jesus calls his disciples the salt of the earth and asks what would happen if the salt lost its saltness and how its flavor could be restored. He concludes with the exhortation to his disciples that they (who are the salt of the earth) should keep the salt in them and not lose their vigor (= flavor) because it cannot be restored. R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah recounts his story within the parameters of both narrating words of fiction and the ongoing competition with the

[448] In the New Testament, the *mule* or the *ass* as an image is associated with Jesus. Already in Mt 21:1-11, Mk 11:1-11, and Lk 19:28-44 that describe the scene of Jesus's entry to Jerusalem the gospel authors narrate Jesus riding a "πῶλον" (accusative of masculine noun "πῶλος") and in the same scene in John 12:12-19 he is riding an "ὀνάριον" (accusative of neutral noun "ὀνάριον"). Indicatively, in the *Protevangelium of James*, Mary is riding an ass to flee with Joseph from Bethlehem in order to avoid the census (Cullmann, "The Protoevangelium of James," §17.2-3, p. 433). In the *History of the Blessed Virgin Mary* the ass is mentioned as used by both Mary and Jesus (Budge, *The History of the Blessed Mary*, 31, 34, 76, 81). Herford considers an association between Jesus and the ass in certain rabbinic passages which he understands as possible allusions to Christianity. For example, Herford explains that the phrase "אמ' ליה: מכיון דאתער בך חמרא דההוא רשיעא ליתי! אנא! יכיל שרי בארעא.–דישראל" (he [R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah] said to him [R. Haninah, his nephew]: since *the ass of that wicked man* has been stirred up against you, it is not possible to dwell in the land of Israel) in the famous story in Qohelet Rabbah 1:8:4 (MS Vatican 12, 191) (it narrates how the nephew of R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah, R. Haninah, who was under the spell of the minim, rode an ass on Shabbat in Capernaum and his uncle sent him away to live in Babylonia due to what happened) has been understood as an allusion to Jesus (Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 153-4). Since in the story there are many minim and there is no mention to an owner of the ass, then it may be assumed that R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah alluded to Jesus. These possible associations between Jesus and the ass may be seen as suggestive of an allusion to Christianity in general, or to Jesus in particular, as for example in b. Bekhorot 8b in relation to the absurd story of the mule giving birth and its afterbirth restoring the saltness of the salt.

Athenian sages and, in a way, he responds to Jesus's question, which Jesus leaves unanswered, asking a similar question to reply that the spoiled salt can be restored with a mule's placenta. But, the Athenian sages instead of asking how it is possible for the salt to get spoiled, they asked whether the mule has placenta (which would entail that a mule can give birth). However, it is R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah who asks the rhetorical question on whether the salt can get spoiled, for which the answer is negative. If neither the salt can get spoiled nor a mule can have an afterbirth to restore it with, then Jesus's question is irrational by definition, his parallelism of the disciples with the salt is absurd, and his exhortation to his disciples to keep the salt in them (Mk 9:50) remains a dead letter.

The rabbinic editor interprets believable words of fiction (the New Testament story) in contrast with of non-believable words of fiction (his story). Seeing the rabbinic dialogue as a foil to the New Testament parable of the salt again allows us to notice that the rabbinic author highlights the rabbinic wisdom versus the folly of "others." Understanding the rabbinic dialogue as such, we may see that it does not offer a parody of the New Testament story; or it does not offer only a parody. Perceiving the story as a parody, that is a ridicule as Schäfer has argued[449] not only deprives the dialogue of the antagonistic element that is embedded in the series of dialogues between R. Yehoshua b. Hananiah and the Athenian elders in the particular sugya, but it also deprives it of the Rabbis' effort to prove that they are wiser than "others." Furthermore, to see an association of the followers of Jesus (and not the disciples as the original story has it) with the afterbirth of the mule to justify the character of the rabbinic story as a parody[450] is a stretch, for the rabbinic editor does not seem to attempt such an association but he ventures to display that

[449] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 24.

[450] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 24.

nothing of what the New Testament account narrates makes sense. On the contrary, to see the rabbinic dialogue as a foil to the New Testament account allows us to see that the Rabbis were interested in emphasizing the different attitude between "others" who believed in irrational stories and thus were not wise and themselves who did not believe in irrational stories, thus proving their wisdom.

In the next section I will analyze another example of a dialectical narrative foil to an "other" story that may display how the Rabbis created an effective rhetorical space of reimagining "other" stories to legitimize their opinion of them.

Dialectical Narratives as Foils to "Other" Narratives to Express Different Opinions

The Rabbis also composed dialectical narratives as foils to "other" stories to highlight, again by means of contrast, the impossibility of the source story's content and in so doing to provide a more plausible alternative. Such a case of a dialectical narrative foil to a notorious early Christian account may be seen in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 104b and its parallel version in b. Sanhedrin 67a. This rabbinic story has been understood so far merely as parody.[451]

The rabbinic dialogue in b. Shabbat 104b is a baraita, a rabbinic tradition that is not included in the Mishnah and constitutes part of a larger discussion on types of writing and whether they are permitted or not on Shabbat. In the course of the rabbinic exposition, the discussion aims to distinguish between someone who writes on his flesh on Shabbat (הכותב על בשרו)—in which case according to the Rabbis one is liable of transgressing the Shabbat—and one who makes an

[451] See Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 15-22.

incision (המסרט על בשרו) on his flesh on Shabbat—in which case the sages do not hold him liable but R. Eliezer does.[452] According to the rabbinic text,

> [A baraita-תניא] is taught:
> *R. Eliezer said to the sages:* But is he not the son of Stada who brought forth sorcery from Egypt with inscription on the flesh of his palm (בשריטה שעל בשרו)?[453]
> *They [the sages] said to him [R. Eliezer]:* He was a fool (שוטה), and evidence cannot be brought from fools. [Is] the son of Stada the son of Pandeira?
> *Rav Hisda said:* the husband [is] Stada [and] the lover [is] Pandeira.
> *The anonymous rabbinic editor:* Is [not] the husband Pappos ben Yehudah, (and) rather his mother [is] Stada[?]
> *The Anonymous rabbinic editor:* His mother [is] she who lets women's [hair] grow (מגדלא) [or, she who plaits women's {hair}].[454] This [is] as they say for her in Pumbedita: this [woman] she deviated (סטית from סטה) from her husband.[455]

In this dialogue, R. Eliezer justifies his decision to hold one who makes incision on his flesh on the Shabbat liable for transgressing it on the basis of a certain ben Stada. The Rabbis disagree with R. Eliezer's assertion and explain that they do not extract a decision on the basis of ben Stada, because he comprised a special case; he was a fool שוטה (mentally disabled). Per the

---

[452] M. Shabbat 12:4-5 (MS Kaufmann A 50):

הכותב שתי אותות בהעלם אחד חייב. [כתב] ב(י)דיו [בסם] בסיקרא בקומוס ובקלקנתוס ובכל דבר שהוא רושם על שני כותלי ז(י)[ו]ית ועל שניֵ לוחי פינקס והן נ(ו)הגים זה עם זה. הכותב על בשרו חייב. והמסרט על בשרו. ר׳ אליעזר מחייב חטאת ור' יהושע פוטר. כתב במשקים במי פירות באבק דרכים באבק סופרים ובכל דבר שאינו מתקיים פטור. לאח(ד)[ר] ידו ברגלו ובפיו ובמ(?ד?)[ר]פקו. כתב אות אחת סמוך לכת(ו)ב. כתב על גבי כתב. נתכוון לכתוב חת וכתב שתי זיין. אחת בארץ ואחד בקורה. על שני כותלי הבית ועל שני דפי פינק?ס? (והם): [ואינן] נהגים זה עם זה פטור. כתב אות אח(ד)[ת] נוטריקון. (ו)ר' יהושע בן בתירה מחייב וחכמ' פוטרין.

[453] The MS Munich 95 spells שריטה with a -ש- whereas the Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 spells it with a -ס-, סריטה.

[454] Sokoloff, "מגדלא," *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 261.

[455] B. Shabbat 104b (MS Munich 95):

תניא. אמ' להם ר' אליעזר לחכמים. והלא בן סטדא הוציא כשפים ממצרים בשריטה שעל בשרו.
אמרו לו. שוטה היה. ואין מביאין ראיה מן השוטים.
בן סטדא בן פנדירא הוא.
אמ' רב חסדא. בעל סטדא בועל פנדירא.
בעל פפוס בן יהודה הוא. אלא (ו)[ה]וא אלא אמו סטדא.
אמו מגדלא נשיא. הואי אלא כדאמרי בה בפומבדיתא. סטית דא מבעלה.

sages' retort, fools cannot be deployed to justify a rabbinic opinion (ואין מביאין ראיה מן השוטים). Afterwards, the anonymous rabbinic editor attempts to determine the identity of "ben Stada." He asks whether ben Stada was ben Pandeira (namely whether the person who had incisions on his palm was the son of Stada or the son of Pandeira). Rav Hisda explains that Stada was the husband (בעל), whereas Pandeira was the lover (בועל), bearing witness to one rabbinic tradition about the name of Miryam's husband. After that, the anonymous rabbinic editor asks whether the husband was called Pappos ben Yehudah (בעל פפוס בן יהודה) and whether Stada was the name of the mother, attesting to another rabbinic tradition that recognized Miryam's husband as Pappos ben Yehudah and Stada as a derogatory epithet attributed to her. At the end, the anonymous rabbinic editor offers the solution on who is who: per his explanation, the mother (Miryam)[456] is she who lets women's hair grow *megadlā' nešayā'* (מגדלא נשיא) (or who plaits women's hair)[457] and the name Stada is the epithet which the Babylonian Rabbis gave to her to denote that she had a relationship outside her marriage, making a pun between *Stadā'* סטדא and *sātāh* סטה from which the word *sāṭit* סטית derives and with which the baraita ends.[458] In all, the person with the magic spells incised on the flesh of his palm was the son of Stada (the epithet Stada denotes his mother), and the son of Pandeira, who was her lover; his mother's husband, Pappos ben Yehudah, was not his real father.

[456] In b. Shabbat 104b (MS Munich 95) the name "Miryam" is omitted. However, this name is mentioned in b. Shabbat 104b, Oxford Opp. Add. fol. 23 "מרים מגדלא נשיא" and b. Shabbat 104b, Vilna edition "מרים מגדלא שער נשיא". Similarly, in b. Sanhedrin 67a (MS Munich 95) the name of the mother is mentioned "מרים מגדלא נשי" as well as in the manuscripts of the same excerpt: Florence II-I-9 "מרים מגדלא נשיא", Jerusalem, Yad Harav Herzog 1 " מִרְיָם מְגַדְּלָא נְשַׁיָּא", Karlsruhe-Reuchlin 2 "מרים מגדלא נשיא", Barko Print "מרים מגדלא נשי", Vilna "נשיא מרים מגדלא" and in Klosterneuburg – Augustiner Chorherrenstift 127-128 "מרים מגדלא נשיא".

[457] According to Sokoloff, "מגדלא," *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 261.

[458] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 17. See also Marcus Jastrow, "סַטְדָּא," *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (Judaica Treasure, 2004), 972.

In reading this text it is hard to not wonder whether it is reminiscent of the story of Jesus's birth, which comprised a well-known Christian storyline and which could have been transmitted not only in writing, but also orally.[459] Scholars have identified in the dialectical narrative in b. Shabbat 104b and in its parallel version in b. Sanhedrin 67a[460] references to Jesus, with whom the history of research tends to associate the name "ben Pandeira" (בן פנדירא) that appears in the text under examination and in its parallel version. Dan Jaffé, in a recent article, gives an informative and comprehensive overview of scholars' various opinions from the twentieth up to the twenty-first century on the definition of the name "ben Pandeira" in rabbinic sources among which both b. Shabbat 104 b and b. Sanhedrin 67a,[461] and explains that "Yeshu(a) ben Pantera" which appears in diverse forms such as "pantera; pandira; pandera; pantira; panteri"[462] is a cryptic name that has been used in "Talmudic literature to designate Jesus of Nazareth."[463]

---

[459] If this is the case, it suggests that the Rabbis were aware of Christianity, which, in certain cases, they confronted through their writings. To that end, Burton L. Visotzky, "Anti-Christian Polemic in Leviticus Rabbah" in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995), 94 asserts, for example, the existence of several rabbinic texts that "polemicize against Christianity" and suggests indicatively materials from Ecclesiastes Rabbah, the Jerusalem Talmud tractate Berakhot 9:1, and materials from Leviticus Rabbah. Ibid.

[460] B. Sanhedrin 67a (MS Munich 95):

בן סטד' בן פנדיר' הו'.
א' רב חסד'. בע' סטד' בועל פנדר'.
בעל פפו' בן יהוד'. הי' אל' אימ' סטד' אמו.
אמו מרים מגדלא נשי'. הואי כדאמ' בפו' פדית' סטת דא מבעל'.

[Was] he the son of Stada the son of Pandeira? Rav Hisda said: Stada [is] the husband, Pandeira [is] the lover. [Is not] the husband Pappos ben Yehudah? Rather, his mother [is] Stada? His mother [is] Miriam she who lets women's [hair] grow. This [is] as they say in Pumbedita: she deviated this [woman] from her husband.

[461] Dan Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context: A Philological and Historical Analysis," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 68.3 (2012): 577-92, https://doi.org/10.7202/1015256ar.

[462] Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 577 n. 1.

[463] Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 577, 578-83. Jaffé explains that neither a conclusive answer has been given so far nor scholars have reached a consensus about the definition of the name.

Furthermore, Jaffé brings in for discussion ancient Christian references to the same name which is used in the rabbinic dialogue under examination and the information associated with this name resembles with the information of our text, enhancing the possibility that the rabbinic dialogue in b. Shabbat 104 b comprises a retelling of Jesus's origins story. In his commentary on John 20:14, Origen attributes to the Jews "a tradition, according to which Jesus was illegitimate,"[464] and in his work *Contra Celsum* the same Christian exegete ascribes to the pagan philosopher Celsus the information that Jesus's mother was accused of adultery and bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera, strengthening Mary, Jesus, and his father's identity behind the descriptive phrase name *miryām megadlā' nešayā'* and ben stada/ben pandera[465] Jaffé points out Origen's remarks in the same work that these traditions were not pagan but Jewish,[466] and probably both Celsus and Rabbis could have drawn on. [467] Tertullian also seems to be referring to Jewish arguments against Jesus as the son of a carpenter and a prostitute who was breaking the Shabbat and was possessed by the devil.[468] References to Mary's adultery appear also in non-canonical compositions such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Acts of Pilate*, a possible indication of the circulation of such accusations among Jews (according to Jaffé),[469] whereas mentions to Mary's

---

[464] "Origen, *Commentary on John* 20:14 (Patrologiae Graecae, XIV, 608c): Ἡμεῖς μᾶλλον ἕνα πατέρα ἔχομεν τον Θεὸν, ἤπερ συ, ὁ φάσκων μὲν ἐκ παρθένου γεγεννῆσθαι, ἐκ πορνείας δὲ γεγεννημένος" as quoted by Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 583 n. 26.

[465] "Origen, Contra Celsum I:32 ("Sources Chrétiennes", 132, trans. M. Borret, I, p. 162-163)" in the same work other references to Mary having an affair with a certain Panthera and giving birth to an illegitimate son "I:28 (*ibid*., p. 151-153) and I:69 (*ibid*., p. 269-271)" as quoted by Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 583 n. 28.

[466] Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 583 refers to b. Shabbat 104b, b. Sanhedrin 67a, and to the minor Tractate of Kallah 18b (that appears at the end of the order Nezikin, [*Damages*]), explaining that despite their late date they seem to reflect earlier traditions.

[467] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 20.

[468] "Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, XXX, 6 ("Sources Chrétiennes" 332, trans. M. Turcan, Paris, Cerf, 1986, p. 324-326)" as quoted by Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 587 n. 51.

[469] See "F. Bovon, P. Geoltrain, ed., *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, Paris, Gallimard (coll. "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade"), 1997, t. I, p. 152. P. Geoltrain, J.D. Kaestli, ed*., Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, Paris, Gallimard (coll. "Bibliothèque de

virginity in other non-canonical texts such as the *Protevangelium of James*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and *Ode* 19:6 from the *Odes of Solomon* which were composed around the time of Celsus's *Alēthēs Logos*[470] could be perceived as responses to those accusations.[471] Finally, similar accusations appear in *Toledot Yeshu*, a Jewish work from between the seventh and the eighth centuries CE that draws from traditions dating earlier than its composition,[472] and which narrates the life of Jesus from a perspective that demonstrates a polemical attitude to the gospel narratives.[473] For Jaffé the epithet "ben Panthera," which designates Jesus, should be seen as indicative of Jewish reaction and hostility against Christianity, which for the Rabbis was associated with the son of an adulterous woman.[474]

Further indication that enhances the allusions of b. Shabbat 104 (and b. Sanhedrin 67a) to the Christian story of Jesus's birth from Mary are provided by the mention of the name *Miryam*. Although the name *Miryam* does not appear in the Munich manuscript of b. Shabbat 104b which I have used here, however, its mention either in b. Shabbat 104b, at least in those manuscripts that

---

la Pléiade"), 2005, t. II, p. 264-265" for the Gospel of Thomas and the Acts of Pilate respectively as quoted by Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 584.

[470] *Alēthēs Logos* is a work composed by Celsus, an Eclectic Platonist philosopher in 178 CE and comprised the first anti-Christian work. The work is lost and we know it through Origen's work *Contra Celsum* in which the Christian exegete engages in a refutation of Celsus's accusations against Christianity and Christians. From what we can deduce from the textual citations that Origen has preserved in his *Contra Celsum* "The work first develops the attacks of a Jew against Christ (I-III, which perhaps uses a Jewish anti-Christian work), then attacks Judaism, Christianity's source (IV-V). Celsus then accuses the Christians of having copied the sages of Greece (VI-VII), and finally criticizes the political stance of Christians, who exclude from the city (VII, 62–VIII)." A. Hamman, "Celsus" *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* 1: 479, http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=706670&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[471] Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 584-5.

[472] Michael Meerson and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Toledot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus*. *Vol. I. Introduction and Translation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 5.

[473] Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 585-6.

[474] Jaffé, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context," 587-90.

contain the proper name *Miryam* in the phrase '*imo miryām megadlā' nešayā'* (אמו מגדלא נשיא) or in b. Sanhedrin 67a in the same phrase '*imo miryām megadlā' nešayā'* ('אמו מרים מגדלא נשי) that appears in most of the extant manuscripts,[475] has been understood as an implication to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Burton L. Visotzky maintains that *miryām megadlā' nešayā'* in b. Shabbat 104b is a rabbinic allusion to Jesus's mother, portraying her as an adulterous woman, as the "derogatory twist" of the name Stada may suggest.[476] Schäfer explains the disparaging rabbinic allusions to both Mary and Jesus in b. Shabbat 104b / b. Sanhedrin 67a.[477] According to Schäfer, by underlining that Mary grew her hair long, the Rabbis emphasized "her indecent behavior,"[478] implying that "A woman who appears bareheaded and with long hair in public, this seems to be presupposed here, is prone to all kinds of licentious behavior and deserves to be divorced,"[479] whereas for Jesus they underscored his status as an illegitimate child.[480] Based on these derogatory references to Jesus's origins and his family, Schäfer has suggested that the rabbinic story in b. Shabbat 104b is a parody

[475] See n. 456 on p. 198 of this dissertation regarding the appearance of the phrase in the different manuscripts.

[476] Burton L. Visotzky, "Mary Maudlin among the Rabbis" in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995), 91. According to the explanation given by the anonymous rabbinic editor, the epithet Stada was a euphemism for Miryam who was perceived as an adulterous woman, bearing a child outside of wedlock.

[477] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 18-19.

[478] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 18. With relation to the association of long hair with a woman's qualities for the Rabbis, Schäfer mentions b. Erubin 100b which "describes the epitome of a "bad woman" as follows: "She grows long hair like Lilith (*megaddelt s'a'ar ke-Lilit*), she sits when making water like a beast, and she serves as a bolster for her husband"," and a story in Gittin according to which "a bad man who sees his wife go out with her hair unfastened and spin cloth in the street with her armpits uncovered and bathe with (other) people"—such a man, it concludes, should immediately divorce his wife instead of continuing to live with her and having intercourse with her." Ibid.

[479] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 18.

[480] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 18, 20.

of Jesus's origins ridiculing Christian concepts such as his virgin birth, and him being the son of God,[481] which had already been seen as controversial by early Christianity.

Whereas perceiving the rabbinic dialectical narrative in b. Shabbat 104b (and its parallel version in b. Sanhedrin 67a) as a parody or a ridicule of a well-known Christian story seems a plausible reading, considering it as a foil to the same Christian story in Mt 1:18-25 and Lk 1:16-38 that refer to Jesus's origins may help us see that Rabbis might not have been interested in ridiculing a Christian account but in providing their own explanation about Jesus's birth in a way that counterbalances the extremity of the Christian account of Jesus being born of a virgin and him being the son of God.

In contrast to the New Testament story of Jesus's being born of virgin Mary and being the son of God, the rabbinic dialectical narrative offers an alternative story: first it is concerned with the identity of Jesus's father and it mentions already two traditions, each of which recognizes either Stada or Pappos ben Yehudah. The resolution favors Pappos ben Yehudah as Miryam's husband and Stada as a derogatory reference to her. Nevertheless, the mention of these two traditions already enhances the complexity regarding Jesus's origins and it especially makes sure that Jesus was born of a human. To complicate things further, the rabbinic dialogue introduces Pandeira as Mary's lover and consequently Jesus's real father.

Thus, to the New Testament story that wanted Jesus to be the son of God and divine as certain Christians' dogmatized belief was from the fourth century CE onwards, the Babylonian rabbinic editor provides an alternative, presenting Jesus as the son of a man. And to the Christian account that wanted Jesus to have been born by a virgin who remained a virgin before, during, and after conception for another large part of Christians from the fifth century CE onwards, the

[481] See Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 21-22.

Babylonian rabbinic editor gives another account, also more sensible than its Christian counterpart, that wanted Jesus to have been born by a Sotah woman through sexual intercourse.

The rabbinic author wove a dialectical narrative as a foil to a fundamental Christian account to intensify by contrast the impossibility of the source story and its subsequent teachings, which are extreme in their own right, and in so doing he provided a substitute account that is more plausible, of course, although also extreme. The composition of the foil dialectical narrative allowed the anonymous Babylonian rabbinic editor to use a contrast to emphasize a simple message: Jesus is not the son of God who was born of a virgin who retained her virginal status *ante partum*, *in partu*, and *post partum*, but he was simply a human being born through sexual intercourse by both biological parents.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the rabbinic dialogues in b. Berokhot 8b and b. Shabbat 4b (= b. Sanhedrin 67a) that narrate stories of a mule giving birth, the restoration of the salt's saltness with the mule's placenta, and the family story of ben Stada comprise foils to presumably New Testament accounts and their subsequent teachings for some Christians. These dialectical narratives that were composed as foils to "other(s')" stories aimed to demonstrate either the irrationality of those "other" stories or the different opinions between Rabbis and "others" on these stories in a rabbinic effort to legitimize their opinion on them.

Unlike parodies, whose aim was to satirize and ridicule usually for comedic effect, and to dismiss or criticize, the composition of dialectical narratives as foils to "other" stories allowed the Rabbis to emphasize the difference between how "others" perceived "other" stories and how the Rabbis comprehended them, demonstrating that their perception of the source texts is correct and legitimate and, consequently, underlining their wisdom.

Taking together the various case studies of using the "other" as foil in rabbinic literature, we can see a diversity in the rhetorical use of foil. The rabbinic authors employed a multitude of "others," including characters and dialectical narratives, as foils to highlight contrasts that emphasized their agenda to demonstrate the legitimacy of their opinion upon "other" stories. Thus, appears an asymmetry in the choice of foils between Christian and rabbinic authors. Comparative examination of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues with rabbinic multivocal narratives reveals that Christian authors of anti-Jewish works lacked the Rabbis' technique of composing new narratives to interpret "other" stories by means of contrast and they also did not engage "other" characters as foils outside of "Jewish" characters. Nevertheless, we see symmetry in that both Jewish and Christian authors of dialogue works employed the rhetorical use of foil. The same method (foil) appears across the Jewish and Christian dialogue texts that I have examined, but it is used in distinctive ways.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I investigated how and why the anonymous authors of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic multivocal narratives deployed "other" characters and "other" narratives in their texts. My study showed that Christians and Rabbis used "others" as foils to claim legitimacy of their opinions and practices. My analysis of selected excerpts from dialogue texts that discuss topics of practice and belief illustrates how understanding the "other"—whether a character or a narrative—as a foil to another character or story, respectively, is an important element to consider when reading the aforementioned texts as literary works.

This study focused on dialectical multivocal texts from the Christian corpus of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the Jewish corpus of rabbinic literature in which two or more interlocutors are portrayed to be in conversation with each other. I chose to analyze texts whose topics pertain to icons, idols, and idolatry (Chapters 2 and 3) and to the divinity of Jesus, his virgin birth, and his origins (Chapters 4 and 5) because they are conceptually similar across the two corpora in which they appear and they are found in compositions that are temporally and geographically relatively proximate.

The characters that are deployed in these imagined dialogues play a significant role, for, as I have argued in the preceding chapters, they depict the goals of the anonymous authors of these texts. One common characteristic that is shared between the characters of the "Jew" and the "Christian" in the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues I investigated and among the characters of the Rabbis and the "others" in the rabbinic texts under consideration is how the interlocutors in their

respective texts are contrasted with one another through their opinions and attitudes on the topics they discuss. Similarly, in the case of the foil dialectical narratives that I have examined, and which appear only in the rabbinic excerpts, the contrasting qualities to "other" stories to which they refer capture their rabbinic authors' attitude towards these "other" accounts. Their attitude was not just to ridicule those "other" stories (something which would entail a vitriolic and consequently polemical tenor) but also to express their antithesis to their meaning, offering a more plausible reading and interpretation of them. To date, scholars have not examined the parameter of contrasting qualities between interlocutors and between narratives and how it relates to legitimizing opinions and beliefs. Instead, scholars have interpreted dialogues with "others" as ways of self-definition,[482] or opinion making[483] (in the case of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues), or as demonstrating internalization and anxiety,[484] or parody[485] (in the case of rabbinic dialogues with "others"), to name the most representative arguments scholars have put forth thus far.

My study has shown how the anonymous Christian and rabbinic authors artfully wove contrasts between interlocutors and between narratives—contrasts that could easily go unnoticed unless examining the dialogue texts from a literary perspective. Taking into consideration the significance of the use of the "other" as a device in dialogue texts and seeing the contrasting

[482] Adolph Harnack, ed., *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani, nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlinchen Literatur, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883).

[483] See Alberto Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation: A Guide to Late Antique Dialogues in Greek and Syriac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[484] See Richard Kalmin, "Christians and Heretics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *The Harvard Theological Review* 87.2 (1994): 155-69; Christine Hayes, "Displaced Self-Perceptions: The Deployment of Minim and Romans in b. Sanhedrin 90b-91a," in *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine*, ed. Hayim Lapin (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 1998), 249-89; and Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[485] See Holger Michael Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); and Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

qualities of the discussants and the stories, I turned to the concept of foiling in literature which allows one to examine the antithetical qualities and traits of the stories (dialectical in this case) and of the characters in stories and narratives, let alone in dialogues. To that direction, the works of Victor Stadley Armbrister,[486] Richard Levin,[487] Ruth Nevo,[488] and David Shulman,[489] in which aspects of foiling in literature have been considered and examined, were instrumental in analyzing the importance of foiling and in realizing the application of foiling to more than characters, such as to stories, or dialogues, and in conceiving the difference between parodying and foiling, a distinction upon which I base my interpretation of some well-known rabbinic stories in Chapter 5.

Examining foiling as a new approach for interpreting selected dialectical excerpts from a number of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues[490] (composed between the late fourth or early fifth and the tenth centuries CE) and from a number of rabbinic texts[491] (composed between the early third and

---

[486] Victor Stradley Armbrister, *The Origins and Functions to Subplots in Elizabethan Drama* (Vanderbilt University, 1938).

[487] Richard Levin, *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971).

[488] Ruth Nevo, *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1980).

[489] David Dean Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[490] The *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues whose selected excerpts I examined in this dissertation are: *The Altercation of Simon and Theophilus* [Adolph Harnack, ed., *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani, nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlinchen Literatur, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883)]; *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* [R. G. Robertson, ed., *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: A Critical Text, Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationships* (Th.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1986)]; *The Trophies of Damascus* [Gustave Bardy, ed., "Les trophées de Damas: controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII^{e} siècle," *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 (1920): 173-274]; *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo, Jews, with a Monk* [Arthur Cushman McGiffert, ed., *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew Entitled* ΑΝΤΙΒΟΛΗ ΠΑΠΙΣΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΩΝΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΝ ΤΙΝΑ (Ph.D. diss. University of Marburg; New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889)]; *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* [A. Peter Hayman, ed., *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*, CSCO 338 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973)]; *Dialogue of Gregentius with Herban* [Albrecht Berger, ed., "Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban a Jew" in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006)].

[491] That is: m. Avodah Zarah 4:7 and 3:4 (MS Kaufmann A 50); Sifre Deuteronomy *'Ekev* 43:12 [ed. Finkelstein, 94-95]; b. Berokhot 8b (MS Munich 95); b. Shabbat 104b (MS Munich 95) = b. Sanhedrin 67a (MS Munich 95).

the early eighth centuries CE) allows us to see how the anonymous Christian and rabbinic authors created an effective rhetorical space in which they claimed for their audiences legitimacy of opinion on matters of practice and belief by contrasting the interlocutors in their imagined dialogues.

In conversations on icons and idols, Christian authors deployed the "Jew" as a foil to his "Christian" interlocutor to claim that icon-making and icon-worship is not idolatry, as the "Jew" has been portrayed to accuse his interlocutor of. Recognizing the legitimacy of the "Jew's" opinion against image-making and image-worship because it is supported in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible as well as acknowledging the ancestral genealogical affinity of the "Jew" with biblical Israelites, Christian authors used the "Jew" as an image to connect themselves with biblical Israelites and to argue that their practices of icon-making and icon-worship mirrored similar practices of the "Jews'" biblical ancestors in the Tabernacle and the two Temples. In so doing, Christian authors claimed a share of legitimacy of practice which they recognized to the "Jews" owing to their genealogical affinity with the Hebrew Bible and their biblical ancestors. Deploying the "Jew" as the foil allowed the Christian authors to partake in the legitimacy of practice that the "Jew" was claiming for himself due to his affinity with the Hebrew Bible and God's commandments and to argue that although they acknowledge the "Jew's" point when he is depicted to accuse Christians of idolatry, however biblical Israelites' practices render their own *modus operandi* equally legitimate.

In rabbinic dialogues between Rabbis and gentiles and among Rabbis, the anonymous rabbinic author deployed as a foil an "other" from any group either to claim ownership of legitimacy of attitude towards idolatry (when the foil is any "other" but a Rabbi) or to demonstrate his sympathies to a particular stance towards idolatry (when the foil is a Rabbi).

The examination of dialogues on Jesus's divinity, his virgin birth, and his origins (on being the son of a human or the Son of God) unveils a noteworthy turn in the deployment of the "other" as a foil. In the Christian dialectical excerpts in *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues, the "Jew" is deployed as a foil not only to the "Christian" interlocutor but also to his own ancestral biblical Israelite authors. As a foil to the "Christian," the "Jew" is depicted to negate the Christian author's belief in Jesus's divinity, in him being born of a virgin, and in him being the Son of God. These are beliefs that the Christian author portrayed the "Christian" discussant to base on the interpretation of biblical passages from the Psalms and the prophets. As the foil to his own ancestral biblical Israelite authors, the "Jew" is depicted to not understand the meaning of those Israelite authors' biblical verses, which the Christian author through the image of the "Christian" discussant argues he comprehended. At the end, the image of the "Jew" as a foil allowed the Christian author to claim exclusive ownership of legitimacy on the beliefs under discussion.

In similar discussions in b. Berokhot 8b and b. Shabbat 104b (= b. Sanhedrin 67a), the foil is not a character but the dialogues themselves function as foils to "other" stories (presumably of New Testament provenance) and their subsequent teachings. Whereas scholars such as Peter Schäfer[492] or Holger Michael Zellentin[493] have seen these narratives or similar ones as rabbinic parodies whose aim was to ridicule, satirize, or mock, I have argued that such stories have another or even an additional function which is not to ridicule but to contrast "other" stories; this function is not parody but foiling. Composing dialectical narratives to "other" stories, the anonymous rabbinic editors interpreted the "other" stories by means of contrast to argue either for their absurdity or to emphasize their own opinions on the "other" accounts, claiming legitimacy of the

[492] Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[493] Holger Michael Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

"other" stories' reading on the basis that Rabbis would not believe fictional stories, let alone teachings based on such accounts.

Through examining foiling, we may see the underlying mechanics of orthodoxy- and orthopraxis-making. In other words, by constructing contrasting opinions between discussants in the context of dialogues, the dialogue authors adopted an authoritative stand towards the interlocutors' opinions and attitudes to the topics under discussion, predisposing what the correct or legitimate view, attitude, or teaching is according to them. The dialogue format created the space for both contrasting views to be "heard" and to be "considered," predetermining, though, the prevailing one.

While this study provides key insights into the authors' use of "others" in the works that I analyzed, this dissertation, like all research, has limitations. For example, I have examined only a selection of dialogue texts and a selection of the topics from the vast corpora of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic literature. Future research (indeed my own plans for research) that includes more texts is necessary for a comprehensive look at the rhetorical use of the "other" in late antique dialogue texts composed by Jews and Christians. Studying "other" groups as foils to the Rabbis in the case of the rabbinic corpus would provide a robust perspective of the use of "other" characters in relation to the connection between the identity of the "other" as a foil and the content of the particular discussions. Furthermore, examining more rabbinic stories as foils to "other" stories may also unpack additional functions of such texts beyond mere parody, ridicule, or satire. With regard to Christian dialogue literature, the examination of the deployment of "others" as foils in dialogues with other groups such as pagans, heretics, or Manicheans may allow us to see similarities, differences, or even whether Christian authors used "other" groups beyond the "Jews" as foil interlocutors. Such a comparative examination will permit us to understand whether

Christian authors of *Adversus* or *Contra* dialogues extended the use of "others" as foils beyond the image of the "Jew," providing an answer to the reasons for the choice of such a rhetorical device and to the purpose of using "other" groups as foils.

The study of the foil in Christian and rabbinic dialogue texts also raises the question of whether Christians and Rabbis had recourse to other rhetorical devices that they applied in their respective dialogue texts, something which calls for examining these works as literary accounts and applying new methodologies such as narratology. Looking at the dialogues as literary texts may help us understand them in light of the cultural, political, and religious ideology of their authors.

In this regard, my dissertation advances the study of *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic multivocal narratives in multiple ways. This study is the first that considers *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic multivocal narratives in tandem and examines the reasons for the deployment of contrasting characters and contrasting narratives in dialectical texts in which interlocutors are presented to discuss with each other on an array of topics. In so doing, this dissertation employs the concept of foil from literary studies, applying it upon late antique Jewish and Christian dialogue texts, which allows us to shed light on the mechanics and functions of constructing the contrasting qualities of characters and stories. My approach reveals the construction of orthopraxis and orthodoxy by anonymous Christian and rabbinic authors of dialogue texts in which claims for legitimacy on matters of practice and belief concerned both Christians and Rabbis and brings forth the important role that contrasting characters and narratives played in dialogue texts for the dialogue authors to weave this orthopraxis and orthodoxy, moving beyond the approaches that scholars have used to date.

The results of this study indicate that we should start examining the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues in relation to rabbinic multivocal narratives. The importance of studying these two corpora together lies in their similarities, *mutatis mutandis*: they are composed around the same period (those *Adversus Iudaeos dialogues* that are dated in late antiquity were composed between the early second and the eighth centuries CE and the works that comprise the rabbinic literature of late antiquity were composed between the early third and the early eighth centuries CE); they are dialectical (in particular the dialectical excerpts across the corpus of rabbinic literature) featuring distinguished interlocutors engaging in dialogue with each other; and there are topics that are conceptually similar in both. The parallel study of excerpts from *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and rabbinic multivocal narratives on topics that can be found in both corpora could contribute to the search for literary contacts between them or the search for parallel processes of constructing imagined discussions between different interlocutors by their anonymous Christian and rabbinic authors.

Furthermore, as I have mentioned *en passant*, these dialogue texts are mostly anonymous and yet, as I have argued in the present study, they strove for legitimacy of practice and belief on part of their anonymous authors. The fact that both corpora are mostly anonymously written calls for further examination on how this component plays a role in strengthening or undermining their anonymous authors' efforts to establish legitimacy. For instance, does the anonymity of these compositions work against them or in their favor? Especially in early and late antique Christianity, orthodoxy or non-orthodoxy has been associated with specific authors. What does it mean that the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues are in the theological line of what is considered "orthodoxy" and yet we cannot associate them with particular authors? Is authorship important to vouch and establish orthodoxy?

My study also brings to the forefront the significance of the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues for the study of the "Parting of the Ways" between Jews and Christians, investigating not merely the topics that are discussed in these dialogue texts, but also their continued composition well until the late Middle Ages (between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries CE).

Additionally, my examination of the use of the "other" (be that a character or a story) as a foil discloses the importance of studying the motifs with which the *Adversus Iudaeos* dialogues and the rabbinic multivocal narratives among Rabbis and between Rabbis and "others" are replete. Studying motifs may reveal the reasons for which their respective authors wrote stories of encounters that are portrayed so realistically.

Fundamentally, the dialectical texts I examined in this dissertation illuminate the important role the anonymous Christian and rabbinic authors placed on contrasting traits of the interlocutors they deployed (in the case of both Christian and rabbinic authors) and of the stories they created in response to "other" stories (in the case of the rabbinic authors alone) to affirm their legitimacy on matters of practice and belief. It shows how these portrayed contrasts were key to the rhetoric of legitimacy employed by the authors of these works. This research emphasizes the significance of looking at the Christian and rabbinic dialogue texts using literary approaches which allow us to answer questions that concern the use of similar styles and practices for the composition of texts that seem to share certain characteristics.

Bibliography

Ahearne-Kroll, Stephen P. "Psalms in the New Testament." Pages 269-80 in *The Oxford Handbook of Psalms*. Edited by William P. Brown. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Alber, Jan. "Unnatural Narrative." *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/104.html.

Albrecht Berger, ed. "The Dialexis," in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation*, ed. Albrecht Berger (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 91-109.

Alexander, Philip. "'In the Beginning': Rabbinic and Patristic Exegesis of Genesis 1:1." Pages 1-29 in *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*. Edited by Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Appelbaum, Alan. "R. Matthia ben Ḥeresh: The First European Rabbi?" Pages 181-98 in *Studies in the Texts and Contexts of Ancient Judaism in Honor of Steven Fraade*. Edited by Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, Tzvi Novick, and Christine Hayes. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017.

Armbrister, Victor Stradley. *The Origins and Functions to Subplots in Elizabethan Drama*. Vanderbilt University, 1938.

Arthur Cushman McGiffert, ed. *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew Entitled* ΑΝΤΙΒΟΛΗ ΠΑΠΙΣΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΩΝΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΝ ΤΙΝΑ (Ph.D. diss. University of Marburg; New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889), 1-94.

Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Balberg, Mira. "The Emperor's Daughter's New Skin: Bodily Otherness and Self-Identity in the Dialogues of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania and the Emperor's Daughter." *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19.3 (2012): 181-206.

Baldick, Chris. "Foil." *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 132.

Bang, Peter Fibiger. *The Roman Bazaar: A Comparative Study of Trade and Markets in a Tributary Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Bar-Asher Siegal, Michal. *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Bar-Asher Siegal, Michal. *Jewish-Christian Dialogues on Scripture in Late Antiquity: Heretic Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Barber, Charles. "The Truth in Painting: Iconoclasm and Identity in Early-Medieval Art." *Speculum* 72.4 (1997): 1019-36.

Bardy, Gustave, ed. "Introduction." Pages 173-88 in "Les trophées de Damas: controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII^{e} siècle," *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 (1920): 173-274.

Bardy, Gustave, ed. "Les trophées de Damas: controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII^{e} siècle." *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 (1920): 173-274.

Barney, Stephen A. "Allegory." *Dictionary of Middle Ages* 1:178-88.

Baron, Lori, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen. "Introduction." Pages 1-14 in *The Ways that Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*. Edited by Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018.

Bathrellos, Demetrios. *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Becker, Adam H. "Beyond Spatial and Temporal Lines: Questioning the 'Parting of the Ways' outside the Roman Empire." Pages 373-92 in *The Ways the Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Edited by Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Becker, Adam H., and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds. *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Ben Zvi, Ehud. "Habbakuk." Pages 1215-21 in *The Jewish Study Bible. Jewish Publication Society: Tanakh Translation*. Edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Ben-Eliyahu, Eyal, Yehudah Cohn, and Fergus Millar, eds. *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135-700 CE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press published for The British Academy, 2012.

Benevich, Grigory. "Maximus Confessor's Interpretation of Abraham's Hospitality in Genesis 18 and the Preceding Orthodox Tradition." *Scrinium* 13 (2017): 43-52.

Berger, Albrecht, ed. *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006.

Blidstein, Gerald. "Nullification of Idolatry in Rabbinic Law." *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 41–42 (1973–74): 1–44.

Boyarin, Daniel. “Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia.” Pages 336-364 in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*. Edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Bratke, E., ed. Evagrius Monachus, *Evagrii Altercatio Legis Inter Simonem Iudaeum et Theophilum Christianum*. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 45. Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1904.

Brennecke, Hanns Christof. “Arianism.” *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00000280.

Brodsky, David. “From Disagreement to Talmudic Discourse: Progymnasmata and the Evolution of a Rabbinic Genre.” Pages 173-231 in *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*. Edited by Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Brown, Bill. “Thing Theory.” *Critical Inquiry* 28.1 (2001): 1-22.

Brown, Peter. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Bucur, Bogdan G. “The Early Christian Reception of Genesis 18: From Theophany to Trinitarian Symbolism.” *JECS* 23.2 (2015): 245-72.

Bucur, Bogdan G. “Ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν: Observations on the Early Christian Interpretation of the Burning Bush Scene.” *JAAJ* 6 (2018): 37-82.

Budge, Ernest A. Wallis, ed. and trans. *The History of the Blessed Mary and The History of the Likeness of Christ*. London: Luzac and Co., 1899.

Burke, Tony. “History of the Virgin (East Syriac).” *e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha*. http://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/history-of-the-virgin-east-syriac/.

Burke, Tony. “Mary in Apocrypha.” Pages 40-53 in *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*. Edited by Chris Maunder. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Burns, Joshua Ezra. *The Christian Schism in Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Cameron, Averil. “The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation.” *Studies in Church History* 28 (1992): 1-42.

Carson, D. A. “Matthew.” Pages 3-602 in *The Expositor’s Bible* Commentary. Vol. 8. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

Ceulemans, Reinhart. “The Septuagint and Other Translations.” Pages 33-54 in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*. Edited by Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Chan, Alan Kam-Yau. *Melchizedek Passages in the Bible: A Case Study for Inner-Biblical and Inter-Biblical Interpretation*. Warsaw: De Greuter, 2016.

Charlesworth, James H., trans. “Odes of Solomon.” Pages 725-71 in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*. Vol. 2. Edited by James H. Charlesworth. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011.

Chill, Abraham. *The Mitzvot: The Commandments and their Rationale*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2009.

Chittick, William C. “Ibn Al-ʿArabi (1165–1240),” *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* 1:333. https://link-gale-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/apps/doc/CX3403500206/GVRL?u=lom_umichanna&sid=GVRL&xid=85bed8d9.

Clifford, Richard. “Psalm 89: A Lament over the Davidic Ruler’s Continued Failure.” *The Harvard Theological Review* 73.1 (1980): 35-48.

Cohen, Barak Shlomo. “‘In Nehardea There Are No Heretics’: The Purported Jewish Response to Christianity in Nehardea (A Re-examination of the Talmudic Evidence).” Pages 27-44 in *Studies in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity; Text and Context*. Edited by Dan Jaffé. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Collins, Adela Yabro. *Mark: A Commentary*. Edited by Harold W. Attridge. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Conybeare, F. C., ed. *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila: Edited with Prolegomena and Fascimiles*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1898.

Cook, Stephen L. “The Metamorphoses of a Shepherd: The Tradition History of Zechariah 11:17+13:7-9.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55.3 (1993): 453-66.

Cranfield, C. E. B. *The Gospel According to St. Mark*. Edited by C. F. D. Moule. Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Cullmann, Oscar. “The Protoevangelium of James.” Pages 421-39 in the *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writings*. Vol. 1. Ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher. English translation edited by R. McL. Wilson. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991.

Dagron, Gilbert, and Vincent Déroche. “Juifs et chrétiens dans l’orient du VII^{e} siècle. Introduction Historique : Entre histoire et apocalypse.” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 17-46.

Dancy, Russell M. *Plato’s Introduction of Forms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Davis, Barry C. “Is Psalm 110 a Messianic Psalm?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 160-73.

Davis, Leo Donald. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology.* Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983.

Dean, James Elmer, ed. *Epiphanius’ Treatise on Weights and Measures: The Syriac Version*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935.

Demeulenaere, R., ed. *Altercatio legis inter Simonem Iudaeum et Theophilum Christianum*. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 64 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991.

Déroche, Vincent, ed. “Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati.” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 47-229.

Déroche, Vincent, ed. “*L’Apologie contre les Juifs* de Leontios de Néapolis.” *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (1994): 45-104.

Déroche, Vincent. “Anti-Jewish Polemic and the Emergence of Islam.” Pages 85-108 in *Doctrine and Debate in the East Christian World, 300-1500*. Edited by Averil Cameron and Robert Hoyland. Ashgate Variorum: Farnham, 2011.

Déroche, Vincent. “Forms and Functions of Anti-Jewish Polemics: Polymorphy, Polysémy.” Pages 535-48 in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*. Edited by Robert Bonfil, Oded Irshai, Guy G. Stroumsa, and Rina Talgam. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Déroche, Vincent. “L’Authenticité de l’ Apologie contre les Juifs’ de Léontios de Néapolis.” *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 110 (1986): 655–69.

Déroche, Vincent. “La polemique anti-judaïque au VI^{ème} et VII^{ème} siècle: Un mémento inédit; Les Képhalaia.” *Travaux et mémoirs* 11 (1991): 276.

Dines, Jennifer M. *The Septuagint*. Edited by Michael A. Knibb. London: T&T Clark, 2004.

Dragutinivić, Predrag. “Psalm 110 im Neuen Testament und in der Frühen Kirche ein Stück Frühchristlicher Theologiegeschichte.” *Sacra Scripta* 11.1 (2013): 95-111.

Eastmond, Anthony. “Between Icon and Idol: The Uncertainty of Imperial Images.” Pages 73-86 in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*. Edited by Antony Eastmond and Liz James. England: Ashgate, 2003.

Ehrman, Bart D. *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Ellis, John. “The Gulling of Gloucester: Credibility in the Subplot of King Lear,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 12.2 (1972): 275-89.

Fagan, Garrett G. *Bathing in Public in the Roman World.* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Foster, Robert L. "Shepherds, Sticks, and Social Destabilization: A Fresh Look at Zechariah 11:4-17." *JBL* 126.4 (2007): 735-53.

Fundic, Leonela. "Iconology/Icons/Iconicity." *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00001658.

Furstenberg, Yair. "The Rabbinic View of Idolatry and the Roman Political Conception of Divinity." *The Journal of Religion* 90.3 (2010): 335-66.

Gabler, Hans Walter. "The Rocky Road to Ulysses." Pages 11-46 in *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018.

Galavaris, George. *The Icon in the Life of the Church*: *Doctrine, Liturgy, Devotion*. Leiden: Brill, 1981.

Gambero, Luigi. "Patristic Intuitions of Mary's Role as a Mediatrix and Advocate: The Invocation of the Faithful for Her Help." *Marian Studies* 52 (2001): 78-101.

Gambero, Luigi. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999.

Gambero, Luigi. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*. Translated by Thomas Buffer. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999.

Gillingham, Susan. *Psalms through the Centuries*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Goodman, Martin. "The Function of Minim in Early Rabbinic Judaism." Pages 163-73 in *Judaism in the Roman World: Collected Essays.* Edited by Martin Goodman. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Goshen-Gottstein, Alon. "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature—Shifting Scholarly And Relational Paradigms: The Case Of Two Powers." Pages 13-44 in the *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*. Edited by Marcel Poorthuis, Joshua Schwartz, and Joseph Turner. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Graham, M. P. "Habakkuk, Book of." *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* 1:475-78.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Greenstein Jack M. "Icons and Memory: Aristotle on Remembrance." *Public* 15 (1995): 5-28.

Gribetz, Sarit Kattan, and Moulie Vidas. "Rabbis and Others in Conversations," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19.2 (2012): 91-103.

Grypeou, Emmanouela, and Helen Spurling. “Abraham’s Angels: Jewish and Christian Exegesis of Genesis 18-19.” Pages 181-203 in *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*. Edited by Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Grypeou, Emmanouela, and Helen Spurling. “The Blessing on Judah.” Pages 361-435 in *The Book of Genesis in Late antiquity. Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*. Edited by Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Gunn, George A. “Psalm 2 and the Reign of the Messiah.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169 (2012): 427-42.

Gvaryahu, Amit. “A New Reading of the Three Dialogues in Mishnah Avodah Zarah.” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19 (2012): 207-229.

Halbertal, Moshe. “Coexisting with the Enemy: Jews and Pagans in the Mishnah.” Pages in 159-72. Edited by Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Halivni, David Weiss. *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Halivni, David Weiss. *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Halivni, David Weiss. *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*. Translated by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Hamman, A. “Celsus.” *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* 1: 479. http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=706670&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Hammer, Reuven. *Akiva: Life, Legend, Legacy*. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2015.

Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*. Edited by Adela Yabro Collins. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Harnack, Adolph, ed. *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani, nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlinchen Literatur. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1883.

Hayes, Christine. “Displaced Self-Perceptions: The Deployment of Minim and Romans in b. Sanhedrin 90b-91a.” Pages 249-89 in *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine*. Edited by Hayim Lapin. Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 1998.

Hayes, Christine. “The “Other” in Rabbinic Literature.” Pages 243-69 in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*. Edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Hayman, A. Peter, ed. *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew*. CSCO 338. Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973.

Hayward, C.T.R. *Targums and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism and Christianity*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Heal, Kristian. "Odes of Solomon." *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity* 2:1094.

Herford, Robert Travers. *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975.

Herr, Moshe David. "The Historical Significance of the Dialogues between Jewish Sages and Roman Dignitaries." *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 123-50.

Hezser, Catherine. "*Classical Rabbinic Literature*," Pages 115-40 in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*. Edited by Martin Goodman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Hezser, Catherine. *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.

Hirshman, Marc. *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*. Translated by Batya Stein. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language (Maagarim). The Academy of the Hebrew Language. https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx.

Holtz, Barry W. *Rabbi Akiva: Sage of the Talmud*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Horbury, William. *Jews and Christians: In Contact and Controversy*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.

Horovitz, S., and Louis Finkelstein, ed. *Sifre 'al Sefer Devarim: 'im Ḥilufe Girsaʾot Ṿe-He'erot*. Bet ha-midrash le-rabanim ba-Ameriḳah, 1993.

Hovorun, Cyril. *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Hunter, David G. "Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome." *JECS* 1.1 (1993): 47-71.

Ilan, Tal. "Matrona and Rabbi Jose: An Alternative Interpretation." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 25.1 (1994): 18-51.

Jacobs, Andrew S. *Christ Circumcised: A Study in Early Christian History and Difference*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Jacobs, Louis, and David Derovan. "Hermeneutics." *Encyclopedia Judaica* 9:25-29.

Jaffé, Dan. “The Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Talmudic Context: A Philological and Historical Analysis.” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 68.3 (2012): 577-92. https://doi.org/10.7202/1015256ar.

Jaffé, Dan. ed. *Juifs et chrétiens aux premiers siècles: Identités, dialogues et dissidences*. Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2019.

Janse, Sam. *“You are My Son:” The Reception History of Psalm 2 in Early Judaism and the Early Church*. Leuven: Peeters, 2009.

Jastrow, Marcus. *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*. Judaica Treasure, 2004.

JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

Juster, Jean. *Les Juifs dans l’Empire romain : leur condition politique, économique et sociale*. 2 vols. Paris: P. Geuthner, 1914.

Kalmin, Richard. “Christians and Heretics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity.” *The Harvard Theological Review* 87.2 (1994): 155-69.

Kalmin, Richard. *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Kalmin, Richard. *Migrating Tales: The Talmud’s Narratives and Their Historical Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Kalmin, Richard. *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Kelly, John Norman Davidson. Early *Christian Creeds*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

Kennedy, George A. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Kitzinger, Ernst. “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm.” Pages 91-150 in *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies by Ernst Kitzinger*. Edited by W. Eugene Kleinbauer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.

Knohl, Israel. “Religion and Politics in Psalm 2.” Pages 725-7 in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible Septuagint and Dead Sea Scroll in Honor of Emanuel Tov*. Edited by Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Weston W. Fields. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Koltun-Fromm, Naomi. “A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47.1 (1996): 45-63.

Koltun-Fromm, Naomi. *Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia: A Reconstructed Conversation*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011.

Koontz, K. Dale. “Heroism on the Hellmouth: Teaching Morality Through Buffy.” Pages 61-72 in *Buffy in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching with the Vampire Slayer*. Edited by Jodie A. Kreider and Meghan K. Winchell. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010.

Kraus, Samuel. *The Jewish-Christian Controversy: Vol. 1 History*. Edited by William Horbury. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

Krueger, Derek. *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Küchler, Susanne, and Walter Melion. “Introduction: Memory, Cognition, and Image Production.” Pages 1-46 in *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation*. Edited by Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Labendz, Jenny R. “Aquila’s Bible Translation in Late Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Perspectives.” *The Harvard Theological Review* 102.3 (2009): 353-88.

Labendz, Jenny R. *Socratic Torah: Non-Jews in Rabbinic Intellectual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Lahey, Lawrence Lanzi. “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, 2001.

Lahey, Lawrence. “Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (excluding Justin).” Pages 581-639 in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*. Edited by Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007.

Lampe, Geoffrey W. H., ed. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1961.

Lanfranchi, Pierluigi. “L’image du judaïsm dans les dialogues aduersus Iudaeos.” Pages 225-36 in *Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : Permanences et mutations d’une tradition polémique. Actes du colloque international organizé les 7 et 8 décembre 2011 à l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne*. Edited by Sébastien Morlet, Olivier Munnich et Bernard Pouderon. Paris : Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 2013.

Larchet, Jean-Claude, and Emmauel Ponsoye, trans. *Maxime le Confesseur: Opuscules théologique et polémique*. Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1998.

Lehnardt, Andreas. “The Samaritans (Kutim) in the Talmud Yerushalmi: Constructs of ‘Rabbinic Mind’ or Reflections of Social Reality?**”** Pages 139-60 in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*. Vol. 3. Edited by Peter Schäfer. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002.

Levin, Richard. *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

Lieberman, Saul. *Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (with a new Introduction by Dov Zlotnick)*. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1994.

Liefeld, Walter L. "Luke." Pages 797-1059 in *The Expositor's Bible* Commentary. Vol. 8. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

Louth, Andrew. "Mary in Patristics." Pages54-66 in *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*. Edited by Chris Maunder. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Luckyj, Christina. ""Great Women of Pleasure": Main Plot and Subplot in The Duchess of Malfi." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 27.2 (1987): 267-83.

Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*. Edited by Helmut Koester. Translated by James E. Crouch. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Marcos, Natalio Fernández. *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible*. Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Markschies, Christoph. "Tertullian." *Encyclopedia of Christianity Online*. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2211-2685_eco_T.25.

Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica ad Marinum* (PG 91:153c-184c and 184c-212a).

McGuckin, John Anthony. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Path of Christianity: The First Thousand Years*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017.

Meerson, Michael and Peter Schäfer, eds. and trans. *Introduction and Translation*. Vol. 1 of *Toledot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.

Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael. A critical edition on the basis of the MSS and early editions with and English translation, introduction and notes. 3 volumes. Edited by Lauterbach, J.Z. Philadelphia, 1976.

Migne, Jaque Paul, ed. *Patrologia Graeca*. 162 vols. Paris, 1857-1886.

Migne, Jaque Paul, ed. *Patrologia Latina*. 217 vols. Paris, 1844-1864.

Miller, Jessica. "Passionate Virtue: Conceptions of Medical Professionalism in Popular Romance Fiction." *Literature and Medicine* 33.1 (2015): 70-90.

Mishnah. Faksimile-Ausgabe des Mischnacodex Kaufmann A 50, mit Genehmigung der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Budapest, besorgt von Georg Beer. ha-Mishnah al pi ketav yad Kofrnan. Jerusalem. Original edition, Haag, 1929.

Morlet, Sébastien, Olivier Munnich, et Bernard Pouderon, eds. *Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : Permanences et mutations d'une tradition polémique. Actes du colloque international organizé les 7 et 8 décembre 2011 à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne*. Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2013.

Morlet, Sébastien. "Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : origine, caractéristiques, référentialité." Pages 21-48 in *Les dialogues Adversus Iudaeos : Permanences et mutations d'une tradition polémique. Actes du colloque international organizé les 7 et 8 décembre 2011 à l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne*. Edited by Sébastien Morlet, Olivier Munnich et Bernard Pouderon. Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2013.

Muehlberger, Ellen. *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Neal, Ryan A. "Monophysitism." *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization.* doi:10.1002/9780470670606.wbecc0927.

Neil, Brownen. "Monothelitism." *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2012. doi:10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah03173.

Neis, Rachel. "Embracing Icons: The Face of Jacob on the Throne of God." *Image* 1.1 (2007): 36-54.

Neis, Rachel. "Religious Lives of Image-Things. Avodah Zarah and Rabbis in Late Antiquity." *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 17.1 (2016): 91-121.

Neis, Rachel. *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Nestle, Eberhard, Erwin Nestle, Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Ioannis D. Karavidopoulos, Carlo Maria Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Holger Strutwolf, eds. *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 2012).

Neusner, Jacob. *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature.* New York: Doubleday, 1994.

Nevo, Ruth. *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare*. London: Routledge, 1980.

Nikolsky, Ronit. "'God Tempted Moses for Seven days': The Bush Revelation in Rabbinic Literature." Pages 89-107 in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses*. Edited by George H. van Kooten. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Noble, Marion Gail. "Aspects of Parody in Shakespearean Drama." PhD diss., The University of Toronto, 1993.

Noy, David. *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers*. London: Duckworth with the Classical Press of Wales, 2000.

O'Collins, Gerald. *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

O'Brien, Kelli S. *The Use of Scripture in the Markan Passion Narrative*. London: T&T Clark, 2010.

O'Sullivan, Shaun. "Anti-Jewish Polemic and Early Islam." Pages 49-68 in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*. Edited by David Thomas. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Oancea, Constantin. "Psalm 2 im Alten Testament und im Frühen Judentum." *Sacra Scripta* 11.2 (2013): 159-80.

Olson, S. Douglas. "The Stories of Agamemnon in Homer's Odyssey," *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 120 (1990): 57-71.

Olster, David M. *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994.

Online Treasury of Talmudic Manuscripts. Project of the Talmud Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/.

Page Jr., Hugh R. "Habakkuk." Pages 893-98 in *The Prophets*. Edited by Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber. Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

Paget, James Carleton. *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Pastis, Jaqueline Z. "Dating the Dialogues of Timothy and Aquila: Revisiting the Earlier Vorlage Hypothesis." *Harvard Theological Review* 95.2 (2002): 169- 195.

Peers, Glenn. *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600).* Vol. 1 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700).* Vol. 2 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. *A New English Translation of the Septuaginta: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Pohl IV, William C. "A Messianic Reading of Psalm 89: A Canonical and Intertextual Study." *JETS* 58.3 (2015): 507-25.

Price, Richard. "The Virgin as *Theotokos* at Ephesus (ad 431) and Earlier." Pages 66-78 in *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*. Edited by Chris Maunder. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Primary Textual Witnesses to Tannaitic Literature. The Institute for the Computerization in Jewish life. Prof. Friedman, S. and Prof. Moscovitz, L. Department of Talmud of the Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv. http://www.biu.ac.il/JS/tannaim/.

Qohelet Rabbah. MS Vatican 12, 191.

Rigolio, Alberto. *Christians in Conversation: A Guide to Late Antique Dialogues in Greek and Syriac.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Robertson, R. G., ed. *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: A Critical Text, Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationships*. Th.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1986.

Rokeah, David. *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in Conflict*. Leiden: Brill, 1982.

Romeny, Bas ter Haar. "Peshitta and Other Syriac Versions." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref:obso/9780195377378.001.0001/acref-9780195377378-e-122.

Rouwhorst, Gerald. "Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity." *Vigilae Christianae* 51.1 (1997): 72-93.

Rouwhorst, Gerard, and Marcel Poorthuis. "'Why do the Nations Conspire?: Psalm 2 in Post-Biblical Jewish and Christian Traditions." Pages 425-53 in *Empsychoi Logoi—Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*. Edited by Alberdina Houtman, Albert de Jong, and Magda Misset-van de Weg. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Rubin, Miri. *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Russell, Norman. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Savvidis, Kyriakos (Bochum). "Diatessaron". *Brill's New Pauly*. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e316750.

Sawyer, John F. A. *Isaiah Through the Centuries*. Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2018..

Schäfer, Peter, ed. *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture*. 3 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998-2002.

Schäfer, Peter. *Jesus in the Talmud*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Schäfer, Peter. *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2003.

Schremer, Adiel. “The Christianization of the Roman Empire and Rabbinic Literature.” Pages 349-66 in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*. Edited by Lee Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

Schwartz, Seth. “Gamaliel in Aphrodite’s Bath: Palestinian Judaism and Urban Culture in the Third and Fourth Centuries.” Pages 203-18 in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*. Vol. 1. Edited by Peter Schäfer. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998.

Secunda, Shai. *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Shaikh, Saʿdiyya. *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ʿArabī, Gender, and Sexuality*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Shoemaker, Stephen J. *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Shulman, David Dean. *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Simon-Shoshan, Moshe. “Halakhah Lemaʿaseh: Narrative and Legal Discourse in the Mishnah.” PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2005.

Simon, Marcel. *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire, AD 135-425*. Translated from French by H. McKeating. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986.

Slusser, Michael. “Docetism.” *Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. doi:10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah05065.

Smallwood, E. Mary. *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian*. Leiden: Brill, 1976.

Sokoloff, Michael. *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002.

Sommer, Benjamin D. “Isaiah.” Pages 763-899 in *The Jewish Study Bible. Jewish Publication Society: Tanakh Translation*. Edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Speck, Paul. “Zu dem Dialog mit einem Juden des Leontios von Neapolis.” *Poikila Byzantina* 4 (1984): 242–49.

Starowieyski, M. “Protevangelium of James,” *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* 3:330-1.

Steinsaltz, Adin Even-Israel. *Reference Guide to the Talmud*. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2014.

Strack, Herman Leberecht, and Günter Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Edited and translated by Markus Bockmuehl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

Talmud Text Databank. Saul Lieberman Institute. https://www-lieberman-institute-com.

Taylor, Miriam. *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Consensus*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

Thiessen, Matthew. "The Form and Function of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1-43)." *JBL* 123.3 (2004): 401-24.

Thomas, Nigel J. T. "Plato and His Predecessors," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mental-imagery/plato-predecessors.html.

Thunberg, Lars. "Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen. 18." *Studia Patristica* 8 (1966): 560-70.

Tov, Emanuel. "The Septuagint." Pages 161-88 in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*. Edited by Martin J. Mulder and Harry Sysling. Aasen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.

van der Horst, Pieter W. "A Short Note on the Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati." *Zutot* 6.1 (2009): 1-6.

Van Nuffelen, Peter. "Prepared for all Occasions: The Trophies of Damascus and the Bonwetsch Dialogue." Pages 65-76 in *Dialogues and Debates from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium*. 65-76. Edited by Averil Cameron and Niels Gaul. Routledge: London, 2017.

Varner, William. *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues: Athanasius and Zacchaeus, Simon and Theophilus, Timothy and Aquila: Introductions, Texts, and Translations*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004.

Vasiliev, A. A. *History of the Byzantine Empire 324-1453*. 2 vols. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952.

Visotzky, Burton L. "Anti-Christian Polemic in Leviticus Rabbah." Pages 93-105 in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995.

Visotzky, Burton L. "Goys 'R'n't Us: Rabbinic Anti-Gentile Polemic in Yerushalmi Berachot 9:1." Pages 299-313 in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*. Edited by Eduard Iricinschi and Holder M. Zellentin. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

Visotzky, Burton L. "Mary Maudlin among the Rabbis." Pages 85-92 in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995.

Visotzky, Burton L. "Trinitarian Testimonies." Pages 61-74 in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995.

Visotzky, Burton L. *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literature*. Tübingen: Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995.

Wald, Stephen G. "Joshua ben Hananiah." *Encyclopedia Judaica* 11:450.

Wessel, Walter W. "Mark." Pages 603-796 in *The Expositor's Bible* Commentary. Vol. 8. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

Williams, Arthur Lukyn. *Adversus Judaeos. A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935.

Yegül, Fikret. *Bathing in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Yerushalmi. Talmud Yerushalmi According to Ms. Or. 4720 (Seal. 3) of the Leiden University Library with Restorations and Corrections. Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001.

Yuval, Israel Jacob. *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Translated by Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Zellentin, Holger Michael. *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.