

Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition in Early Christianity and Early Judaism

Early Christianity in the Roman World

This series offers a new forum for studies on the formation and development of Christian beliefs and practices in the first centuries of Common Era. The constitutive idea is to treat Early Christianity as a multivalent phenomenon, characterized by a fundamental diversity. The focus is on interchanges and interactions between various groups in the ancient Mediterranean world that had an impact on developing Christianity, including the interrelations between various Christian groups. The series wants to foster studies that seek to place the diverse manifestations of the Christian movement on the Hellenistic-Roman cultural and religious maps.

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Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition in Early Christianity and Early Judaism

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations	7
---------------	---

Introduction	9
--------------	---

Outi Lehtipuu and Michael Labahn

I Conditions of Tolerance

1. From Conflict to Recognition	19
---------------------------------	----

Rethinking a Scholarly Paradigm in the Study of Christian Origins

Ismo Dunderberg

2. Mutable Ethnicity in the Dead Sea Scrolls	47
--	----

Intertwined Acts of Tolerance and Intolerance

Carmen Palmer

3. Der geliebte „Feind“	73
-------------------------	----

Wahrnehmung des Anderen in Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe und ihre
Rezeption im Dokument Q – ein Beispiel antiker „Toleranz“ und
„Anerkennung“?

Michael Labahn

II Jewish–Christian Relations between Tolerance and Intolerance

4. Was Paul Tolerant?	113
-----------------------	-----

An Assessment of William S. Campbell's and J. Brian Tucker's
“Particularistic” Paul

Nina Nikki

5. Since When Were Martyrs Jewish?	139
------------------------------------	-----

Apologies for the Maccabees' Martyrdom and Making of Religious
Difference

Anna-Liisa Rafael

6. Hiding One's Tolerance 169
 Cyril of Alexandria's Use of Philo
Sami Yli-Karjanmaa

7. Rabbinic Reflections on Divine–Human Interactions 195
 Speaking in Parables on the Miracle of Pregnancy and Birth
Galit Hasan-Rokem and Israel J. Yuval

III Tolerance and Questions of Persecution, Gender, and Ecology

8. Were the Early Christians Really Persecuted? 229
Paul Middleton

9. “No Male and Female” 251
 Women and the Rhetoric of Recognition in Early Christianity
Outi Lehtipuu

10. Learning from “Others” 273
 Reading Two Samaritan Stories in the Gospel of Luke from an
 Ecological Perspective
Elizabeth V. Dowling

- Epilogue 291
 Sites of Toleration
Amy-Jill Levine

- Index of Ancient Sources 305

Abbreviations

Note – Abbreviations not listed below are found or follow the pattern of those found in the *SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, edited by Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Peabody, MA, 1999). The following, not in SBL, are abbreviations of works by Cyril of Alexandria and other writers cited in Yli-Karjanmaa: *Ador.* = *De adoratione*; *Comm. Matt.* = *Commentarii in Matthaeum*; *Comm. min. pr.* = *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores*; *C. Jul.* = *Contra Julianum*; *Ep.* = *Epistulae*; *Ep. pasch.* = *Epistula paschalis*; *Exp. Ps.* = *Expositio in Psalmos*; *Fr. Ps.* = *Fragmenta in Psalmos*; *Isa.* = *In Isaiam*; *Jo.* = *In Joannem*; *Luc.* = *In Lucam*; *Trin. dial.* = *De sancta trinitate dialogi i–vii*

1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>
4Q117	<i>Ezra</i>
4Q169	<i>Pesher Nahum</i>
4Q174	<i>Florilegium</i>
4Q279	<i>Four Lots</i>
4Q307	<i>Text Mentioning Temple</i>
4QMMT	<i>Miqṣat Maʿaśê ha-Torah^a</i>
11Q19	<i>Temple Scroll^a</i>
11QApPs ^a	<i>Apocryphal Psalms^a</i>
ANF	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 1885–87, 10 vols. (repr., Peabody, MA, 1994)
BAGD	Bauer, Walter, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. <i>A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd ed. (Chicago, 2000)
BDR	F. Blass, A. Debrunner and F. Rehkopf, <i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> (18th ed.; Göttingen 2001).
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart, 1983)
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the <i>Damascus Document</i>
DJD	<i>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert</i> series
DSS	Dead Sea scrolls
JPL	Jewish Publication Society
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>

LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NHC	<i>Nag Hammadi Codices</i>
NHL	<i>Nag Hammadi Library in English</i> , edited by James M. Robinson, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA, 1988)
NPNF	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , edited by Philip Schaff, 1886–89, 14 vols. (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
PL	Patrologia Latina, series edited by J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64)
SGG	H.W. Smyth, <i>Greek Grammar</i> . (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956)
SIA	social identity approach
TLG	<i>Thesaurus linguae graecae</i> , http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/
cap.	<i>caput</i> (chapter)
frag(s).	fragment(s)
lit.	literally
v(v).	verse(s)

Introduction

Outi Lehtipuu and Michael Labahn

One of the best-known landmarks in the city of Córdoba in Andalusia is the Mezquita, the Mosque–Cathedral, a remarkable monument with two identities. Formerly a mosque that could hold up to 40,000 persons, in the thirteenth century it was converted to a Catholic church, with a Renaissance nave later added to the building. Today, the Mosque–Cathedral serves as the main church of Córdoba, where Christians regularly gather to celebrate the Mass.

The Mosque–Cathedral symbolizes the diversity of religions characteristic of the history of all Andalusia. In the twelfth century, both the Jewish scholar Maimonides and the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (also known as Averroes) lived and worked in Córdoba, where one of the world's largest libraries at the time was located. Indeed, this period of the city's history is often represented as one of peaceful *convivencia* (coexistence), where those belonging to different religious traditions could live together peacefully.

When the European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS) announced that it would gather in Córdoba in 2015, as chairs of the Early Christianity research group we decided to devote the topic of our discussion to religious tolerance and mutual recognition. Despite several early Christian texts reflecting suspicion of and open hostility toward “others,” we encouraged participating scholars to focus on other modes of interaction found in early Christianity. We challenged them to look for examples of constructive dialogue in ancient sources and seek out the signs of peaceful coexistence among different religious traditions. Some of this research has resulted in the contributions published within the core of this volume.

Another important source of inspiration for this volume is the work conducted in the Centre of Excellence on Reason and Religious Recognition, funded by the Academy of Finland and hosted by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki between 2014 and 2019. One of its research teams set its focus on the interaction between religious traditions in antiquity,

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including Judaism, Christianity, and Greco-Roman religions. One of the crucial starting points of this multidisciplinary team was to avoid studying any of these religious traditions in isolation. This prompted us to extend the focus of this volume to include encounters with others in early Jewish sources. In addition, Jewish–Christian relations figure prominently in the following essays.

For a historian, conflict is often more easily accessible than peaceful coexistence, for disagreement and controversy are more likely taken into historical records and serve often as prerequisites for change. The history of religious traditions is no different in this respect. Much of the study of the history of early Judaism and early Christianity has focused on rivalry, either between these two religious traditions or within one of them. Questions concerning encounters with others are closely linked with questions of identity, and religious concerns, ethnicity, gender, and other factors central to identity formation are often intertwined in complicated ways. Within these complex networks, the boundaries of tolerance are drawn and negotiated in multitudinous ways.

Several challenges face the study of tolerance and recognition in ancient religious traditions. First is the question of language. Ancient sources attest to a wide variety of encounters with others and signs of demarcation lines between both groups and ideas, but the language found therein differs from the modern concepts of “tolerance,” “intolerance,” and “recognition.” While it is natural for scholars to use concepts familiar to them, it is important to try to distinguish them from their later meanings and associations heavily indebted to post-Enlightenment ideas. Categories of tolerance and recognition can serve as valuable comparative tools, but it would be a mistake to try to fit the observations made from ancient evidence into modern theories.

Second is the question of perspective. Tolerance is not absolute or something that can be univocally defined. It is always context-specific, dependent on perspective. This also means that generalizations about religious tolerance can easily become oversimplified. For example, there has been a strong scholarly tradition of pre-Christian polytheistic traditions having been tolerant, whereas Christian monotheism, particularly after the conversion of Constantine, was increasingly intolerant. This view can be partly explained as a reaction to the older, often religiously inspired discourse that saw early Christians as victims of intolerant, ruthless Roman emperors and their officials. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the one-sidedness of both positions, with calls now for a more nuanced study of the past. Early Christianity, early Judaism, and different polytheistic

traditions entailed both tolerant and intolerant elements. Power relations are also essential to this analysis.

The third challenge is the question of source materials. As with all ancient sources, the picture they offer is fragmentary and usually reveals only one side of multidimensional relations. While the tone of many textual sources is polemical, even hostile, it is unclear to what extent such texts reflect the world in which they were composed. Polemic need not be read as underlying real-life conflict, especially if the polemicist is relatively powerless. In some cases, intolerance directed against outsiders may in fact be aimed at dissidents in one's own ingroup, with an outside group used only as a rhetorical tool to demarcate the group's inner boundaries. Sometimes the opposite may be true, with an assertion of good will and harmony obfuscating underlying tensions. The beauty and tranquility of the Córdoba Mezquita, for example, may also evoke critical questions: Are Christianity and Islam here truly at peace with one another, or is one suppressing the other? What about Jewish tradition, which is also important to the city's history?

One way or another, historical scholarship always reflects present-day concerns. Questions about religious intolerance and conflict came sharply into focus especially in the aftermath of 9/11. It is hardly coincidence then that recent decades have seen a growing interest in the study of religious tolerance and the peaceful cohabitation of various traditions – values which present-day multicultural societies aspire to embody. The study of historical encounters between different religions does not lead into simple either/or conclusions; rather, it challenges us to better understand history – and ourselves. While it would be irresponsible to deny or belittle conflicts, a critical analysis of coexistence should account for other modes of interaction to gain a fuller view of history.

While this volume approaches questions of tolerance and intolerance as historical phenomena, some contributions also deal with the history of research and present-day challenges. The quest for religious tolerance, respect, and recognition – albeit characteristic of modern and postmodern thought – is a human concern that runs throughout history, for coexistence and diversity are at the core of human culture. It is crucial to inquire, among other things, whether patterns suggesting a promotion of tolerance and recognition can be found in ancient Jewish and Christian sources and how modern readers should deal with expressions of intolerance and misrecognition in ancient religious traditions.

The collection starts with essays on various conditions of tolerance. Ismo Dunderberg analyzes how conflict has become a major interpretative framework for imagining the historical context behind early Christian texts. Dunderberg points out that the relationship between texts and the historical circumstances in which they were written is not straightforward. It is methodologically dubious to presume that texts articulate the social reality experienced by their ancient audience. Rather, the language of conflict in texts may be nothing more than a bellicose move to establish a certain form of religious identity and demarcate its boundaries. Such boundaries were often less clearly visible in the lived religion of common people. While Dunderberg does not deny the existence of conflicts between early Christ-believers, he maintains that focusing on conflicts may distort our understanding of the past. Ancient texts also offer examples of respectful dialogue with those suspected of heresy. Dunderberg discusses two such cases in the works of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who were willing to give some credit to Valentinian teachers who they otherwise opposed. These examples show that conflict is not – and should not be – the only option in religious dialogue.

In the second essay, Carmen Palmer addresses the question of tolerance and intolerance toward outsiders in the Dead Sea scrolls, particularly in relation to conversion. Because conversion in ancient Judaism was regarded as a change of ethnic identity and the scrolls attest to a high value placed on purity, scholars have assumed that the movement would have been opposed to any manner of including converts. By analyzing how the term *ger* is used in the scrolls, specifically in the scriptural rewritings, Palmer demonstrates how varying references to *gerim* (plur.) as converts betray the variety of attitudes that existed in the community toward outsiders. One tradition within this corpus reflects tolerance by means of a notion of mutable ethnicity. In other words, Gentiles who convert are regarded as Gentiles no longer; taking on Jewish kinship and connection to land, they are able to become full members as *ger*. This sort of tolerance is not without its limits, for it requires the converts to overcome their Gentile nature and transform themselves into Jews. Moreover, the scrolls also reflect another, more intolerant tradition that regards ethnicity as immutable. According to this understanding, the *gerim* are inauthentic converts, unable to overcome their Gentileness, and ought therefore to be excluded from the community for reasons of kinship and religious practice.

In the next chapter, Michael Labahn examines the commandment to love one's enemies from the point of view of tolerance. The formulation of the commandment presupposes that some people are perceived as

an enemy, which corresponds to the widespread need to create identity through constructing enemy-images. On the other hand, the commandment implies that the other ought neither to be excluded nor passively endured. To meet the enemy with love means abandoning one's comfort zone and thus presents the challenge of reaching beyond tolerance by exceeding social expectations. This kind of love can be taken as an unconditional concern for the well-being of others both in the context of Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom of God and in the early reception of this memory in document Q. The commandment implies a theological conception of enemies as, on the one hand, forming part of the object of God's love for human beings and the whole created world, while, on the other hand, being perceived as adversaries responsible for their actions before God, the ultimate judge. The commandment to love one's enemies speaks against any escalation of enmity, calling for an act that can be described, at least partly, as one of unrestricted recognition, one that exists outside any demand to be inscribed in a grammar of the theory of recognition.

Nina Nikki's contribution is a critical examination of whether Paul's attitudes toward Jews and Gentiles deserves the identification of "tolerance." Her point of departure is the "particularistic approach" to Paul taken by William Campbell and J. Brian Tucker, according to which Paul allows Jewish and pagan followers of Christ to live "in Christ" without abandoning their former identities as Jew or Gentile. After a critical investigation of the identity models used by Tucker and Campbell, Nikki turns instead to the "mutual intergroup differentiation model," which emphasizes the importance of using vague prototypes to foster acceptance within a group. Using this model, she identifies both tolerating and discriminatory aspects in Paul's letters. Nikki concludes that modern interests and theological tendencies should not overly direct historical analysis. Paul's discourse must be understood as reflecting his historical context, not as foundations for modern values.

The next three contributions discuss Jewish and Christian relations in subsequent centuries. Anna-Liisa Rafael examines three fourth-century homilies – by Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo – on the so-called Maccabean martyrs. She calls into question the scholarly commonplace that these homilies offer a case of Christian appropriation of Jewish martyrs. She argues instead that the Jewishness of the "Maccabees" was reinforced as part of the process in which they were recognized as martyrs (of Christ). In other words, the homilies do not reflect intolerance of Jews or Judaism, nor do they convert the Maccabees from Jews into Christians; in late antiquity, distinctions between Jews and Christians were much more complex than previous scholarship on this topic maintains.

Contextualizing the homilies of Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine in the ways their contemporary Christian discourse differentiated between being Christian and being Jewish, Rafael suggests that a positive notion of Jewish martyrdom – that is, martyrdom for Christ before Christ – develops within the early Christian martyrological discourse expressly with the help of the Maccabean martyr figures.

Cyril, the fifth-century bishop of Alexandria, is infamous for his intolerance of all he deemed unorthodox, be that Judaism, paganism, or heresy. Sami Yli-Karjanmaa focuses on Cyril's anti-Judaism. The starting point of his essay is the paradox that, while Cyril was hostile toward contemporary Jews, his Platonizing theology and allegorical interpretation were deeply indebted to Philo the Jew. Even though Cyril, in his voluminous writing, never explicitly mentions Philo, Yli-Karjanmaa maintains that Cyril not only used Philo's work but was also aware of Philo's Jewishness. Because of his antipathy toward contemporary Jews, Cyril, in Yli-Karjanmaa's view, did his best to conceal his theological debt to Philo, to hide his tolerance. Because of Philo's prominent place in the Alexandrian exegetical tradition, Cyril could not simply dismiss him, but instead used Philo without acknowledging his dependence on him.

Galit Hasan-Rokem and Israel J. Yuval approach the question of tolerance by focusing on the notion of miraculous birth, a topic shared by both Jews and Christians. Because of its centrality in Christianity, the topic featured in polemics between Jews and Christians. Hasan-Rokem and Yuval propose that in some rabbinic texts the topic may signal intergroup dialogue. In their analysis of chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, dated to the first half of the fifth century, they reveal contacts between the rabbinic text and Origen's homilies on Leviticus, which elaborate on the same biblical texts. Both sets of texts are based on performative situations and echo oral contexts despite having been rewritten many times over and, in Origen's case, having been translated from Greek into Latin. While the narrative techniques in *Leviticus Rabbah* differ from Origen's allegorical style, both texts show how everyday life and experience are linked to theological questions. Jews and Christians shared the idea of God's unquestionable power to perform miracles, but whereas the Christian discourse on miraculous birth in general addresses the birth of Jesus, the rabbis diverted the discourse to all human births.

In the last section of the volume, the questions of tolerance and recognition are discussed in relation to persecution, gender, and ecology. Paul Middleton focuses on various ancient testimonies that saw early Christians as a group persecuted by Jews and non-Jews alike. These testimonies correspond to the long-held image according to which early Christ-believers were persecuted

by an intolerant state. This interpretation has been called into question by a “minimalist” view, which in contrast understands Christian obstinacy as intolerance of a largely tolerant Roman state. Middleton seeks to balance these two extremes by offering a new model of “modified minimalism,” which accounts for both Christian and Roman viewpoints. Key here is to assess the extent and limits of acceptance. The Roman state’s tolerance ended if the required loyalty, shown by sacrificing to the gods and before the emperor, was refused. Christian acceptance of and commitment to the Roman state likewise had its limits, as they were not willing to compromise their monotheistic belief in God.

The key concept in Outi Lehtipuu’s essay is recognition. While tolerance is essentially based on disagreement, recognition of others means granting them a positive status despite disagreement or different values. Recognition has become an important tool in critical social theory, vital in present-day multicultural societies where different groups seek ways to express their identities. Noting that the slogan of “no male and female” in Galatians 3:28 is often interpreted as reflecting universal recognition of human beings despite their gender, Lehtipuu analyzes how ancient authors have used Paul’s statement. She criticizes recognition theories for downplaying the power structures inherent in acts of recognition: it is the one who recognizes who gets to define the criteria for recognition and thus to create the identity that is recognized. This structure is also evident in the ancient discourses on Galatians 3:28. While authors such as Clement of Alexandria seem to accept a common humanity and a universal capacity for virtue, he reserves the abolition of gender difference to the ideal world to come. Until then, Clement maintains, virtues manifest differently for different genders, and conventional social distinctions will prevail.

In the last contribution to this volume, Elizabeth V. Dowling asks what the Lukan stories of the Samaritan “others” might teach us from an ecological perspective. In her reading, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) and the narrative of the Healing of Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11–19) use the dynamic of division between Jews and Samaritans to create a category of the “other.” At the same time, these stories invite their audience to think differently about these “others” who, at the narrative level, present a positive model for virtue. This dynamic challenges the readers and hearers of these stories to strive beyond mere tolerance, as they invite them to learn from such “others.” For first-century audiences, the challenge of these stories is to look beyond stereotypes and to recognize the positive model for virtue offered in those whom they otherwise scorned. In Dowling’s ecological reading, the challenge for present-day readers – amidst the global crisis

posed by climate change and refugees and internally displaced persons – is to recognize alternative “others” in these stories, including both human and other-than-human members of the Earth community.

The volume closes with an epilogue by Amy-Jill Levine, who discusses what kinds of strategies of tolerance and examples of intolerance we can find in the ancient sources and what lessons we can learn from them.

An edited volume is a collaborative project that would not be finished without the work and commitment of several people. We would like to express our heartfelt thank you to all our contributors for their fine essays. We are also grateful to the anonymous reviewer for many helpful comments. The staff of Amsterdam University Press has offered their help at all stages of the project – a special thank you to Erin Thomas Dailey, Chantal Nicolaes, and James Thomas.

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1. From Conflict to Recognition

Rethinking a Scholarly Paradigm in the Study of Christian Origins¹

Ismo Dunderberg

Abstract

This article analyzes conflict as a major interpretative framework for early Christian texts. The language of conflict in these texts may be nothing more than a bellicose move to establish a certain form of religious identity and demarcate its boundaries. While conflicts existed between early Christ-believers, a focus on conflicts may distort our understanding of the past. Ancient texts also offer examples of respectful dialogue with those suspected of heresy and show that conflict is not the only option in religious dialogue.

Keywords: religious dialogue; early Christian texts; Johannine literature; Clement of Alexandria; Origen

Early Christ-followers were often engaged in conflicts with each other. While there is no denying this, the question deserves to be raised whether conflict has become too dominant a paradigm in the study of Christian origins. In this field, the notion of conflict provides a major interpretive framework

¹ I wish to thank my two Helsinki colleagues, Outi Lehtipuu and Nina Nikki, for their close reading of and valuable comments on the earlier versions of this study. An early draft of this essay was presented and discussed at the Department of Religious Studies at Northwestern University, 2 May 2018. I am grateful to Christine Helmer and Robert Orsi for the kind invitation, and for the thoughtful response by Jason Springs (University of Notre Dame), who, among other things, reminded me that, in conflict and peace studies, conflict is not merely approached as a negative thing. It can also be understood as one way to determine, and work on, the nature of a relationship.

within which the sources are placed into their historical contexts and their relationship to each other is explained.

The point I seek to make here is that the emphasis on conflicts in the study of Christian origins has often resulted in one-sided and occasionally unwarranted explanations of the relationship between early Christ-groups.

The problems with the so-called mirror-reading of texts addressing – and sometimes creating – situations of conflict have been pointed out before: we know “only one partner in a particular conversation”; authors of such texts may have misunderstood their opponents’ teachings; and scholars may have overinterpreted those texts as sources of conflict and of their opponents’ views.²

My discussion will be focused on scholarly constructions of conflicts in early Christian sources. In my view, the main problems with the conflict-centered paradigm in scholarly usage are that it tends to (1) magnify the scope and importance of conflicts that seem real; (2) invent conflicts in cases where evidence is spurious or non-existent; and (3) neglect (or downplay) other kinds of encounters with the other.

This essay proceeds from a brief reflection on the presuppositions that may underlie the popularity of conflict in scholarly discourse to some Johannine examples illustrating what I mean by “magnification” and “invention” of conflicts. I will then pinpoint two broader issues, each of which poses a challenge to the conflict-centered paradigm. These are the relationship between texts and lived religion on the one hand, and that between texts, authors, and social reality on the other. In the final part, I will briefly discuss two cases running against the conflict paradigm, pointing out that there were at least two early Christian teachers – Clement and Origen – who treated their opponents not with disdain, but with some degree of esteem. These cases certainly fall short of being examples of a full-blown recognition of the other, but they manifest some Christian authors’ effort at conducting a respectful dialogue with those suspected of heresy.

Conflicts Make History, Don’t They?

The most important precursor of the conflict-centered paradigm prevailing in the study of Christian origins is no doubt Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), and especially his analysis of the competing parties among followers of Christ in Corinth. Paul refers to such parties in 1 Corinthians:

2 Cf. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter,” esp. 74–83 (quote from p. 76).

“each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ’” (1 Cor. 1:12, *NRSV*). While Paul identifies a number of groups here, Baur insisted that the earliest Christ-followers were basically divided into two currents, that is, the “Pauline” and the “Petrine” forms of Christianity.³ This division equated to that between “Gentile” Christianity and “Jewish” Christianity, and it was their mutual “opposition” that, according to Baur, “so deeply shaped the relations in the earliest church.”⁴

Baur’s notion of the two opposite poles now seems overly simplistic.⁵ While the influence of Baur’s model is still apparent in some modern studies,⁶ most scholars in the field allow for much greater diversity among early Christ groups than Baur did. This diversity can be seen not only in texts that became part of the New Testament, but also in those included in more recent discoveries of non-canonical early Christian texts, such as the Nag Hammadi library and the Coptic codex *Berlinus Gnosticus*, which were not then available to Baur.

While Baur’s polarized view on the parties shaping the Christian origins has been considerably criticized and modified, his focus on conflict persists as a focal point in the academic study of early Christianity. Much of the research conducted in this field is driven by a special fascination with conflicts between early Christ groups. Conflicts largely determine our ways of conceptualizing and writing about the story of early Christ-followers.

The continuing attraction of this perspective suggests that conflict looms large in our perception of what history is all about. Most of us have been taught to think that conflicts bring about change and thus set important historical processes in motion.⁷ Hence conflict matters more than periods of stability, and war more than peace in our conception of “history.”

Conflict-based historiography may hold a special attraction for those of us conducting research on sacred texts since this perspective enables

3 Baur, “Die Christuspartei.”

4 *Ibid.*, 205.

5 Cf. e.g. Donaldson, “Gentile Christianity.”

6 For the most prominent recent example, see Theissen, *Theory*. Theissen admirably delineates a theoretical perspective that allows him to integrate different aspects of religion (myth, ritual, and ethics) into a synthesis of Christian beliefs and practices at the earliest phase. Theissen’s ensuing account of the two “crises” that early Christ-followers needed to resolve, however, perpetuates Baur’s dated dichotomy between the “Jewish” and the “Hellenistic” (often identified with “Gnostic”) form of Christianity.

7 This affirmation draws from personal experience: the tripartite scheme “background–conflict (war, revolution, or like)–consequences” was essential to the way history was conceptualized and taught at my high school.

us to offer fresh insights into those texts that may be unexpected, and sometimes shocking and disturbing. The idea that early followers of Christ were struggling with each other challenges the popular imagination – going back to the Book of Acts – of the earliest phase, when those people lived in undisturbed harmony and peace with each other.

The notion of conflicts also lends a more human edge to the world of the early Christians, which brings them closer to us and our experience of reality. Raymond Brown says this much in his commentary on the three Johannine epistles:

My vision of these Epistles as the record of a theological life-and-death-struggle within a community at the end of the first century has made me want to make them more familiar to readers (and even to churches) at the end of the twentieth century. If I am right, the author of these Epistles wrestled in microcosm with problems that have tortured Christianity ever since and that are still with us today.⁸

As I maintained above, there would be no point in trying to deny Baur's basic insight. Conflicts among early Christ-followers certainly existed. Many of Paul's letters are filled with references to debating, party formation, competition, and inequality among Christ-groups. A close reading of any of those letters suffices to challenge the all-too-peaceful and harmonious account of the emergence of the Christian community offered in Luke-Acts. Paul's references to competing parties in Corinth and his fiery polemics against those imposing circumcision on non-Jewish Christ-followers in his letter to the Galatians may be rhetorically exaggerated, but they would make little sense unless there were among the first-generation Christ-adherents real and serious conflicts which Paul thought required his intervention.⁹ The author of the Book of Revelation certainly had some real-life Christ-followers in mind in condemning "the works of the Nicolaitans" (Rev 2:6; cf. 2:15) and "that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food offered to idols" (2:20). Other texts where the opponents are identified and combated could be easily added, such as 3 John (v. 9), 2 Timothy (2:16–18), and the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3, 55/§ 17; 56/§ 21; 57/§ 23; 67/§ 69; 73/§ 90), to mention only a few.

8 Brown, *Epistles of John*, xv.

9 Cf. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter," 86–90, who, in spite of all his caveats about the mirror-reading of Paul's Galatians, concludes that Paul's opponents were real and that some aspects of their identity, views and actions can be inferred from this letter.

One should just keep in mind that such blatantly clear cases of Christ-followers debating about the right teaching and practice are not the entire picture of their relationships with each other. This, however, is the impression that one often gets from academic studies on Christian origins. If it is assumed that conflicts matter more than anything else when history is made, then the study of Christian origins is also bound to be focused on them. This, in turn, often results in one-sided interpretations of our sources, determined by the conflicts they allegedly seek to address.

Scholarly Magnification and Invention of Conflicts: Johannine Examples

The conflict-driven approach in New Testament studies entails two specific problems that I shall briefly illustrate with a few examples derived from Johannine studies. One is the tendency to see conflicts everywhere, including sources in which they are not clearly indicated. In other words, the conflict-driven paradigm may lead to scholarly *invention* of conflicts. Another problem is scholarly magnification, by which I mean the tendency to expand the scope of the conflicts addressed in the sources available to us. Magnification usually takes place in the form of posing trajectories from a conflict addressed in one particular text to some later developments in the Christian church. More often than not, these alleged trajectories pertain to some key aspects of what was established as Christian dogma in later centuries.

John and Other Gospels

John's Gospel clearly differs from the three other gospels in the New Testament in numerous ways, but its author neither quotes nor disputes any of them. It would seem an obvious conclusion from this state of affairs that the author of John's Gospel was not interested in conducting any kind of dialogue with any other accounts of Jesus. Nevertheless, Hans Windisch (1881–1935) detected in John's gospel polemics against other Synoptic Gospels. A similar notion of John as a gospel-in-conflict recurs in many more studies on the Gospel of Thomas.

Windisch provided a thorough account of all differences between John's Gospel and the three Synoptic Gospels to demonstrate that John's was written in order to replace and even suppress these other gospels.¹⁰ Windisch

10 Windisch, *Johannes und die Synoptiker*.

maintained, correctly in my view, that all those features that make John's Gospel different from the Synoptics would have posed serious interpretive challenges to readers familiar with the Synoptics. Windisch also correctly maintained that John's Gospel does not offer any interpretive help to such readers, who may have found all those differences between John and the Synoptics baffling. While these are undeniable textual facts, the way from here to Windisch's explanation of why John's Gospel was written is less self-evident. Windisch deduced from the differences an authorial intent for John's Gospel that aimed at exclusion and censorship. Thus, he took difference as indicative of competition and conflict. This is no longer a self-evident conclusion.

Even today, Windisch's observations provide a healthy antidote to any easy harmonization of the differences between John's Gospel and the Synoptics. Nevertheless, his conclusion that the Johannine author(s) sought to put those other gospels out of contention seems unwarranted.¹¹ One indication to this effect is that this option was never seriously considered or realized in the ancient church.¹² Some early readers dismissed John's Gospel as being too different from the synoptic gospels,¹³ but those who approved of it also subscribed to the authority of the synoptic ones.

The way the story about Jesus is told in John's gospel demonstrates a great deal of literary and theological independence.¹⁴ This is especially the case if we assume that this gospel's author(s) knew (some of) the synoptic gospels and yet decided to offer a very different account of Jesus. Literary and theological independence, however, does not necessarily equate to censorship. If the suppression of other gospels were the true reason why John's Gospel was written, one could expect that the author(s) would spell out this intention loud and clear. Yet this aspect goes unmentioned in the concluding passage stating the purpose for writing this gospel (John 20:30–31). No other accounts of Jesus are mentioned here, not to speak of

11 For my extended discussion with Windisch's views on John and the Synoptics, see Dunderberg, "Johannine Anomalies."

12 I am indebted to Outi Lehtipuu for making this point in her comments on an early draft of this chapter.

13 The Christ-followers critical of John's Gospel were dismissively called *alogoi* in the early church. The term refers to these people being "without" the divine Word, with whom Jesus is identified in John's Gospel, but it also quips about them as being "without reason." For *alogoi*, see Merkel, *Die Widersprüche*.

14 It seems that even more conservative scholars, who insist on the potential value of John's Gospel for the study of the historical Jesus, agree with this conclusion; for a brief discussion on Brooke Foss Westcott's views, on which many present-day conservative scholars lean at this point, see Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality Revisited*, 199–201.

the intention to correct or censor them. The conclusion only characterizes the entire text as an invitation to believe in Jesus:

But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

(John 20:31, *NRSV*)¹⁵

The gospel's second ending refers to many more books that could be written "about everything that Jesus did" (John 21:25). This could be a veiled hint that such books already existed, but even here the author voices neither rejection of nor support for any other accounts of Jesus.

In more recent scholarship, prominent specialists in the *Gospel of Thomas* have affirmed that this gospel shares with John's Gospel a number of common themes, such as one's divine origin, ascent to God, and resurrection, and that they develop quite different views on these issues. While in John's Gospel it is only Jesus who comes down from above and then returns to the Father, the *Gospel of Thomas* envisions the two-way journey from and to God as an option available to all believers. The divine light resides only in Christ according to John, but in all believers (or humankind) according to Thomas. Finally, John seems more affirmative than Thomas as regards the resurrection of the body – at least the risen Christ's scars are described in John 20 as tangible and available for inspection (v. 20, 25–27).¹⁶

It seems unavoidable that such differences between the gospels of John and Thomas have been explained as signs of a conflict between early

15 It is often maintained that the textual variation between two forms of the verb *pisteuein* in John 20:31 (present subjunctive *pisteuēte* and aorist subjunctive *pisteusēte*) yield two different understandings of the gospel's purpose affirmed in John 20:30: the aorist subjunctive would mean "begin to believe" (and thus be aimed at unbelievers), whereas the present subjunctive would mean "continue to believe" (and thus be aimed at believers). This may presuppose too dramatic a difference between the present and the aorist subjunctive since "the subjunctive as such refers to the future" (SGG § 1860; cf. BDR § 363: "Der Konjunktiv bezeichnet etwas noch nicht Eingetretenes, hat also futurischen Sinn [...]"). Hence the aspect difference between the present ("continuance," SGG § 1860) and the aorist ("simple occurrence," *ibid.*) readings of John 20:31 pertains to what kind of believing in the future the author has in mind. The "simple occurrence" (aorist) would point to the moment of one's "getting it" (or becoming persuaded), whereas "continuance" (present) would point to one's adopting a new course of action ("become and remain believers").

16 Divine origin and light: Pagels, "Exegesis of Genesis 1"; cf. Pagels, *Beyond Belief*; ascent to God: DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics*; resurrection: Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*. For a compelling argument that the Johannine author in John 20:24–29 refers to the scars of Jesus rather than to his wounds, see now Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 26–40.

Christians. One major difference to Windisch is that he assumed a conflict revolving around texts, while those assuming a conflict between the gospels of John and Thomas maintain that it was first and foremost the communities behind these texts that were in conflict with each other. The unfavorable portrayal of the doubting Thomas in John 20:24–29, culminating with Jesus calling him “an unbeliever” (*apistos*, 20:27), has been interpreted as mockery of the cult hero of the opposed party.

Nevertheless, the step from difference to conflict is no more self-evident here than it was in Windisch’s case. The assumption that the figure of Thomas in John’s Gospel is a spokesperson for one distinct Christian group is far from clear, and it adds to the difficulty that the scholars making this assumption cannot agree on what misguided beliefs Thomas stands for in John 20:24–29. An alternative to the conflict hypothesis is that both gospels developed similar theological viewpoints without any knowledge about the “competing” claims in another. It is possible, and in my view likely, that the authors behind the gospels of John and Thomas went their own ways without knowing – or caring about – each other’s theological positions.¹⁷

Editorial History of John’s Gospel

The notion of severe intra-Johannine conflicts permeates theories about the editorial history of John’s Gospel. The assumption that the gospel evolved gradually, from one literary phase to another, has been one scholarly way to make sense of its numerous narrative breaks and conceptual and theological incongruities. One ramification of this approach has been that scholars have been at pains to impose on each literary layer a distinct doctrinal profile that makes it different from other layers. This approach has often resulted in the picture of John’s Gospel as a battlefield of quarreling Johannine theologians, who not only added new materials, but also constantly disagreed with and corrected the views of their predecessors on a number of crucial theological issues, such as Christology (too much emphasis on Christ’s divinity in an earlier version was corrected by adding details emphasizing the true humanity of Jesus), eschatology (too much “present” eschatology was balanced by adding references to the “future” one), and the Eucharist

17 Cf. Dunderberg, *Beloved Disciple in Conflict?*; for a short summary of my arguments, see Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality Revisited*, 93–116, esp. 96–106. For another critical take on the theories assuming a conflict between the gospels of John and Thomas, see Skinner, *John and Thomas*.

(references to it were added at a later stage).¹⁸ Secondary modifications and expansions can also be explained as resulting from shrewd ecclesio-political calculation in that the editors added elements that brought John's different gospel closer to what scholars consider the Christian "mainstream," such as the emphasis on the Eucharist (John 6:51–58) and the recognition of Peter's leadership of the church (John 21:15–19). In so doing, the Johannine editors allegedly sought to secure broader recognition for and the survival of this gospel and their own group in "the great church."¹⁹

This interpretation presupposes an understanding of the sources available to us, not only as "foundational" documents that express the faith of one community, but also as platforms where that faith could be negotiated with and adapted to the beliefs adopted in some other communities. At the end of the day, the picture envisioned here boils down to the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy: a group suspected of heresy struggles hard to find its place as part of the burgeoning Christian orthodoxy. The problem remains whether any plausible historical context could be offered at this early stage – probably at the turn of the first century – for editors working on stories about Christ in this way. Another related question this explanation raises is whether we are entitled to imagine that there already were people at this juncture who recognized those added "ecclesial" features, most of which are relatively minor textual details, and who because of those subtleties were willing to ignore much bigger problems raised by the very different picture John's Gospel paints of Jesus.

The Johannine Epistles

The conflict paradigm continues to determine much of the current interpretation of the Johannine epistles.²⁰ Its dominance has not gone unchallenged (see below), but large chunks of scholarship on the epistles are still focused on the identification of the opponents against whom these texts were written.

Each of the three Johannine epistles bears witness to some sort of conflict. The two shorter ones revolve around the issue of to whom hospitality can be extended. The author of 3 John complains about the refusal of hospitality towards his messengers, whereas 2 John urges its addressees to test the

18 For one of the most consequent advocates of this approach to John's Gospel, see Richter, *Studien zum Johannesevangelium*.

19 Bultmann's take on the editors of John's Gospel is built on this view; cf. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*.

20 The title of a recent collection of scholarly essays on the Johannine epistles may suffice to demonstrate this intent: Culpepper and Anderson, eds., *Communities in Dispute*.

visitors' teaching before admitting them. The author of 1 John, in turn, is concerned with some people whom he variably designates as "antichrists" (2:18), "false prophets" (4:1), and deserters from his group (2:19), that is, those who no longer believe in Christ (2:22; 4:2) – not at least in the way the author would prefer.

Most scholarly analyses of the Johannine epistles revolve around these passages. It is assumed that the opponents' presence in these texts, especially in 1 John, is ubiquitous; hence the usual interpretation that the author is also engaged in debate with the opponents' views at those points of argumentation where no opposition is directly mentioned. Much ink is spilled on detecting the opponents' slogans in the text, and the theories about their theological profile by and large determine the scholarly interpretations of the message the author of 1 John sought to convey to his audience.²¹

Sometimes this approach results in strange conclusions as regards opponents and their views. The opponents are easily described as morally reprehensible persons, although nowhere in 1 John are they directly accused of any other wrongdoing than leaving the group. Some scholars regard the opponents as being only interested in spiritual progress and, for that very reason, indifferent to issues pertaining to good morality – as if people interested in things spiritual were lax about morality. Scholars can also uncritically side with the author of 1 John in claiming that the opponents did not believe in Jesus at all. One recent interpreter affirms that the opponents "believed that, once they possessed the eschatological Spirit, the inspiration of that Spirit would be sufficient and they would not need the 'revelation' of Jesus."²² This explanation not only builds on, but also exacerbates the author's polemics against the opponents since that author never went so far as to claim that the opponents did "not need" the teaching of Jesus at all.

One striking feature in the scholarly discussion about 1 John is the suggestion that the community addressed was split over debates about the

21 One recurring literary pattern in 1 John comprises three elements: claim/behavior contradicting the claim/condemnation. By way of example: "If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true" (1 John 1:6). "Whoever says, 'I have come to know him,' but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist" (1 John 2:4). It is customarily assumed that the claim in such affirmations comes from the opponents. Yet, as Lieu points out, such passages do not provide a solid ground for identifying opponents. She compellingly argues that the author has no qualms in these cases with the claim part but elaborates the potential discrepancy between the right claim and the wrong behavior. In addition, the author uses generalizing statements to make this point. He nowhere directly accuses his opponents of being guilty of the discrepancy between what one says and what one does; cf. Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 11–12.

22 Wahlde, "Raymond Brown's View," 43.

interpretation of John's Gospel. The most prominent advocate of this view was Raymond Brown, who maintained that 1 John was written to contest a "hyper-Johannine" party that had evolved from a too spiritualized and "gnosticizing" understanding of the gospel.²³

Brown's view of the Johannine community as split into opposing factions is strikingly similar to Baur's on the quarrelling Christians in Corinth. What Brown added to this picture was the idea that one text – John's Gospel – had assumed such an important position in the life of the community that different interpretations of it tore the entire group asunder. (This new feature confirms the doubt, already raised by Windisch's view of John and the Synoptics, that scholars of texts have the tendency to place the texts they study right in the middle of the controversies they assume took place between Christian groups.)

The main obstacle to Brown's explanation is the lack of clear textual support. The fact remains that, in 1 John, John's Gospel is neither quoted nor mentioned. Keeping silent about the gospel would seem the most unlikely strategy for an author seeking to safeguard this gospel from incorrect interpretations.²⁴

The scholarly tendency to exaggerate the scope of the conflicts addressed in our evidence is also well documented in the study of 3 John. The allure of this approach may lie in the fact that it affords greater relevance to this text, which is the shortest in the New Testament. Georg Strecker conceded this much in complimenting Walter Bauer (1877–1960) for being one whose "groundbreaking work *rescued* 3 John from the shadowy status to which scholarship had long relegated it."²⁵

Bauer saved 3 John from scholarly oblivion by connecting the hazy figure of Diotrephes with two much larger debates in the early church, one on orthodoxy and heresy, and another on the holders of ecclesial office.²⁶ What is common to all scholarly suggestions about Diotrephes is that they place him and the author of 3 John on the orthodoxy–heresy axis, though at very different points. Diotrephes has been described *both* as the leader of a successful heretical group (Bauer) *and* as a monarchical bishop, who

23 Brown, *Epistles of John*, *passim*.

24 Brown also operated with a fuzzy picture of John's Gospel. While he insisted that the debate addressed in 1 John was related to this gospel, he remained uncertain whether this gospel existed as a text or a fixed community tradition when 1 John was written. As John Painter points out, the way Brown treated John's Gospel in his commentary on the epistles of John presupposes that "the Gospel was known in more or less its present form"; cf. Painter, 1, 2, and 3 *John*, 15–16.

25 Strecker, *Johannine Epistles*, 261 (emphasis added).

26 Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 93–94.

was engaged in a conflict with the author of 3 John and his more informal, Spirit-inspired view of leadership (Käsemann).²⁷ The roles attributed to the author of 3 John and Diotrephes in the latter view are reversed in the interpretation that 3 John written *against* non-hierarchical enthusiasts who “represented gnosticizing or spiritual tendencies contrary to the presbyter’s apocalyptic teaching about Christ” (Strecker).²⁸ The shadow of “Gnosticism” and the image of its “charismatic” or non-hierarchical social structure lurks beneath the opposing interpretations of who took what place in the debate between the author of 3 John and Diotrephes.²⁹

The fact that the positions assigned to the author and Diotrephes can be so easily reversed in various theories indicates that it matters more *that* the two players are engaged in the great battle between Christian orthodoxy and heresy than *where* they exactly belong in it.

The author of 3 John offers precious little information about Diotrephes and his ideas. The author criticizes him for withdrawing the benefit of hospitality from the author’s envoys. Undoubtedly, the debate between these two figures was related to the opinions the author had expressed in a previous communication with the assembly led by Diotrephes (cf. 3 John 9). If Diotrephes sought to persuade others to adopt the same course of action as he had done, as the author insinuates (3 John 10), the debate was no doubt a real one, and not one the author invented just to make a point. In light of other early Christian sources, Diotrephes’s policy of declining hospitality may have involved subjecting visitors to tests examining their beliefs (cf. *Did.* 11:1–2; 2 John 10). However, the possibility also exists that Diotrephes detected in the author’s communication other kinds of tendencies that he found potentially disruptive in the life of the community under his control, especially those that could have provoked factionalism in the group. The strict division between the “true” and the “false” believers, as attested in 1 John, would have been a real concern for leaders of Greco-Roman voluntary associations of any sort.³⁰

While there is an unmistakable clash between two claims to authority documented in 3 John, there is little to warrant the assumption that

27 Käsemann, “Ketzer und Zeuge.”

28 Strecker, *Johannine Epistles*, 263.

29 For only one example, see Vouga, *Die Johannesbriefe*, 11. 1 John betrays a “gnostic self-understanding” that “characterizes the (author’s) fellowship with his addressees.”

30 For the concern of factionalism in voluntary associations and how that concern may elucidate the references to the expulsion of Christ-followers from the synagogue in John’s Gospel (9:22, 34; 12:42; 16:2), see Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation”; for a discussion on how Kloppenborg’s insight could inform our understanding of 3 John, see Dunderberg, “Dissidents.”

the clash anticipated, or was already part of, the grand battle between orthodoxy and heresy in the early church, or that between “monarchical” and “spirit-inspired” modes of leadership. Leadership is no doubt debated in 3 John, but it is possible that the whole debate was not about “doctrine” (as a system of faith) but about other things that could have disturbed the social life of Diotrephes’ group.

Rethinking the Conflict Mode in Johannine Studies

Although the conflict mode of explanation still defines Johannine studies, it has more recently been modified in many important ways. No longer do all theories about the editorial stages of John’s Gospel subscribe to the notion of disagreeing and debating editors. Earlier literary layers of the gospel have also been explained as belonging to the final author’s repository of a community tradition,³¹ and the later editorial stages can be regarded as instances of reinterpretation of an earlier gospel.³² Both approaches yield a much more eirenic picture of the literary evolution of John’s Gospel than previous models. Judith Lieu has since the mid-1980s steered away from the interpretation that all truth claims made in the Johannine epistles would in one way or another be related to the teaching of opponents, and Daniel Streett has recently devoted an entire monograph to the critical analysis of the scholarly theories seeking to establish links between the opponents of 1 John and libertinism, docetism, gnosticism, etc.³³

Much still needs to be done to change the course of scholarship. Most importantly, “Gnosticism,” which still looms large in Johannine (and Pauline) studies, can no longer be taken as the convenient point of reference that it used to be. Many beloved assumptions cherished in the study of the Johannine epistles – such as the links between “libertinism,” “doceticism,” and Gnosticism – have turned out to be unwarranted generalizations based upon eclectic reading of sources that were once lumped together under the umbrella of Gnosticism. Two points have become abundantly clear in more recent studies on Gnosticism. First, the sources traditionally regarded as evidence for Gnosticism betray an enormous diversity on many issues that have been considered to be part and parcel of “Gnostic”

31 Kügler, *Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte*.

32 Dettwiler, *Die Gegenwart des Erhöhten*; Zumstein, *Kreative Erinnerung*.

33 Lieu, *Second and Third Epistles of John*; Lieu, *Theology of the Johannine Epistles*; Lieu, *I, II, & III John*; Lieu, “Us or You?”; Streett, *They Went Out from Us*.

thought. Second, many items traditionally associated with Gnosticism – libertinism in particular – go back, not to the first-hand sources, but to polemical accusations leveled in the hostile sources that were authored by heresy-hunters.³⁴

These developments have led to the deconstruction of the whole concept of “Gnosticism” among the experts. In consequence, it would be advisable to remove this concept from the toolbox of any scholar interpreting Johannine (or any other New Testament) texts. Greater precision is needed in identifying the individual groups used as points of comparison. Johannine scholars maintaining links between the opponents addressed in Johannine texts and “Gnosticism” regularly operate with a very undifferentiated picture of the latter. For example, the Valentinian sources from the second and third centuries, often used in Johannine scholarship, are no witnesses to any general “Gnostic” spirit. They bear witness to one distinct (and diverse) group of Christ-followers, and these people already knew, and were inspired by, John’s Gospel. What is more, their teachings were in many ways very different from other Christ-groups who, like them, attributed the creation of the visible world to an inferior creator-God (such as “Sethians”). It would be especially ill-advised to use Valentinians as evidence for people who were interested in spiritual progress at the expense of good moral behavior since all claims about their immorality come from hostile sources and should thus be read with a grain of salt.³⁵

Texts, Religious Experts, and Lived Religion

I have above used a few Johannine examples to illustrate the problems of the conflict-centered paradigm. The paradigm also entails more general challenges, the most important being the vexed relationship between texts and identity. It is often presupposed that the texts available to us articulate the social reality as experienced by early Christians. This, however, cannot be taken for granted. These sources do not describe the social reality as it was but as it ought to be. What is more, these texts provide us with a more antagonistic picture of the relationships between Christians, Jews, and pagans in the Roman world than other forms of evidence.³⁶ This is because the religious experts from whom these texts stem were more concerned with drawing the boundaries between

34 Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism.”*

35 Cf. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 137–38.

36 Hakola, “Galilean Jews.”

“us” and “them” than were Christ-followers in general.³⁷ The discrepancy between the antagonism expressed in texts and the continuing coexistence of people of different stripes has been recently pointed out, for example, as regards Christian-Jewish relations in Galilee,³⁸ and the relationships between Monophysite and Chalcedonian Christians in Egypt.³⁹

Even some of the most polemical early Christian texts provide us with glimpses of the lived religion of common people, who were obviously less concerned with, or perhaps unaware of, the boundaries imposed on them by religious leaders. Tertullian, who in his *Apology* famously painted the image of the true Christians as an ideal group, unified in faith and practice, castigated common Christians in his other treatise *On Idolatry* for participating in Roman religious festivities more eagerly than anyone else.⁴⁰ In later centuries, bishops in their sermons scolded Christians frequenting synagogues and adopting Jewish practices,⁴¹ which shows that the boundaries we take for granted were often malleable in the early history of Christianity.

In Christian Rome, policies outlined in and from the pulpit were turned into legal ones. New laws were issued to delimit interaction between Christians and Jews, pagans, and heretics. Illicit forms of interaction included for Christians participation in Jewish, pagan, and heretic religious festivities, mixed marriages between Christians and Jews, and observation of the Sabbath. The need for such measures indicates that such forms of interaction between Christians, Jews, and Gentiles continued to take place in Christian Rome.⁴² Both the bishops' sermons and new legislation reveal that there was an unmistakable “tension between lived religion and attempts to stabilize and authenticate a particular form of religious identity as the only accepted alternative.”⁴³

37 Boundary drawing can be seen as one aspect of rivalry that characterized the situation of Christian and other freelance experts in religion in antiquity; cf. Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, esp. 190–216.

38 Hakola, “Galilean Jews.”

39 Wipszyska, “Insurmountable.”

40 Tertullian, *Idol.* 14–15. Tertullian here reproaches Christians for participating in “the Saturnalia and New-year's and Midwinter's festivals and Matronalia,” claiming that they were more eager to decorate their houses for those festivals than non-Christians: “You will nowadays find more doors of pagans without lamps and laurel-wreaths than of Christians” (*Idol.* 15.1, trans. ANF, with modification); cf. Graf, *Roman Festivals*, 77, 215.

41 Hakola, “Galilean Jews,” 143, n. 6; Kahlos, “Meddling in the Middle.”

42 Hakola, “Galilean Jews,” 143, with reference to canons 29 and 37–38 of the Council of Laodicea (363–64).

43 Hakola, “Galilean Jews,” 150.

Yet another complication with texts as our main evidence is that the conflicts ancient authors addressed were not necessarily experienced as such by their audiences. The authors could resort to the language of conflict to appropriate importance to themselves and their message. They could describe the situation they addressed in terms of a conflict to lend urgency to the point they wanted to make or the policy they wanted others to adopt. It is thus possible that at least the conflicts envisaged in these texts took the historical addressees by surprise. "It is quite possible for Paul (or anyone else) to count as his foes those who thought they were supporting him!"⁴⁴

In consequence, the texts available to us do not necessarily bear witness to "communities in conflict." These texts rather bear witness to the fact that some learned members in such groups were engaged in conflict with each other or with similar people in other groups. Daniel Boyarin has reminded us that the boundaries between people do not simply exist there. There have always been individuals – experts and leaders – in whose interests it has been to draw those boundaries. Boyarin maintains that "the borders between Judaism and Christianity have been historically constructed out of acts of discursive (and too often actual) violence."⁴⁵

In addition, the concept of "community" needs to be critically assessed. Stanley Stowers points out that the scholarly use of "community" presupposes an idea of "groups with a deep social and mental coherence, a commonality in mind and practice."⁴⁶ According to Stowers, this idea imposes too much unity on ancient people affiliated with early Christian groups. For instance, it is virtually impossible to tell how much the different kinds of supporters of the Christian cause took in what Paul said in his letters. Even his most avid supporters probably displayed "partial and selective acceptance of the messages and practices, and assimilation of the teachings to the person's own interests and frame of reference."⁴⁷

Stowers argues that it is this mistaken idea of "community" that has enabled scholars to treat the authors of our sources as spokespersons for their respective groups. This latter assumption, in turn, has produced

44 Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter," 80. This may hold true of Ignatius of Antioch as well. Some people may have been unaware of being his opponents before reading his letters; for this perspective on Ignatius, see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*.

45 Boyarin, *Border Lines*, xiv.

46 Stowers, "Concept of 'Community,'" 242.

47 *Ibid.*, 246.

"the tendency to read communities behind early Christian writings."⁴⁸ The "communities-in-conflict" model, of course, duplicates the problem since it presupposes that there were two or more such "communities," each of which was equally unified in doctrine and practice and thus bound to clash with other similar "communities" with different doctrines and practices.

Both Boyarin and Stowers emphasize the role of the learned individuals from whom the sources at our disposal stem. While those individuals' views cannot be taken as group opinions, it does not seem advisable to completely separate such people from their respective groups either. I would submit that the religious experts who sought to set the boundaries can be regarded as "entrepreneurs of identity," that is, leaders who take the role of forging the "sense of us" within and for their respective groups.⁴⁹

Two points are worth considering in this framework. On the one hand, religious experts and leaders do not have free rein in the creation of the "sense of us." They must comply with acknowledged traditions and other expectations that are already present in that group.⁵⁰ On the other, the "sense of us" does not simply evolve in a group. The emergence of this sense requires an active process where the group leader works hard to make the goals he or she sets for the group seem as "natural" as possible.

The way the leader defines the group's identity does not simply lend voice to an identity that is already there and shared by all group members. While a group may never become a full-blown "community," unified by thought and practice in all respects, it is this kind of "ideal" community that the leader, as an entrepreneur of identity, constantly strives to create.

The leader plays a crucial role in establishing the "received" opinions, ideals, values, and forms of accepted and declined behavior for the group. In so doing, the leaders must strike a delicate balance between "cultural knowledge and rhetorical skill" since their ways of constructing group

48 Ibid., 241. He also maintains that this perspective separates New Testament studies from any other fields of the study of ancient literature (247).

49 The notion of group leaders as "identity entrepreneurs" stems from new studies on leadership rooted in social identity theory; for some key publications where this viewpoint is developed, see Reicher, S. Alexander Haslam, and Nick Hopkins, "Social Identity"; Haslam and Reicher, "Identity Entrepreneurship"; Haslam Reicher, and Platow, *New Psychology of Leadership*. For one example of this perspective in Pauline studies, see Nikki, "Contesting the Past," 241–42: "Inasmuch as Paul acts as an entrepreneur of the addressees' possible past and future identities, the question of Paul's *leadership* will also be of interest."

50 Theorists of identity entrepreneurship point out that there is a "dialectic relationship between (a) leadership constrained by existing social identities and (b) leadership as creative of social identities"; Haslam and Reicher, "Identity Entrepreneurship," 127.

identity is constantly under the critical scrutiny of their followers.⁵¹ It is noteworthy that a successful leader has the knack of using the group tradition in a creative manner:

great leaders [...] don't just repeat traditional stories of identity. They innovate. They draw on less well-known strands of group culture. They weave familiar strands into novel patterns [...] Their genius is to make the new out of the elements of the old and thereby to present revolution as tradition.⁵²

Identity entrepreneurs are in high demand in all kinds of groups since the "sense of us" matters to most people: "social identities are immensely important to individual group members. They give us a sense of place in the world: who we are, what we should do, and how we relate to others".⁵³ And yet the sense of us does not simply evolve in the group. This is what the leaders are needed for: "leaders need to work to create and maintain a coherent sense of 'we' and 'us' and also to define what 'us' means (and does not mean) for followers".⁵⁴ The "sense of us" is, thus, a *constructed* identity, and the task of creating this construction falls on group leaders.

As the cases mentioned above suggest, the ways the leaders define "us" as against "others" do not necessarily coincide with how group members interact with those "others" in real life. Some leaders were no doubt more successful in unifying people's thought and actions than others. The authority of religious experts in their communities was not a given either. The early rabbis were in general far less influential in the ancient synagogue than the literature they left behind may make us think.⁵⁵ The aforementioned bishops preaching against the wrong kinds of behavior among their people demonstrate that these identity entrepreneurs were unable to fully control the lived religion of their flocks either.

51 Reicher, Haslam, and Hopkins, "Social Identity," 561.

52 Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, *New Psychology of Leadership*, 149.

53 Ibid., 144.

54 Steffens, Haslam, Reicher, Platow, Franssen, Yang, Ryan, Jetten, Peters, and Boen, "Leadership as Social Identity."

55 Cf. Cohen, "Rabbi"; Hezser, *Social Structure*; for a concise summary, see Hakola, *Identity Matters*, 59: "Even in those matters where the rabbis were acknowledged experts, their influence on other Jews remained limited. [...] the influence of early rabbis was restricted to those who accepted their authority, no matter how they might have tried to impose their views on people [...] Frequent references to non-observance of rabbinic ideals suggest that the great majority of the Jews ignored these ideals and that the rabbis had no means of enforcing their decisions upon negligent people."

Regardless of such problems, identity entrepreneurs aim at creating the sense of us that lends coherence to the groups they lead. Such people must be well-informed, creative, and sufficiently educated to accomplish their task. In consequence, Paul's affinity with groups of literate people, which Stowers offers as an alternative social framework for Paul (instead of a Christian "community"), is not so much an alternative as a *qualification* for Paul's claim to leadership among early Christian groups. Paul was no doubt more knowledgeable than most of his addressees about the traditions stored in Jewish scripture. Hence his ability to draw upon the less familiar aspects of those traditions in crafting the sense of us for his audiences. The same probably goes for the author of 1 John. It is customarily noted that apocalyptic rhetoric figures much more prominently in 1 John than it does in John's Gospel. This suggests that the author of 1 John was able to "activate" less known (or less popular) aspects of the tradition in crafting a social identity for his addressees.

Another point to be learned from identity entrepreneurship studies is that we should not underestimate the followers' intellectual commitment to the group. Group members usually tend to reflect on why they belong to the group – hence the demand for specialists who spell out this issue for them.

The authors of the New Testament and other early Christian texts were not free from constraints issuing from the groups they were addressing. This, however, does not justify us in treating their texts as "community documents" in the sense that they might lend voice to early Christ groups in conflict (or in other forms of dialogue). These texts rather bear witness to individual authors who were in constant dialogue with the expectations of their audiences. That dialogue did not dictate those authors' viewpoints, but it was one part of their limits of maneuver. The authors had to be sufficiently informed about, and sensitive to, the already existing opinions, attitudes, and practices of their addressees. This constraint still left much room for these authors' creative thinking and their new and innovative ways to affirm the group's identity. The survival of the sources available to us is not always indicative of their authors' success in persuading their early audiences to take their side, but sometimes this may have been the case.⁵⁶

56 As indicated above, it is possible that some Jewish rabbis whose teachings are recorded in the rabbinic literature were not very influential in their historical context. On the other hand, it seems clear, for instance, that Paul managed to persuade at least some people that non-Jewish followers of Christ should not be circumcised since this gradually became the usual policy among early Christians. Even the pseudo-Clementine texts, which are customarily regarded as a key witness to a Christian identity with a distinctly Jewish flavor (a viewpoint sometimes

Communities and Texts

One final point of uncertainty in the ways early Christian communities have been imagined is related to texts themselves. The communities-in-conflict theories usually assume that the texts available to us played an important role in the lives of early Christian groups. Interpreters of the Johannine epistles have presupposed that disagreements about one text – John’s Gospel – could break entire faith communities asunder, while those assuming a conflict between the gospels of John and Thomas presuppose that the consumers of these texts were able to detect in them very subtle hints of the existence of opposed groups.

Such a conception of Christian origins presupposes that the early Christian groups comprised textual experts, and not just any kind but such as were very passionate about the texts they read since they were willing to part company from those not agreeing with their interpretation. The resulting image of early Christian groups divided on the interpretation of one particular text looks suspiciously similar to the image of the early Protestant churches divided over the right interpretation of the Bible in the sixteenth century. This image may also betray the biblical scholars’ fantasy that all people ought to relate to scriptures in the same meticulous (and sometimes passionate) way as they themselves do as professional interpreters.

The question needs to be asked how many Christians there were to whom texts and their interpretations could have played such a pivotal role. Such people were probably few and far between. Recent studies on ancient literacy keep reminding us that few people in the ancient world could avail themselves of an education providing the most elementary skills in reading and writing, that even fewer gained secondary education, generating some fluency in reading and writing (or in either of the two – some professional scribes were illiterate), and that it was only a very small minority that proceeded to higher education providing skills in rhetoric and composition or in philosophical reasoning.⁵⁷ While there were literate people among early Christ-followers, it cannot be assumed that entire Christ-groups were “textual communities” in the sense that all members of those groups thought

peppered with what seems to be anti-Pauline polemics), do not demand circumcision while they urge Christ-followers to follow Jewish dietary laws; cf. Vähäkangas, “Rejection and Reception”; cf. also Vähäkangas, “Christian Identity.”

57 Limited literacy: Harris, *Ancient Literacy*; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, esp. 28–36; limited access to higher education: Morgan, *Literate Education*.

highly of texts, actively memorized them, and were concerned about their correct interpretation.⁵⁸

From Conflict to Recognition: Two Valentinian Cases

One alternative to the conflict-centered paradigm in New Testament and early Christian studies comes from recognition studies. The concept of recognition has in recent years become subject to increased academic reflection in political science, philosophy, and theology.⁵⁹ Recognition provides a next step from tolerance since

the attitude of recognizing another person or group typically means something “more” than mere toleration. This “more” may consist in a commitment to work together, respect for other convictions, and approval of a general societal or ideological framework in which the coexistence takes place.⁶⁰

Current theories of recognition are focused on acts of recognition taking place in a formal way (e.g. between countries or churches or other institutionalized social bodies). The perspective of recognition, however, could also be of importance for less formalized relations between people. While polemics characterize many of the texts the early Christ-followers produced, this body of literature also offers glimpses of other kinds of interaction with the “other.” Most importantly, there were some authors who occasionally credited their opponents and showed willingness to learn from them.

My two examples of the attitude of recognition come from the evidence pertaining to the school of Valentinus.⁶¹ This group had been influential among early Christ-followers since the second century, but the group was also fiercely opposed since many teachers associated with it attributed the

58 It is often assumed that ancient culture was an “oral” one and that ancient people were better equipped to memorize things they heard in oral presentations. For a compelling argument that there is no reason to assume that human memory has deteriorated so dramatically in 2,000 years, see Czachesz, “Rewriting and Textual Fluidity,” esp. 430; for one ancient author resorting to writing because of his insufficient memory, see *Shepherd of Hermas* 5.3–4. I find unwarranted the assumption that illiterate Christ-followers admired Christian books as objects, as is suggested by Hurtado, *Christian Artifacts*.

59 Cf. Saarinen, *Recognition*, 2–24.

60 Ibid., 1.

61 This part of my essay draws upon Dunderberg, “Recognizing the Valentinians.”

creation of the world not to the supreme God but to an inferior creator-God. Valentinian Christians were also accused of spiritual arrogance, a disdain for other Christ-followers, and immoral behavior.⁶² Over against this background, it is all the more surprising that at least two anti-Valentinian authors, Clement and Origen, both from Alexandria, show some signs of positive recognition of their opponents' views.

Origen's *Commentary on John* (a work he never finished) often refers to, and deals with, allegorical explanations of this gospel by the Valentinian Heracleon. He had written the first commentary on John known to us several decades before Origen. Ambrose, Origen's patron, who lavishly supported Origen's work on the commentary, had formerly been a Valentinian, which may be one reason for Origen's interaction with Heracleon's views. Origen most often debunked them, regarding them as either based on unwarranted textual emendations, or betraying Heracleon's Valentinian proclivities, or both. Yet Origen was not completely negative about Heracleon's interpretations. There are several points where Origen seriously considered the interpretations Heracleon had proposed, even though he finally chose some other interpretation. Origen fully agreed with Heracleon at one point. Unfortunately, in this particular case, the recognition Origen grants to Heracleon takes place at the expense of a third party – the Jews. The point of agreement is Heracleon's negative assessment of the envoys sent by Pharisees who cross-examined John on why he baptized people (John 1:24). Heracleon had explained that the Pharisees "inquire out of malice and not out of the desire to learn." Origen not only grants this point in referring to Heracleon as speaking "not without being persuasive," but he also reaffirms the same view in his own words: "those sent by the Pharisees [...] address the Baptist in arrogant and rather senseless manner" (*Comm. John* 6.51–2).

Clement agreed with Valentinus (whose views he usually rejected) on a more positive note. The point of agreement may seem surprising to us since it is related to Valentinus's teaching that Jesus, because of his perfect self-control that extended to his body, ate and drank but did not defecate.⁶³ This interpretation probably seemed less awkward to the learned in antiquity than it seems to us. Similar stories were told about philosophical

62 I would assume that the link Johannine scholars easily posit between the idea that the opponents of the author of 1 John were "gnostics" (or on their way to becoming such) and the claim that the opponents were therefore indifferent to good morality largely goes back to such accusations brought against Valentinians in hostile sources.

63 Valentinus, frag. 3 = Clement, *Misc.* 3.59.3.

luminaries like Pythagoras, which suggests that by this interpretation Valentinus sought to put Jesus on a par with such figures.⁶⁴ Clement, in any case, found no source of embarrassment in this teaching. Quite the reverse: Clement quoted this piece from Valentinus as supporting his own teaching of the importance of self-control. The way Clement proceeds from Valentinus' teaching to his own interpretation shows that Clement treats this passage as a proof text, from which his own conclusion ensues: "So we embrace self-control out of love we bear the Lord and out of its honorable status, consecrating the temple of the Spirit." Clement, in other words, employs a quotation from Valentinus in the same way as he elsewhere employs scriptural quotations.

The two examples from Clement and Origen demonstrate that there were early Christian teachers who were open-minded enough to learn from their opponents and give them at least some credit. Even though open-mindedness does not exactly dominate Clement's and Origen's take on Valentinians, they do display greater openness towards the Valentinians than many modern scholars, who, following the more polemical authorities, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius, have been quick to dismiss the Valentinians altogether.

Conclusion

I should emphasize once again that the point of this essay has *not* been to deny the existence of conflicts between early Christ-followers. I have, rather, taken issue with the scholarly constructions of the past that either detect conflicts where the available sources do not clearly refer to them, or puff up real conflicts by linking them to broader doctrinal debates waged in the subsequent centuries. It is those delicate transitions in scholarly literature from "difference" to "disagreement," and from "disagreement" to "conflict," that need to be critically assessed.

I would claim that there is also an ethical side to the ways scholars construct the past. The emphasis on conflicts keeps us alert to the fact that nascent Christianity was no different from other ideologies following its emergence and entailed a great deal of struggle, rhetorical vitriol against the "other," and boundary drawing. This much said, I wonder if the focus on conflicts in scholarship may contribute to the naturalization of conflict as the part and parcel of religious discourse. The mere affirmation that conflicts

64 Cf. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 22.

existed may not help us much further in our thinking about how they could be reconciled or avoided. Hence the importance of those, admittedly few, instances of recognition of the other in early Christian evidence – they remind us (and our students) that conflict was (and is) neither self-evident nor the only option in religious dialogue.

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2. Mutable Ethnicity in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Intertwined Acts of Tolerance and Intolerance¹

Carmen Palmer

Abstract

By analyzing how the term *ger* is used in the Dead Sea scrolls, particularly in relation to conversion, this article demonstrates the variety of attitudes in the community toward outsiders. One tradition reflects tolerance through a notion of mutable ethnicity: taking on Jewish kinship and connection to land, the Gentiles who converted became full members as *ger*. The scrolls also reflect another, more intolerant tradition in which the *gerim* (plur.) were inauthentic converts who had to be excluded from the community for reasons of kinship and religious practice.

Keywords: identity; Dead Sea scrolls, outsiders; ethnicity

Overview

In seeking patterns that promote tolerance of others within the period of ancient Judaism, a ready marker is a group's inclusion of an outsider through the process of conversion. Likewise, the prohibition of a convert's inclusion into a group could mark a type of intolerance. Within the cultures of this ancient Mediterranean context, a conversion includes a change in religious practice, such as Torah obedience within ancient Judaism.² However, a conversion includes more than merely a change in religious practice: all

¹ This chapter expands upon elements in Palmer, *Converts in the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

² For example, see the summary of Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 137. The matter will be expanded in greater detail in the next section on "Ethnic Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean and Ancient Judaism," p. 49 *et seq.*

components of an identity transform, or convert, to the new group. This full identity is known as an “ethnic identity,” and a working definition of its components include, in addition to religious practice, a notion of shared kinship, as well as connection to land.³ When ethnic identity is mutable, permitting a conversion, one observes a type of “tolerance” to heretofore outsiders, and where ethnic identity is immutable, denying a conversion or the inclusion of a convert, a type of “intolerance.” A cursory look at texts from within ancient Judaism highlights both trends of mutable and immutable ethnicity. For example, Philo intimates that Gentile individuals who have made a change in their connection to land and their religious practices have also made a change in their kinship, and now constitute converts:

Moreover, after the lawgiver has established commandments respecting one’s fellow countrymen, he proceeds to show that he looks upon strangers also as worthy of having their interests attended to by his laws, since they have forsaken their natural relations by blood, and their native land and their national customs, and the sacred temples of their gods, and the worship and honour which they had been wont to pay to them, and have migrated with a holy migration, changing their abode of fabulous inventions for that of the certainty and clearness of truth, and of the worship of the one true and living God.⁴

On the other hand, the book of *Jubilees* strictly prohibits circumcision that is not performed on the eighth day after birth, eliminating the possibility for Gentiles to circumcise and convert as adults (*Jub.* 15:25–34). While the first example from Philo exhibits conversion through mutable ethnicity, this second example from *Jubilees* exhibits immutable ethnicity, portrayed in kinship and religious practice.⁵

The present study will argue that at least two patterns are visible within the Dead Sea scrolls (DSS), mirroring the diversity evident throughout ancient Judaism. Beyond the book of *Jubilees*, where the literature of DSS is concerned, one might interpret high purity requirements to imply that the texts display overall immutable ethnicity toward Gentiles desiring to convert and join with the people of DSS. Indeed, texts legislate to keep away

3 This definition is similar to that provided by Hall, *Hellenicity*, 9, except that Hall identifies religion (religious practice) as a “secondary *indicia*,” which the present study does not.

4 Philo, *Virt.* 102, trans. Yonge, *Works of Philo*, 650.

5 These features of religious practice in Torah observance as well as shared kinship may be observed in Matthew Thiessen’s argument that *Jubilees* “links law observance inextricably with birth and therefore with genealogy”; Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 85.

from Gentiles, such as CD XI, 14–15, which forbids approaching Gentiles on the Sabbath. However, it will be argued that while one pattern does indeed deny access to Gentile converts due to a notion of immutable ethnicity, another exhibits a level of tolerance by permitting Gentile converts through a process of mutable ethnicity. This essay will explore these attitudes toward mutable and immutable ethnicity by drawing on a number of examples within DSS where the term גר (hereafter, *ger*) is found within scriptural rewriting. The term *ger* has been susceptible to change over time, to shift in meaning from “resident alien” within scriptural tradition (such as the *ger* sharing in the first fruits in Deut 26:11–13, or the *ger* required to follow purity regulations in Lev 17:15–16), to “Gentile convert to Judaism” by the time of rabbinic literature (such as converts who are instructed in certain commandments and undergo circumcision and immersion in *b. Yebam.* 47a–b).⁶ It will be argued that in the scrolls, the *ger* represents a Gentile convert to Judaism who shares in features of ethnicity such as kinship, religious practice, and a connection to land, but may or may not be accepted as such by the authors of various texts, highlighting both trends of tolerance and intolerance.

Ethnic Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean and Ancient Judaism

Defined features of ethnicity vary, but generally consistent is the view that ethnic groups share features of common culture (which may include religious practice, language, and customs), a shared notion of kinship, and a connection to land.⁷ Ethnicity theory revolves around two poles, one which situates these features of ethnicity from a “primordialist” perspective; and the other, from an “instrumentalist” perspective. The primordialist pole suggests that ethnicity is static and seen by participants as exterior.⁸ The instrumentalist pole sees ethnicity as mutable and defined from within.⁹ Relating to this instrumentalist perspective, the boundaries of an ethnic

6 See the section below “Dead Sea Scrolls and Levels of Tolerance or Intolerance: The Status of the Question,” p. 51 *et seq.*

7 For example see Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 34–35; see also the work of John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, who succinctly identify six components of ethnic identity as the following: “a common *proper name*”; “a myth of *common ancestry*”; shared “*historical memories*” or “memories of a common past”; “elements of *common culture*” such as “religion, customs, or language”; “a *link with a homeland*”; and “a *sense of solidarity*.” Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 6–7.

8 For an overview, see *ibid.*, 8.

9 Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 37.

group are defined at the point of contact and flow between groups, as argued in the foundational work of Fredrik Barth and subsequent scholarship.¹⁰

It is this contact at and between borders where the matter of “conversions” within the ancient Mediterranean and Judaism overlaps with ethnic identity. Although discrepancy exists concerning which features of ethnicity would transform in a conversion to ancient Judaism, nevertheless, scholarship acknowledges “conversions” as a phenomenon from within Hellenistic Judaism and onward. Just as individuals could choose to become Greek by following Greek customs, non-Jews could become Jewish through following Torah, worshipping the God of Israel, and (for men) becoming circumcised, according to Gen 17:9–14.¹¹ Purposeful changes in features of ethnicity from one group to another qualify as a “conversion.”¹² Philo specifically addresses those elements of following Torah and worshipping the God of Israel in the quote from *Virt.* 102 (listed above). Josephus narrates the act of circumcision as a defining one in becoming a Jew, in the account of the conversion of Metilius (*J.W.* 2.454).¹³

Some discrepancy lies in whether and how much each feature of ethnicity is prone to mutability within conversions in ancient Judaism. For example, some scholarship has questioned whether a convert would change in kinship or not: arguments against a change in kinship include that of Shaye Cohen who suggests that kinship would remain immutable, and that of Daniel Schwartz who argues that in some cases, kinship is no longer relevant.¹⁴ Others – including Steve Mason, Caroline Johnson Hodge, and Denise Kimber Buell – argue that kinship is integral to ethnicity and would change in a

10 See the foundational argument by Barth, “Introduction,” 9–10. See also Jenkins, “Rethinking Ethnicity,” in his expansion of Barth’s work in order to increase notions of categorization.

11 On taking up Greek language specifically, Kennedy, Roy and Goldman, eds. and trans., *Race and Ethnicity*, 67; on general adoption of “Hellenic practices, customs and language,” Hall, *Hellenicity*, overview on p. 8.

12 Female conversions are not addressed in the present study, because the study focuses on the *ger* as the point of exploration and this figure is regarded as male in this time period. The *ger* differentiates between male and female forms within rabbinic literature, for example, *m. Yebam.* 6:5, 8:2, and 11:2. See Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 170, n. 78. In addition, while in the Masoretic Text there are examples of both men and women entering the people of Israel through various processes of integration, these examples are beyond the scope of the present study’s definition of “conversion” as evidenced within the Hellenistic period and onward.

13 See Cohen, “Respect for Judaism,” 427, who discusses Josephus’s view in *J.W.* 2.454 that circumcision marks the separation between adherence and conversion. See also Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew?*, 23–25, who discusses the importance of circumcision for conversion from within late Second Temple Judaism.

14 Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, esp. ch. 4; D. Schwartz, “Ends Meet.”

conversion, as would all other features.¹⁵ Another area for debate entails the interrelationship between the notion of “religion” (what this chapter defines within the framework of “religious practice”) and also geography, when discerning appropriate ways to define groups within ancient Judaism.¹⁶ Overall, these conversations demonstrate that various features of ethnicity are recognized within ancient Judaism, and furthermore, that conversions occur when the features become mutable to enable flow across borders.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and Levels of Tolerance or Intolerance: The Status of the Question

Generally, the rule texts of DSS exhibit high purity standards that would suggest minimal flow across borders and a closed attitude to Gentile converts to Judaism. One manner in which stringent purity standards are evidenced is in the blending of ritual and moral purity. Hannah Harrington observes that even while performing ritual purification (such as ablutions) for the physical body, individuals are simultaneously undergoing moral renewal.¹⁷ One example in the *Rule of the Community* is the stipulation in 1QS III, 6–9 that new members undergo cleansing by both sprinkling of water and repentance. Jonathan Klawans also notes the blending of the notions of ritual and moral purity into one in DSS, in which ritual impurity was seen as sinful and sinful behavior (moral impurity) was seen as ritually defiling.¹⁸ Klawans lists numerous examples of this overlap, including 1QS II, 25–III, 6; IV, 9–11; V, 13–14, 18–19; VI, 24–26; and VIII, 16–18.

Purity rules within the scrolls also extend to dealings with Gentiles and foreigners. For example, no one may ask a foreigner to do any task

15 In particular, see the following authors and their arguments, contra Cohen, that kinship is mutable and a change in kinship takes place within a conversion: Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, esp. 70–73; Mason, “Jews, Judaeans,” esp. 494–95; Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 54; and Buell, *Why This New Race*, 44.

16 Matters debated include issues such as whether a notion of “religion” existed as an entity that could be viewed separately within ancient Judaism, as well as how best to articulate geographic connections. See Mason, “Jews, Judaeans,” for an initial argument on the topic, and various responses and continued argumentation within Law and Halton, eds., *Jew and Judean*, as well as J. Schwartz, “Methodological Remarks,” esp. 36–48.

17 Hannah Harrington describes ritual purity as the state of cleanness required for participation in cult activities, and obtained through physical purification rituals. See Harrington, *Impurity Systems*, 2. Harrington provides an overview of the manner in which ritual and moral impurity are intertwined within the sectarian movement affiliated with DSS in Harrington, *Purity Texts*, 27–30.

18 Klawans, “Moral and Ritual Purity,” 278–81.

for oneself on the Sabbath (CD XI, 2), or even stay in a place close to Gentiles on the Sabbath (CD XI, 14–15). Certain texts also advocate for what Christine Hayes describes as genealogical purity.¹⁹ Hayes defines genealogical purity as that purity developed in the post-exilic Book of Ezra in which the genealogical purity required of the high priest in Lev 21:14–15, to marry only within the priestly clan, is expanded to include all lay Israelites to marry only other Israelites. Ezra's expansion occurs on the grounds that Israelites are now asserted to have "holy seed" as do priests, made apparent in Ezra 9:1–2. With this understanding, all intermarriage would be banned, as evidenced in the examples of *Jub.* 30 and 4QMMT B75–82.²⁰ Within the concept of genealogical purity, the extreme view is taken that marriage between an Israelite and a Gentile would profane the holy seed of an Israelite layperson.

This heightened level of purity in DSS, including an exclusion of Gentiles, renders it difficult to interpret the several occasions of the term *ger* in passages that utilize scriptural rewriting. Frequently scholarship deals with the presence of the *ger* in the scrolls by interpreting the character to be some type of Gentile resident alien. For example, Harrington highlights the "Gentile ancestry" of the *ger* within the scrolls and looks to texts such as 11Q19 XL, 6 and CD XIV, 4–6 to argue that the *ger* is "not fully assimilated" and more like a resident alien than a convert.²¹ However, why would the scrolls contain a number of references to *gerim* as Gentiles, included among the communities of the peoples of DSS, seeing how much the scrolls legislate to keep away from these very individuals? Another solution is possible. Whereas the term referred to a resident alien (non-Israelite) within canonical scriptural tradition, by the time of rabbinic literature this term takes on the meaning of a Gentile convert to Judaism. For example, instead of the *ger* representing a precarious outsider needing social assistance in the form of first fruits offering as in Deut 26:12–13, the *ger* represents a convert praying while offering his own first fruits offering in *m. Bik.* 1:4.²² It is possible

19 For an overview on Hayes's description of genealogical purity, see Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 27–32. The topic will also be discussed again in the section below on 4Q174, *Florilegium*.

20 For *Jubilees*, see Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 73–81; for 4QMMT, see *ibid.*, 82–9.

21 Harrington, *Purity Texts*, 114–16.

22 Comprehensive overviews of the *ger* within Pentateuchal tradition (including pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic), can be found in the following selected examples: de Groot van Houten, *Alien in Israelite Law*; Kidd, *Alterity and Identity*; Bultmann, *Der Fremde*; Albertz, "From Aliens to Proselytes"; Awabdy, *Immigrants*. On the *ger* as a convert within rabbinical material, see for example Schiffman, "Ordinances and Rules," 154–55; Porton, "Who Was a Jew?," 213–15; Lavee, "'Tractate' of Conversion."

that the term *ger* could represent a convert in these cases of rewritten scripture in DSS as well: the scrolls date to the period in which Gentile conversions to Judaism have begun to occur. Arguably the circumcisions of the Idumeans by Hyrcanus within the Hasmonean era, described by Josephus in *Ant.* 13.257–58, may represent an early example of conversions to Judaism.²³ The rewritten nature of the texts leaves the meaning of the term *ger* ambiguous and not obviously that of the biblical use of the term as resident alien and non-Jew.

The *ger*'s presence within the texts may indicate that the figure has undergone a change in ethnicity and this is the reason for which there is no lingering concern for impurity. If so, a study of the *ger* could highlight whether and which features of ethnicity are significant within DSS.

Method

In what follows, this essay will assess views toward ethnicity within DSS and whether and what features of ethnicity may be regarded as mutable or immutable. As discussed above, a number of features of ethnicity exist within ancient Judaism, such as a shared kinship, a connection to land, and religious practices. A study assessing a select sample of texts using the term *ger* as it appears in scriptural rewriting within DSS will serve as guide. The term shows a transition in meaning from (Gentile) resident alien within scriptural tradition to Gentile convert to Judaism within rabbinic literature. Because the scrolls are composed within the time frame of early conversions, it is possible that the term could already represent such a convert within the context of the scrolls. And, if so, a meaning of convert would suggest an attitude of mutable ethnicity in order to have enabled the conversion. Or, the *ger* could be perceived as a convert who is nevertheless excluded by the communities represented in the texts. Or finally, the *ger* could be simply a resident alien in its scriptural sense. By comparing the term as it appears in scriptural rewriting against possible scriptural predecessors, we can see changes made to the text that may offer traces of sociohistorical context and contemporary community. The essay describes scriptural rewriting, the relationship between a rewritten work and a scriptural predecessor, as a textual strategy and not a genre. This description means that any passage among the scrolls that uses the term *ger* in such a fashion is open

23 For an argument that the circumcision of the Idumeans provides the earliest evidence of conferring citizenship on outsiders, see Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 109–19.

to assessment.²⁴ Looking at both whether the *ger* is included or excluded in the communities represented in the texts, combined with the manner in which the *ger* is included or excluded, may highlight certain features of ethnicity as mutable or immutable at different times.

The examples below will show that shared kinship, a connection to land, and religious practice are important components of ethnicity within DSS. Furthermore, the *ger* will be found to represent a Gentile convert to Judaism. Sometimes this convert will be tolerated and included, and other times, not tolerated and excluded. The results will show that DSS exhibit patterns of both tolerance and intolerance due to mutable and immutable views toward ethnicity, and consequently, converts.

Analysis: Models of Tolerance and Intolerance

The examples utilized will be organized into the general categories of tolerance and intolerance toward mutable ethnicity. A further breakdown within the sample passages demonstrating tolerance to the *ger* will be made to highlight two examples of ethnic features that appear to be of importance within DSS, namely the ethnic features of shared kinship and also a shared connection to land.

Models of Tolerance 1: A Notion of Shared Kinship

The study will begin with kinship, a feature of ethnicity that has proven contested as to whether it also changes as a part of conversions in ancient Judaism. The two following examples will show that the *ger* within scriptural rewriting in the scrolls shares in kinship with other group members identified in the text. For kinship, as a feature of ethnicity, to have become mutable and to have permitted a change across borders suggests that a conversion has taken place and that the *ger* may be viewed as a Gentile convert to Judaism within the time frame under scrutiny. We will consider one passage from within the *Damascus Document* that has been used more commonly in assessments of the *ger* in DSS, although often to make the

24 Anders Klostergaard Petersen uses the terminology of “textual strategy” to describe rewritten scripture, which is a rewritten work with a relationship to a “scriptural predecessor.” Klostergaard Petersen, “Riverrun of Rewriting Scripture,” esp. 484–85. Passages using the term, but that mirror quite closely what becomes the MT, will not be assessed because there is no change to compare. In other words, there is no way to interpret the term apart from its earlier scriptural meaning of resident alien.

argument that the *ger* is not a convert. As a second passage, we will assess one that was assessed in the *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (DJD) series more recently (4Q307), and that can offer a fresh perspective.²⁵

Damascus Document XIV, 3–6

CD XIV, 3–6 is part of the *Damascus Document* and identified by Charlotte Hempel as the Community Organization strata of the Laws section of the rule document.²⁶ The passage lists in hierarchical fashion those who are included and inscribed by name in the “rule for the settlement of all the camps (המחנות)”:

They shall all be mustered by their names; the priests first, 4 the Levites second, the children of Israel third, and the *ger* fourth. 4 And they shall be inscribed by their names, 5 one after the other [lit. each one after his brother (אִישׁ אַחֶר אַחֶירוֹ)], the priests first, the Levites second, the children of Israel 6 third, and the *ger* fourth [...]²⁷

This passage from the *Damascus Document* has been used frequently to assess the status of the *ger* in DSS, although conclusions vary between whether this *ger* should be viewed as a resident alien or a Gentile convert to Judaism. For example, due to an anti-Gentile sentiment found in regulations such as CD XI, 14–15, prohibiting proximity to Gentiles on the Sabbath, Philip Davies perceives the *ger* in this passage to be an existing Jew who is “a proselyte to the sect, and thus one in the process of initiation into it.”²⁸ As a second example, Daniel Schwartz has argued that the very fact that the *ger* is categorized as such implies that the figure is not an “Israelite.”²⁹ In other words, according to Schwartz, if the *ger* was truly perceived to be Jewish, there would no longer need to be such a categorization as the *ger* in the *Damascus Document*. On the other hand, others have found the *ger* of this passage to be fully incorporated within the community of the

25 Lim, “4QText Mentioning Temple” (DJD 36).

26 The Laws contain CD XI–XVI, as opposed to the Admonition section, which includes CD I–VIII and XIX–XX. Hempel has argued that the Admonition seems more sectarian in character than the Laws, although the Community Organization strata has had more redactional activity. Hempel, *Laws of the Damascus Document*, esp. 1–23, for an overview.

27 This passage from CD as well as any others are according to Baumgarten and D. Schwartz, “Damascus Document (CD).” The *ger* has been left untranslated.

28 Davies, “‘Damascus Sect’ and Judaism,” 74–75, citation on p. 75.

29 D. Schwartz, “Doing Like Jews,” 94.

text. Joseph Baumgarten sees the *ger* of CD XIV as a “proselyte” (convert) as in rabbinic literature, in that the scriptural meaning of “resident alien” or “stranger” seems unlikely in the context of individuals counted in the camps.³⁰ Finally, Jutta Jokiranta observes that the *ger* of CD XIV, 3–6 is a part of the “ideal Israel” forged through the list created, and interprets the *ger* in DSS overall as a full member albeit lower in hierarchy.³¹

If this figure is indeed a convert and full member, how might a notion of shared kinship be contained within that? We can draw insight from assessing terminology specific to the passage, when comparing it to other relevant sources and scriptural predecessors. The passage states that each category, including that of the *ger*, is a “brother” one to the other. Brother terminology, used to denote fellow Israelites within scriptural tradition (e.g. Lev 19:17), seems to indicate a similar notion within the *Damascus Document*: the “brother” is a fellow group member, who is also Jewish. In addition to examples from CD in which the “brother” refers to fellow group members (e.g. CD VI, 20–VII, 1 and CD XX, 17–19), 1QS VI, 21–22 draws similarly on the term “brother” to refer to community (יחד) members ranked among themselves: “If the lot goes out to him 22 to approach the Community, he shall be registered in the order of his rank among his brothers (אחיו), for Torah, judgment, and purity, and his property shall be assimilated (into that of the Many).”³² While 1QS never mentions a *ger*, hierarchical ranking among members who are referred to as “brothers” is a shared phenomenon.

In addition, while the *ger* of CD XIV is clearly a member of the camps, calling to mind Deut 29:9–10 (vv. 10–11 in most English translations),³³ the *Damascus Document* goes a step further: CD XIII, 20 equates the settlement of the camps – of which the *ger* is a part – with the seed of Israel.³⁴ The

30 Baumgarten, “Proselytes,” 700.

31 Jokiranta, “Conceptualizing *Ger*,” 668–75. Instead of a framework of “conversion,” Jokiranta devises a conceptual framework that draws on components of “obligations/rights in *activities and participation, identity, and loyalty*,” Jokiranta, “Conceptualizing *Ger*,” 668. These components fit within the larger framework of features of ethnic identity, such as religious practices, kinship, and a sense of solidarity.

32 This passage from 1QS and all others are as found in Charlesworth and Qimron, “Rule of the Community.”

33 Berthelot, “La notion de 185 גר.”

34 Berthelot makes this observation, although she concludes that “seed of Israel” in this case is not related to “race” or “kinship.” Berthelot, who concludes that the *ger* is a “socio-tribal” category of Israel (translation mine), suggests that the “seed of Israel” in this case may have a moral or religious connotation, such as “the seed of the holy ones” (זרע הקדושים) from an apocryphal psalm of David in 11QApPs^a IV, 6, where “the holy ones” appear to designate angels. Ibid., 191–92.

passage, when reconstructed with “seed of Israel” (זרע ישראל) drawing on the extant *zayin*, reads as follows: “And this is the assembly [settlement] of the camps for all the s[eed of Israel].”³⁵ Elsewhere in DSS, “seed” terminology represents matters pertaining to kinship, such as concern expressed in 4QMMT B 80–82, for defilement of the “holy seed” resulting from intermarriage.³⁶ Innertextually within the *Damascus Document*, the *ger* is a brother, who shares in the seed of Israel. A change in a feature of ethnicity, namely kinship, is observed in this figure previously discerned to be a non-Jew, qualifying as a conversion.

We identified above certain arguments that the *ger* cannot be a Gentile convert to Judaism within this passage, on the grounds of a general anti-Gentile sentiment elsewhere in CD, in addition to a hierarchical classification that differentiates the *ger* from an Israelite. Now that we see that the *ger* is nevertheless identified as a “brother” with other groups members in the group affiliated with the text, in addition to the fact that the *ger* is a part of the seed of Israel, we can counter the above arguments. First, we find confirmation that the *ger* has truly relinquished his Gentile nature, which is why the matter regarding avoiding Gentiles is not of import here. And second, a *ger* can have fully crossed ethnic boundaries from Gentile to Jew, while still ranking lower in a hierarchy than individuals born Israelite, just as various community members in 1QS are found to rank lower as well.³⁷

4Q307 *Text Mentioning Temple*, frag. 1, 6–7

This fragmentary text receives its name from a reference to the Temple (מקדש) in frag. 2, 2. A date of composition cannot be certain, although the text itself is written in a Hasmonean or early Herodian handwriting,

English translation is my own, Hebrew text as in Berthelot, who draws upon the reconstruction by Émile Puech in Puech, “Psaumes davidiques.” I argue instead that “seed” terminology more commonly suggests matters of kinship within DSS.

35 For this reconstruction, see Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 1, 572–73.

36 Christine Hayes interprets the passage to prohibit intermarriage between not only priests and Gentiles, but also between Jewish laypeople and Gentiles. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 84.

37 See Baumgarten, “Proselytes,” 700; and also Jokiranta, who observes that the *ger* is “low in the internal hierarchy.” Jokiranta, “Conceptualizing *Ger*,” 675. See also the article by Jokiranta and Cecilia Wassen (“Brotherhood at Qumran?”), in which they discuss the presence of a hierarchical system within DSS.

suggesting a date from the later second century through to the first century BCE.³⁸ The passage of interest to the present study is frag. 1, 6–7:

יהיה כול הגר הנשאר 6
את ישראל בגו[ים] ל 7

The lines are translated by Timothy Lim as “6 *yhyh any haggēr* who remain[ns] (?) 7 Israel among the nati[ons] for[.]”³⁹ If we read the first word as the verb היה “to be,” the fragmentary passage would translate as “and it shall be that any *ger* who remains.” It is unclear exactly where this *ger* remains, other than that the next line references “Israel.” The passage calls to mind Ezra 1:4, which addresses Israelites who are called back to Judea from the Babylonian exile: “and let *all survivors* (וכל־הנשאֵר), in whatever place *they reside* (הוא גר־שם) [...]”⁴⁰ In these two passages, we find both the roots גר “to sojourn” and also שאר “to remain.” In the passage from Ezra, the term to describe Israelites who will return to the land of Judea, expressed literally as “any one who remains” (i.e. remains to return to the land), is used as a noun; the root גר is used verbally as an active participle (lit. “one residing”). Meanwhile, in 4Q307, it is the inverse: the root גר is used as the noun (the “resident alien”), and the root שאר has a verbal intention. This inversion implies that the “*ger* who remains” in 4Q307 is now substituting for the Israelite who “remains” to return to the land in Ezra 1:4. The result of this careful scriptural rewriting is the granting of Israelite status to the *ger*.

One might wonder whether this reference to the *ger* is intended to reminisce upon Israelites sojourning as *gerim*, as observed of Abraham in Gen 12, and the Israelites in Egypt in Exod 22:21. But, if that were the case, surely the passage would use those scriptural predecessors, instead. The Book of Ezra is a realistic scriptural predecessor, as passages from Ezra are found among DSS in 4Q117 (*Ezra*). It is realistic for the author or authors of 4Q307 to have known material from the Book of Ezra. This lesser known scroll provides an example of an eloquent reworking of scriptural text, which clearly shows an understanding of the *ger* as kin. The *ger* substitutes for the Israelite in this narrative fashion within 4Q307’s allusion to the Book of Ezra, although in that book’s original context, Israelites are never correlated

38 Lim, “4QText Mentioning Temple,” 255.

39 Ibid., 255. There is no space between the את and ישראל, confirmed when viewing the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, 4Q307 photographs, “B-295741” and “B-295175.” [deadseascrolls.org.il].

40 English translations from the MT are according to NRSV (emphasis added).

with the noun *gerim* (as occurs, for example, in Gen 12:10 and Exod 22:21). Because of this substitution leading to Israelite status for the *ger*, within the second- or first-century BCE context of 4Q307, it seems more likely that the *ger* represents a Gentile convert to Judaism, rather than a resident alien, or a sojourning Israelite.

The passage also draws attention to another feature of ethnicity that is important for the text, namely, the ethnic feature of a connection to land. Thus, 4Q307 can serve as a segue between discussing the features of shared kinship and a connection to land that appear to be significant features of ethnicity within DSS.

Models of Tolerance 2: Shared Connection to Land

The first two passages examining the *ger* in scriptural rewriting in DSS highlighted the existence of a mutable notion of kinship. These next two examples will highlight a second feature of ethnicity that may show mutability within DSS, that of a connection to land. We will look at two texts in which the *ger*'s inclusion in the connection to land is a signal that this individual has in fact crossed the boundary from Gentile to Jew.

4Q307 Text Mentioning Temple, frag. 1, 6–7

It was seen that 4Q307 reinterprets the *ger* as kin by means of a careful rewriting of Ezra 1:4, equating the *ger* with the Israelite who will return to the land of Judea after the Babylonian exile. However, not only has the ethnic feature of kinship become mutable, but the literary inversion suggests a mutability in the ethnic feature of a connection to land as well. While the Book of Ezra does not actually use the term *ger* as a noun, certainly Ezra itself makes use of Pentateuchal sources, and Deuteronomy in particular, when considering relationships with non-Israelites and their rapport with the land.⁴¹ According to Pentateuchal tradition, one finds the prevailing view that the *ger* as a resident alien could not own land, which is why this individual was instead the recipient of first fruits and tithes (e.g. Deut 26:11). In 4Q307, by equating the *ger* with the Israelite who is specifically

41 For example, Michael Fishbane observes the conflation of the peoples' names in Deut 7:1–6 (Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites) and Deut 23:4–9 (Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians) in the list of those “peoples of the lands” named in Ezra 9:1–2. Fishbane suggests this conflation is done to extend previous Pentateuchal provisions to more “contemporary” times. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 108–12.

returning to the land as according to Ezra 1:4, the *ger* subsequently gains affiliation with the land as well. In other words, it appears that the *ger* has gained access to the land specifically because the individual is no longer a resident alien. Within the second- or first-century BCE contemporary context of the community that wrote 4Q307, an individual who has made a change in kinship and also connection to land may be regarded as a convert.

One exception to this prevailing view that a *ger*'s inclusion in land inheritance indicates that the *ger* is no longer Gentile may be found in Ezek 47:21–23. In this passage, *gerim* who “have begotten children among you” are allotted land inheritance “among the tribes of Israel.” This text is anomalous with regard to permitting land inheritance for the *ger* in the post-exilic environment of Judea in the Persian era. In this post-exilic period, the *ger*, even if wealthy and also included in cultic regulations for the sake of the purity of the land, is still typically regarded a non-Israelite who may not own land on a permanent basis.⁴² Nathanael Warren suggests that the Ezekiel passage stems from a situation in which resident aliens have been adopted as Israelites to enable them to become legal heirs to land.⁴³

Ezekiel does not seem to be a scriptural predecessor for 4Q307, but the comparison calls to attention that however it occurs, occasions wherein the *ger* inherits land involve the *ger* becoming “Israelite.” In other words, a connection to land has become a mutable feature of ethnicity in order for the *ger* to attain it. A similar phenomenon will be observed in the next example, as well.

4Q279 *Four Lots*, frag. 5, 4–6

This passage receives its name from “lots” (sing. *gôrāl*) which are designated for various parties included in a hierarchical list, almost identical to that observed in CD XIV:

4 [And for the prie]sts, the sons of Aaron, shall go out the [first] lot []
5 [] a man according to his spirit. And the [second] lo[t] 6 [and] the
fourth lot for the *ger*[*im*].⁴⁴

One can imagine the same fourfold pattern of priests, Levites, children of Israel, and *ger*, with one difference being that the term *ger* is now in the

42 For views on the *ger* in the post-exilic period of the Holiness Legislation (Lev 17–26, for example), see Achenbach, “*Gêr-Nâkrî-Tôshav-Zâr*,” 41; Nihan, “Resident Aliens,” 132.

43 Warren, “Adoption–Alienation.”

44 Alexander and Vermes, “4QFour Lots” (DJD 26), 221. The term *gerim* has been left untranslated.

plural, and thus matches in number with the other parties listed. The other major difference is that a lot will be assigned to each, which is reminiscent of the lot of land designated as inheritance to the Israelites in Num 36:2.⁴⁵ The passage calls to mind individuals (priests, Levites, and *gerim*) all from within Pentateuchal scriptural predecessors. Within Pentateuchal tradition (e.g. Deut 26:11), resident aliens as well as Levites were included in the festival of first fruits and tithes, because they were not included in the gift of land and would consequently be lacking in provisions. In a similar fashion, Aaronide priests are granted holy offerings instead of allotments of land (Num 18:20). That these Aaronide priests, Levites, and *gerim* now receive lots of their own suggests a textual inversion. Where the *gerim* are concerned, such an inversion suggests that they are now children of Israel themselves, who can share in the inheritance of land. As was observed in CD XIV, the fact that the list differentiates the “children of Israel” from “*gerim*” does not need to imply that the *gerim* cannot have become “Israelite” themselves, but simply that they are Gentile converts to Judaism listed lower hierarchically than those “Israelites” from birth. Priests and Levites are “Israelite” as well, and they too are listed separately in the hierarchy, above lay Israelites.

Both passages of 4Q307 and 4Q279 portray *gerim* as individuals who have become Israelite, because they can share in the inheritance of land given by God to the Israelites. A connection to a homeland is a strong feature of ethnic identity, and the fact that *gerim* share in this connection implies a tolerance toward ethnic conversion.

Models of Intolerance: Exclusions Based on Kinship and Religious Practice

The introduction to this essay argued that charting the figure of the *ger* in scriptural rewriting within DSS reveals more than one uniform perspective of tolerance or intolerance toward outsiders. Indeed, the first examples that follow demonstrate an attitude of mutable ethnicity, permitting Gentiles to become Jews, and thus effectively Gentile converts to Judaism. However, the two final examples exhibit texts in which the *ger* is clearly excluded

45 References to lots of “light” can also be found within DSS (e.g. 1QS II, 2; II, 4–5; 1QM I, 5; CD XIII, 12). See Alexander and Vermes, “4QFour Lots,” 222, and also Hamidović, “4Q279, 4QFour Lots,” 172. However, in 4Q279 the allusion to the Pentateuchal tradition of the inheritance of lots of land is a closer parallel, in that all parties either receiving or not receiving lots of land are listed within the passage.

from the group, for reasons of both kinship and religious practice, which suggests an attitude of immutable ethnicity on the part of the texts' authors.

4Q169 *Pesher Nahum*, frags. 3–4, II, 8–10

4Q169pNah provides a list of individuals who are clearly excluded from the ingroup:

8 [Its] *pesher*: concer[n]ing the misleaders of Ephraim, who mislead many by their false teaching, and their lying tongue and their wily lip; 9 kings, princes, priests and populace together with the *ger* (מלכים שרים כוהנים ועם). Cities and clans will perish through their counsel, n[ob]les and rul[ers] 10 will fall [by the fur]y of their tongue.⁴⁶

The *pesher* offers allusions to historical figures and groups, among them the reference to “Ephraim,” which most likely refers to the Pharisees.⁴⁷ According to syntax provided by Shani Berrin, then, these “kings, princes, priests and people together with the *ger*” represent adherents of “Ephraim,” who are consequently adherents of the Pharisees.⁴⁸ The passage suggests that Pharisees and their various adherents are being led astray with false teaching. In other words, the *ger* is fully a part of sectarian controversies concerning correct practice, which can fall under the category of “religious practice” as a component of ethnic identity. In the narrative of the *pesher*, the *ger* is among those clearly excluded from the ingroup due to differences in religious practice. When taken on its own, this *ger* could be assumed to be similar to that resident alien *ger* of post-exilic Judea, in which the *ger* must follow the commandments in order to keep the land holy (e.g. Lev 18:26–28).

However, in addition to intolerance due to difference in religious practice, the *ger* is excluded for reasons of difference in kinship. The text shows that the *ger* is literally “attached” to the people, reminiscent of the *ger* of Isa 14:1 (וגלוי הגר עליהם) who will join the house of Jacob, drawing on the verb

46 Text and translation according to Berrin, *Pesher Nahum Scroll*, 194. The *ger* has been left untranslated.

47 The “city of Ephraim” has also been equated with the “Seekers-after-Smooth-Things” (in 4Q169, frags. 3–4, II, 2), who in turn have been equated with the Pharisees, for their reference in a passage alluding to Pharisaic Jews who called upon Demetrius III for help (4Q169, frags. 3–4, I, 2). Collins, “Prophecy and History in the Pesharim,” esp. 213–15.

48 Berrin, *Pesher Nahum Scroll*, 252–53. See also David Hamidović, who considers the *ger* to be susceptible to Pharisaic teachings. Hamidović, “À la frontière,” 275.

lwh (to join or attach).⁴⁹ From the late Second Temple period onward, this verb has been associated with converts who have attached themselves to Jewish groups, such as the presumed Gentiles who “joined” Jews and their descendants, described in Esth 9:27.⁵⁰ It appears that the *ger* of 4Q169pNah is a Gentile convert to Pharisaic Judaism. Nevertheless, even though the convert was accepted into that community, his ethnic identity overall, including his kinship, is still immutable to entry within the group that authored this text. One further example will offer a possible explanation regarding why Gentile kinship is immutable for certain among DSS.

4Q174 *Florilegium*, frag. 1, I, 3–4

In 4Q174, once more the *ger* is found within a list, which in this case names figures who will be excluded from an eschatological sanctuary:

3 [“The sanctuary (מקדש), O Lord, which] thy hands have [es]tablished. YHWH will rule for ever and ever.” That is the house (הבית) “where there shall never more enter 4 [] and “the Ammonite and the Moabite” and “illegitimate child” (ממזר) and “foreigner” (בן נכר) and *ger* (גר) “for ever,” for my holy ones are there.⁵¹

The figures of the Ammonite, the Moabite, and the illegitimate child are reworked from Deut 23:3–4 (vv. 2–3 in most English translations) which describes their exclusion from the assembly of the LORD, while the reference to the exclusion of a foreigner from the sanctuary is reworked from Ezek 44:9.⁵² Meanwhile, the figure of the *ger* is not borrowed from any other passage excluding a *ger* from the sanctuary. Terence Donaldson has suggested that because the *ger* is added as a new character into the text and is not borrowed from a scriptural predecessor in which it holds a meaning of resident alien, the *ger* is even more likely to take on the newer sense of the word (i.e., a convert).⁵³ This deduction seems reasonable when one

49 Berthelot calls to mind Isa 14:1 as scriptural predecessor. Berthelot, “La notion de 186 “גר.”

50 On the topic of *lwh* as a post-exilic verb and its association with conversion; see, for example, Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 42, 207; and Kidd, *Alterity and Identity*, 72.

51 Text and translation are those of Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4.I* (DJD 5), 53–54, with alterations: “illegitimate child” (for the ממזר); “foreigner” (for the בן נכר); and “*ger*” (leaving the *ger* untranslated for the time being).

52 For discussion of the use of Deut 23:3–4 and Ezek 44:9, see Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*, 76; Berthelot, “La notion de גר; 205-6,” and Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4.I*, 55, 1.3.

53 Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 212.

also considers that the typical scriptural dichotomy between “foreigner” and “resident alien” breaks down in DSS. In postexilic canonical scriptural tradition, the foreigner (*ben nekar*, or *nokri*) is not a permanent resident and is excluded from the Judean community; this individual is responsible to a foreign rule.⁵⁴ Within this dichotomy, the *ger* is the resident alien requiring social assistance. In DSS, however, regulations stipulate avoiding interactions with foreigners interchangeably with those identified as Gentiles (*goyim*). For example, within the *Damascus Document*, individuals are prohibited from sending foreigners to do tasks on the Sabbath (CD XI, 2). A few lines later is the regulation to keep away from Gentiles on the Sabbath (CD XI, 14–15). A dichotomy is no longer clear that the foreigner represents those non-permanent foreigner residents and the *ger* represents the permanent resident alien. Instead, the *ger* is free to represent a Gentile convert to Judaism.

Nevertheless, clearly the *ger* is excluded from the sanctuary as are the other members of this conflated list, but for what reason exactly? Relating to the notion of an immutable kinship, recall that Christine Hayes has argued that stemming from the post-exilic Book of Ezra, the concept of a priest’s holy seed (Lev 21) is extended to all lay Israelites, while the seed of Gentiles remains profane (e.g. Ezra 9:2).⁵⁵ Hayes believes that this is the view taken by 4Q174, that “the blemish of profane seed can never be overcome.”⁵⁶ Thus we encounter the unusual circumstance in which the term *ger* is deemed to be a Gentile convert to Judaism, but 4Q174 believes that a Gentile can never overcome his Gentile seed. The result of this culture clash is that 4Q174 acknowledges individuals exist who are deemed to be Gentile converts to Judaism, but the text does not regard these conversions to be legitimate in any way. In other words, Jewish seed is immutable to Gentiles, according to 4Q174.⁵⁷ To say that this kinship is immutable draws upon a notion of immutable ethnicity more broadly.

Overall, both 4Q169pNah and 4Q174Flor display an attitude of immutable kinship and culture toward the Gentile convert to Judaism. The convert is excluded within these texts because in the eyes of these authors, the

54 See Achenbach, “*Gêr-Nâkrî-Tôshav-Zâr*,” 43–45.

55 Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 26–29.

56 *Ibid.*, 62.

57 Berthelot also suggests that 4Q174 may perceive the *ger* as an inauthentic convert, although she argues the reason stems from negative perspectives concerning the authenticity of Idumean conversions (whether they were forced or not), and not due to simply a notion of immutable kinship. See Berthelot, “La notion de גֵּר,” 206–12.

“convert” has never actually relinquished a Gentile nature, even if he underwent a conversion process recognized within other circles.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study set out to assess levels of tolerance or intolerance toward outsiders within the Dead Sea scrolls, all the while drawing on the observation that conversions in ancient Judaism were due to changes in ethnic identity. The study used as its centerpiece an examination of examples of the term *ger* as it appears in the scrolls, specifically because this term has been known to transform over time to take on a meaning of Gentile convert to Judaism, in addition to its first meaning of a (Gentile) resident alien. Due to high levels of purity exhibited within the literature of DSS, it has frequently been assumed that the scrolls would only render the term in its earlier meaning of resident alien, and would certainly exclude any sort of inclusion of converts in the movement.

The study found that within DSS, some texts model tolerance by means of mutable ethnicity to Gentiles, who are seen to become full members in the figure of the *ger*. In the examples assessed, their transformation has happened on a level that relates to shared kinship and a connection to land, and thus, a status of “convert” can be defined as such for the *ger* in these texts. Where kinship is concerned, CD XIV drew from Deuteronomy to equate the *ger* with a brother. This brother is furthermore a member of the assembly of the camps (from CD XIII), and consequently the seed of Israel. For its part, 4Q307 offered a purposeful reworking of the *ger* from Ezra 1, transforming the *ger* into the Israelite who will return to the land after the Babylonian exile. In this fashion, 4Q307 also highlighted an example of how the *ger* is included in a connection to a homeland. Likewise 4Q279 reworked scriptural passages to offer the *ger* a share of land inheritance, signifying an Israelite kinship. These examples demonstrate that one tradition within DSS exhibits permeability and tolerance toward outsiders, through a notion of mutable ethnicity. However, it should be noted that the permeability displayed is not without its own boundaries. The reason mutable ethnicity works is because it enables all members to be Jewish. In other words, the high purity standards in the scrolls forge an intolerance toward Gentiles, and it is not Gentiles who are joining the group. Instead, it is converts who are joining, Gentile individuals who have overcome their Gentile nature by taking on a Jewish kinship and connection to land. The convert is only included because he was able to overcome his Gentile nature.

Furthermore, it was determined that such a model of tolerance by means of mutable ethnicity was not a uniform view throughout DSS under consideration. A second tradition was found to exist, one that displayed a sentiment of immutable ethnicity and intolerance toward the *ger*. In this tradition, the *ger* was still understood to be a convert, but the very notion of a convert was deemed inauthentic. In other words, it was deemed impossible for the convert to overcome his Gentile nature. The immutable ethnicity was made evident in the way that the *ger* was excluded from the community of the text for reasons of kinship and culture. In 4Q169 *Pesher Nahum*, the *ger* is attached to other members, as are converts who “attach” themselves in other late Second Temple texts such as the Book of Esther. However, these members are followers of Pharisaic customs and are therefore led astray, the *ger* as a Gentile convert to Judaism among them. In 4Q174 *Florilegium*, the *ger* as a Gentile convert to Judaism is excluded from the eschatological Temple because this community deems that he never actually overcame his Gentile seed, meaning that his conversion status is invalid.

Clearly, this tradition deals with difference very differently from the one that accepts the convert. While the first group was concerned with purity matters as well, it dealt with the desire to keep apart from Gentiles by permitting a change to sameness. Seed could be transformed and shared by becoming mutable. The second group, in which the *ger* was excluded, dealt with the purity concerns by transforming themselves to an ethnicity entirely immutable to Gentiles: they followed a notion circulating in the later Second Temple period that all Israelites contained a holy seed which would remain immutable to Gentiles. These two traditions highlight that identity is determined by a similar underlying factor, ethnicity, but that it can be shaped and interpreted in very divergent ways to deal with the difference of proximate others.

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3. Der geliebte „Feind“

Wahrnehmung des Anderen in Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe und ihre Rezeption im Dokument Q – ein Beispiel antiker „Toleranz“ und „Anerkennung“?

Michael Labahn

Abstract

The commandment to love one's enemies presupposes that some people are perceived as an enemy, but the commandment also implies that the other ought neither to be excluded nor passively endured. To meet the enemy with love means taking an unconditional concern for the well-being of others both in the context of Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom of God and in the early reception of this memory in document Q.

Keywords: Q document; early Christianity; love; tolerance; recognition

Aufgabe und Thema

Die nicht allein in der neutestamentlichen Exegese viel beachtete Aufforderung Jesu zur Feindesliebe (Q 6,27; Mt 5,44 par Lk 6,27) wird oft als eine utopische Herausforderung oder gar als ein weltfremdes Ideal begriffen, das zur Liebe des Unliebbareren auffordert, nämlich eines die eigene Existenz gefährdenden Feindes. Solche Forderung ist mehr als ein tolerant zu nennender Akt der Duldung des Anderen, vielmehr ein das Selbst gefährdendes Erdulden, und steht im Verdacht, die Grenzen möglicher Toleranz zu überschreiten, bzw. eines Verzichts auf die – beispielsweise in einem demokratischen Politikkonzept – notwendige Streitkultur.¹ Damit werden existenzwahrende Grenzen des Selbstschutzes überschritten, so dass die Forderung im Sinne einer Selbstaufgabe für den Gegner gar nicht

¹ Vgl. z.B. das Referat bei Theißen, „Gewaltverzicht“, 160.

gemeint sein kann und damit ausschließlich rhetorisch, vielleicht auch utopisch, jedenfalls hyperbolisch gedacht wäre.

Andererseits setzt die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe voraus, dass eine andere Person als Feind bezeichnet wird und damit nicht nur anders, sondern zugleich bedrohlich ist. Der Begriff des Feindes bestimmt die Wirklichkeit als eine bedrohte, die allerdings durch die Aufforderung zur Liebe aktiv gestaltet und nicht einfach erlitten wird. Doch zunächst bedient die Aufforderung zur *Feindesliebe* ein *Feindbild*, das in der Kürze des Gebotes nicht näher bestimmt ist – kein Motiv beschreibt im Appell den Feind näher; ob der römische Eindringling, der religiöse Opponent oder ein innergesellschaftlicher Konflikt bedacht wird, bleibt in der Kürze der Mahnung offen. Der geschilderten Kritik an einem undifferenzierten Erdulden steht auf der anderen Seite ein scheinbar ebenso undifferenzierter Begriff von Abgrenzung gegenüber.

Soziologische Feldforschung und Studien haben gezeigt, dass die Aufgabe und Funktion von Feindbildern in der Ausbildung von Identität durch die stereotype Abgrenzung der Anderen zugunsten der Mitglieder einer Gruppe besteht.² Feindbilder, so formuliert Stefan Schreiber zusammenfassend, leisten

eine Kategorisierung und damit Vereinfachung des Bildes der Welt, was bei der menschlichen Wahrnehmung der Welt unvermeidbar ist, entsteht so doch größere Klarheit und Strukturierung. [...] In sozialen Konfliktsituationen ist die Vergegenwärtigung der eigenen Gruppenzugehörigkeit besonders wichtig, was die Entstehung von Feindbildern begünstigt.³

Die Wahrnehmung von anderen Menschen als „Feind“ in Konfliktsituationen ist Teil der Identitätsbildung aufgrund der *Wahrnehmung* des Anderen bzw. einer Welt jenseits der Gruppengrenzen als fremd, gefährdend und damit feindlich. Die Charakterisierung eines / einer Anderen als Feind leistet somit Orientierung, indem sie der Festigung eigener durch die Konfliktsituation gefährdeter Identität wie auch der Klärung des Verhältnisses zur Mitwelt dient. Durch die Erstellung eines Feindbildes erzählt sie die eigene Situation neu und erzeugt eine klar gegliederte Welt. Der durchaus fragwürdige Zugewinn an Sinn ist die positive Seite einer polemisch strukturierten Beziehung zu Anderen, basierend auf Abgrenzung und Kommunikationsverweigerung

2 Vgl. z.B. Still, *Conflict*, 121–22: Das Feindbild als Negativmodell des Anderen „results in a stereotypical perception and portrayal of outsiders by insiders“.

3 Schreiber, „Häresie“, 196–97.

verbunden mit der Gefahr der Eskalation und Zerstörung; einer Feindschaft, die Bestandteil einer „konkreten Mitwirkung“ derer ist, „die sich darauf einlassen, einander ‚feindselig‘ zu begegnen, um schließlich ganz in Feindschaft aufzugehen“. ⁴ Somit ist die Kehrseite identitätsbildender Feindbilder die Unterbrechung sozialer, politischer oder religiöser Interaktion mit dem als „Feind“ bezeichneten Anderen, was soziale Konflikte verschärft, vorhandene Differenzen vertieft und Auseinandersetzungen verlängert. Zudem profitieren in der Regel von der Erzeugung von Feindbildern ⁵ nur wenige, vor allem einflussreiche Eliten.

Die Benennung eines anderen als Feind und die angemahnte Interaktion der Liebe zu ihm verbinden folglich widersprüchliche sprachliche und soziale Muster; ihnen entsprechen gegenläufige Handlungs- und Interpretationsmodelle, deren Zusammenwirken im Gebot der Feindesliebe besondere Aufmerksamkeit auch im Blick auf Entstehung und Entwicklung der Toleranzidee verdient. Toleranz als Dulden des Anderseins des Anderen – in der Begriffsgeschichte zunächst vor allem des religiösen Anderseins – ist keineswegs eine ausschließlich neuzeitliche Idee; ⁶ neuzeitlich ist die Ausprägung des Toleranzgedankens in der Akzeptanz der *Gleichwertigkeit und Gleichberechtigung* unterschiedlicher religiöser und philosophischer Ideen, unterschiedlicher politischer Konzepte und Menschen unterschiedlicher Herkunft, Rasse und Religion, nicht zuletzt verbunden mit unterschiedlich elaborierten Pluralismusmodellen, deren Brüchigkeit in der Alltagsakzeptanz gegenwärtig geführte gesellschaftliche Diskurse weltweit in traurigem Ausmaß belegen. ⁷

Allerdings erscheint auf der Grundlage der Begriffsgeschichte und im aktuellen Gespräch der Toleranzgedanke als ein begrenztes, eher statisches und an bleibenden Gegensätzen orientiertes Prinzip. Demgegenüber wird

4 So der Hinweis bei Geulen, von der Heiden, Liebsch, „Einleitung“, 10, die zu Recht daran erinnern, dass „Verfeindungsprozesse [...] niemals bloß ‚eigendynamisch‘ ablaufen“.

5 Vgl. z.B. Schlee, *Feindbilder*, bes. 24–66; s.a. kurz Geulen, von der Heiden, Liebsch, „Einleitung“, 10–11.

6 Im Wechsel der Zeiten und gesellschaftlichen Konkretionen sowie der philosophischen Modelle hat der Toleranzbegriff ein weites Deutungsspektrum erfahren. Zum Begriff Toleranz und seiner Begriffsgeschichte vgl. z.B. Hastedt, *Toleranz*; s.a. Forst, *Toleranz*.

7 Zum Themenfeld von religiösem Pluralismus und Toleranzidee vgl. z.B. die bereits etwas ältere Sammlung Augustin, Wienand, Winkler (Hg.), *Religiöser Pluralismus und Toleranz in Europa*. Zu den wechselnden Bedingungen und zur schwindenden Bereitschaft toleranter Wahrnehmungen anderer Religionen und den Motiven von Ablehnung in Europa und vor allem in Deutschland vgl. z.B. die Beiträge in Pollack, Müller, Rosta, Friedrichs, Wendell (Hg.), *Grenzen der Toleranz: Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt in Europa*.

der psychologisch fundierte Begriff der „Anerkennung“ (engl.: „recognition“)⁸ seit den 1990iger Jahren in das Gespräch, vor allem in konflikttheoretische Analysen gebracht, durch den bezogen auf die gesellschaftliche Interaktion dem Anderen ein positiver Status zugemessen wird,⁹ der nicht auf Konsens oder gemeinsamen Werten basieren muss.¹⁰ In psychologischer Hinsicht beschreibt „Anerkennung“ ein „vital human need“,¹¹ da zumeist ihre Wichtigkeit für die Ausbildung praktischer Identität bedacht wird. So liegt etwa der Beitrag Honneths darin, dass „die Notwendigkeit der intersubjektiven Anerkennung die Bedingung für ein gelingendes Selbstverhältnis“ darstellt.¹² Unterschieden werden können vier Formen der Anerkennung: elementare Anerkennung, Respekt, Wertschätzung sowie Liebe und Freundschaft¹³ Die Liebe lokalisiert Honneth als affektive im emotionalen Lebensbereich als „nicht-instrumentelle, bedingungslose Sorge um das Wohlergehen eines anderen Individuums“ (Lieben).¹⁴ Gerade der Begriff der Liebe eröffnet eine Schnittmenge des Feindesliebegebots zum anerkennungstheoretischen Diskurs, wenngleich diese Konzepte in Diskussionen des 19. Jh.s wurzeln.¹⁵ Die Handlungsaufforderung zur Liebe im Gebot der Feindesliebe überschreitet die Grenzen des emotionalen Lebensbereichs, bedient sich – wie zu zeigen ist – jedoch eines theologischen Sinnentwurfs, bei dem dem Feind einerseits voraussetzungslos

8 Vgl. zur Einführung Iser, „Recognition“; s.a. die Einführung bei Kohl, *Anerkennung*, 19–44, mit weiterer Literatur. Eine kurze auf das Thema dieses Sammelbandes zugespitzte Zusammenfassung bei Outi Lehtipuu, „Male“, 254–57 in diesem Band. Wegweisend sind die Werke von Honneth, *Kampf*, und Taylor, „Politics“, 25–73.

9 Iser, „Recognition“: „Arguably, if you recognize another person with regard to a certain feature, as an autonomous agent, for example, you do not only admit that she has this feature but you embrace a positive attitude towards her for having this feature. Such recognition implies that you bear obligations to treat her in a certain way, that is, you recognize a specific normative status of the other person, e.g., as a free and equal person.“

10 Lehtipuu, „Male“, 254.

11 Taylor, „Politics“, 26.

12 Kohl, *Anerkennung*, 20.

13 Iser, „Recognition.“

14 Kohl, *Anerkennung*, 31–34. (Zitat: *ibid.*, 32); hierzu Honneth, „Liebe“, 216–36, der Anerkennung in Handlungen konkretisiert: „die wie die bedingungslose Fürsorge oder das verständnisvolle Verzeihen zu erkennen geben, dass sie allein um des individuellen Wohlergehens eines konkreten Anderen willen geschehen“ (*ibid.*, 235–36).

15 Ist man bereit mit Kohl, *Anerkennung*, 19, die Wurzeln der Anerkennungstheorie bis zur griechischen Freundschaftsethik zurückzuverfolgen, dann ist das Gebot der Feindesliebe ebenfalls in das Gespräch um die Wurzeln anerkennungstheoretischer Ethik zu bringen, auch wenn dies im Vergleich der Diskussionen des 19. Jh.'s oder des aktuellen Gesprächs anachronistisch erscheint; zudem sind die Grenzen bzw. Differenzen in den theologischen, philosophischen, psychoanalytischen und soziologischen Grundlegungen unbestritten.

sein Mensch- und Geschöpfsein anerkennende Liebe zu Teil wird, er/sie andererseits in der Wahrnehmung als Feind in gerichtstheologischem Diskurs bei seinem Handeln behaftet wird.

Die Wahrnehmung Anderer kann sich sprachlich in Bewertungen, Beschreibungen von Beziehungen, aber auch in der Einladung bzw. Aufforderung zu bestimmten Aktivitäten in Bezug auf diesen Anderen äußern. Die Wertungen und Handlungen haben eine soziologische Funktion für das Verhältnis unterschiedlicher Gruppen und ihrer Glieder zueinander. Sie dienen der Identitätsbildung und zielen auf Interaktionen, die ein Miteinander ermöglichen oder Abgrenzungen provozieren. Damit verfolgen sprachliche Äußerungen der Wahrnehmung des Anderen gleichzeitig eine Pragmatik im Kommunikationsprozess mit den Adressat*innen. In dieses Spektrum werden das Gebot der Feindesliebe und sein Beitrag zur Toleranzdiskussion im antiken Kontext methodisch eingeschrieben, indem die Analyse der „Wahrnehmung“ und Neu-Interpretation des Anderen als „Feind“ im Gebot Jesu und seiner frühen Rezeption in Q nunmehr als „geliebtem Feind“ im Fokus stehen. Gerade die Analyse der „Wahrnehmung“ des Anderen und die daraus resultierenden Handlungsmodelle mitsamt ihrer Pragmatik leisten einen wichtigen Beitrag, um der Toleranzidee im Gebot der Feindesliebe nachzugehen.

Für diese erneute Auseinandersetzung mit dem Gebot der Feindesliebe wurde die gemeinsame Quelle der beiden Großevangelien Matthäus und Lukas als einer frühen Rezeption und zugleich als Ausgangspunkt für die historisch-re-konstruierende Rückfrage nach Jesus ausgewählt. In Bezug auf Q und auf die Jesusverkündigung analysiert dieser Beitrag die Grundlagen der Feindesliebe innerhalb der Sinnbildung von Q bzw. in der Gottesreichsverkündigung Jesu. Ferner geht die Analyse den theologischen und soziologischen Remodulierungen des Feindbildes und seiner jeweiligen Funktion nach, um damit in der langen und breit geführten Diskussion um das Gebot der Feindesliebe bei Jesus und in der frühchristlichen Rezeption neue Akzente zu setzen, aber auch einen Beitrag zur Frage der Toleranz Anderer im religiösen Diskurs der Zeit des frühen Christentums zu leisten. Die Einbettung des Gebotes in der jeweiligen Sinnbildung wird zeigen, dass die Wahrnehmung des Anderen als „Feind“ konkrete soziale Realitäten widerspiegelt, in denen auch die Aufforderung zur Liebe nicht symbolisch oder rhetorisch-hyperbolisch verstanden werden will, sondern konkret auf die Ausbildung einer die eigene Identität bewahrenden Interaktion als Anerkennung in geschichtlicher Wirklichkeit geht.

Die Feindesliebe in Q 6,27.35c–d – Bewahrung des Selbst und Bewahrung der Kommunikationsfähigkeit

Da vor der Rückfrage nach der Re-Konstruktion der Botschaft des erinnerten Jesus die Analyse einer möglichen Textbasis steht,¹⁶ werden wir diese historische Annäherung durch die Analyse der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe im Dokument Q vornehmen, da so – auch wenn die Existenz von Q nicht unumstritten ist¹⁷ – die Untersuchung zunächst bei einem gestalteten Textphänomen mit einer sinnvollen Pragmatik einsetzen kann. Das Dokument Q verstehe ich dabei als reflektierte, erzählartige Sinnbildung¹⁸ und damit als einen Text, dessen Bestandteile einander interpretieren unabhängig von der Frage, welche Jesustraditionen bzw. Jesuserinnerung jenseits der Textlichkeit den Q-Anhänger*innen zugänglich war.¹⁹ Es ist eine Schrift, die von Dorfschreibern verfasst²⁰ in die palästinische Sozialgeschichte eingeschrieben werden kann und darin aufgrund von Konflikten einer jüdenchristlichen Gruppe / Gemeinde in ihrer Mitwelt als Selbstvergewisserung und Krisenbewältigung entstanden ist.²¹

Zum Kontext: Verfolgte als Liebende

Beginnen wir mit der literarischen Kontextualisierung. Jesu Appell zur Feindesliebe findet sich in seiner Eingangsrede in Q 6,20–49. Diese Rede nimmt unterschiedliche, Jesus zugeschriebene Sprüche auf und fügt diese unabhängig von kompositionsgeschichtlichen Fragen zu einer einheitlichen und programmatischen Rede zusammen, in der der durch die Versuchung (Q 4,1–13) bewährte Lehrer seine Anhänger*innen grundlegend über das Wesen des Jüngerseins unterweist. Die Eingangsrede beginnt mit Seligpreisungen in 6,20–23 als Fundierung der um Jesus versammelten Heilsgemeinschaft²² und schließt mit der Mahnung, nach den Worten Jesu des Herrn zu handeln

16 S.a. Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 4.

17 Zur Zwei-Quellen-Theorie, ihrer Begründung und ihrer Kritik vgl. z.B. Labahn, *Der Gekommene*, 27–39; s.a. Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 205–64, sowie Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*; Tiwald, *Logienquelle*, 15–21.

18 Labahn, *Der Gekommene*, 134–68. 570–87; Labahn, „Sinn“, 131–73.

19 Q verweist auf textexterne Jesuserinnerung und nutzt dieses Wissen durch die Verwendung literarischer gaps; vgl. Labahn, „Lücken“, 163–88; s.a. Fleddermann, Q, 105.

20 Vgl. z.B. Bazzana, *Kingdom*; s.a. Arnal, *Jesus*. Wichtig für das Verständnis von Q als einem literarischen Werk ist die von Bazzana formulierte Einsicht, dass die Dorfschreiber „shared with their rulers and employers literacy and sometimes a not negligible degree of schooling“ (ibid., 34).

21 Vgl. Labahn, „Sinn“, 131–73.

22 Vgl. z.B. Labahn, *Der Gekommene*, 326–30.

(6,43–48). Die Sprüche sind ethischer Natur, so dass sich Jesus in dieser Rede als vollmächtiger Lehrer seiner Anhänger*innen erweist und ihnen grundlegende Orientierung zum Leben in ihrer Mitwelt vermittelt.

Das Wort von der Feindesliebe schließt unmittelbar an die Seligpreisungen (6,20–23) in Q 6,27–28.35c–d an²³ und erhält durch die exponierte Stellung eine herausragende Bedeutung für die Unterweisung.²⁴ Die vierte Seligpreisung (Q 6,22), die mit der Kompositionstätigkeit in Q verbunden werden kann,²⁵ spricht Themen sozialer Ausgrenzung an: Schmähung, Verfolgung und üble Nachrede (μακάριοι ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ [διῶξ]ωσιν καὶ [εἰπ]ωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν [καθ'] ὑμῶν²⁶). Begründet wird diese Ablehnung in der Verbindung mit dem Menschensohn (ἐνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), dem *alter ego* Jesu in Q. Den feindlichen Handlungen Anderer entspricht die Zusage himmlischen Lohns (V.23: [...] ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ), so dass die die aktuelle Befindlichkeit neu definierende Anrede als „selig“ schließlich ihre eschatologische Entsprechung in himmlischer Belohnung finden wird. Zwar blickt Jesus in Q auf seine im Text bisher nicht vorgestellten Jünger (καὶ [ἐπάρ]ας τοῦς ὀφθαλμοῦς] αὐτοῦ [εἰς τοὺς] μαθητὰς] αὐτοῦ [...]; 6,20), aber dennoch liegt die Annahme nahe, dass die Seligpreisungen als direkte Anrede²⁷ über die textinternen Adressat*innen auch die realen Leser*innen des Dokuments treffen sollen; ihre Alltagswirklichkeit – nicht allein die abgelehnten Missionare²⁸ – wird in der Eingangsrede ethisch beleuchtet, und damit sind sie es, die selig gepriesen werden und zwar in einer Situation von Pression bis hin zur Lebensgefahr, blickt man auf die Schicksalsgemeinschaft mit den Propheten, die in Q 11,49–51 als Prophetentötung konkretisiert wird.

Wenn die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe durch Q 6,29.30 fortgesetzt wird, dann macht die Reihenfolge deutlich, dass diese grundlegende ethische Maxime Verzicht auf die eigene Unversehrtheit beinhaltet; der Begriff des Verzichts ist dabei allerdings irreführend, weil aus dem Verzichtenen ein aktiver Einsatz für den Anderen wird.

23 Gegen die gelegentlich geäußerten Vermutungen, dass die lukanischen Weherufe, Lk 6,24–26, einen Ursprung in Q haben, vgl. z.B. Fleddermann, Q, 281–83.

24 S.a. Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 23.

25 Vgl. Labahn, *Der Gekommene*, 277.

26 Wir folgen hier und im Folgenden weitgehend der Textpräsentation in der Studienausgabe Hoffmann, Heil (Hg.), *Die Spruchquelle Q*, die weitgehend dem Text in CEQ entspricht.

27 Vgl. z.B. Labahn, *Der Gekommene*, 326, mit Lit.

28 Z.B. Klein, *Lukasevangelium*, 253; kritisch mit anderer Zielrichtung zu Recht Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 25.

Zum Text der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe in Q 6,27–28.35c–d (Mt 5,44–45 par. Lk 6,27–28.35c–d)

Unmittelbar an die vierte Seligpreisung der Verfolgten (Q 6,22–23) schließt sich die Aufforderung Jesu zur Feindesliebe an, deren Q-Text kurz aus Mt 5,44–45 und Lk 6,27–28.35 zu begründen ist:

Mt 5,44–45

5,44 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν·
ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν

καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων
ὑμᾶς,

45 ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν
τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς,
ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ
πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς
καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους.

Lk 6,27–28.35

6,27 Ἀλλὰ ὑμῖν λέγω τοῖς ἀκούουσιν·
ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν,
καλῶς ποιεῖτε τοῖς μισοῦσιν ὑμᾶς,
28 εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμᾶς,
προσεύχεσθε περὶ τῶν ἐπηρεαζόντων
ὑμᾶς.

[...]

35 πλὴν ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν
καὶ ἀγαθοποιεῖτε καὶ δανίζετε μηδὲν
ἀπελπίζοντες·

καὶ ἔσται ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς,
καὶ ἔσεσθε υἱοὶ ὑψίστου,

ὅτι αὐτὸς χρηστός ἐστιν ἐπὶ τοὺς
ἀχαρίστους καὶ πονηροὺς.

Abgesehen von der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe selbst, deren vier Worte wörtlich übereinstimmen, ist die Rekonstruktion der Einheit ungewöhnlich schwierig und damit strittig. Schon der Textaufbau und Umfang der Einheit nötigen zur kritischen Diskussion, die in diesem Beitrag nur in einem begrenzten Maße nachgezeichnet werden kann.

Im Lukasevangelium formt die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe einen umfangreicheren Abschnitt als bei Matthäus; dies ist in der lukanischen Ring-Komposition begründet, bei der die Mahnung zur Feindesliebe verdoppelt wird (Lk 6,27.35).²⁹ So findet sich bei Lukas weiterer Stoff in die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe eingearbeitet (Lk 6,27c–28a).³⁰ Lk 6,29–36

29 S.a. Schulz, Q, 131.

30 Vgl. z.B. Hoffmann, „Tradition,“ 5–6; Radl, *Evangelium*, 394; Kosch, *Tora*, 290: Q^{Lk}. Nach Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 256, ist auch die Fürbitte für die Feinde eingearbeitet worden, so

(mit Ausnahme von V.33) bringt Q-Sprüche, deren Akoluthie weitgehend der Vorlage entsprechen.³¹ Verbunden mit Spuren der lukanischen Komposition ist es wahrscheinlich, dass Lukas den Kern der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe (6,27.28b) und seiner Motivierung (V.35c–d) in die Situation seiner Adressat*innen hinein konkretisiert hat,³² wobei auch Matthäus der Vorlage durch die Einfügung in seine Antithesen einen neuen Rahmen gegeben hat.³³

Anders als bei Matthäus und Lukas, die jeweils in ihrer sprachlichen Charakteristik eine metasprachliche Wendung zur Redeeinleitung geschaffen haben,³⁴ setzt Q die Seligpreisung direkt mit der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe fort, zu der parallel ein Imperativ zur Fürbitte auffordert, wobei strittig ist, ob das Gebet den Schmähenden (Lk 6,28b) oder den Verfolgern (Mt 5,44c) gilt. Das Partizip *διωκόντων* in Mt 5,44c verdient den Vorzug vor dem lukanischen *ἐπηρεαζόντων*.³⁵ So wird eine enge Verknüpfung mit der vorausgehenden Seligpreisung der Verfolgten geschaffen, die in Q den „Feind“ textintern definiert.³⁶

Mt 5,44–45 gibt die originale Textabfolge der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe in Q wieder. Die apodiktische Forderung zur Feindesliebe, die

dass Lk 6,27c–28b dem Evangelisten zugeschrieben werden. Anders z.B. Fleddermann, *Q*, 289; Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 346: „Wahrscheinlich hat Matth auf zwei Glieder gekürzt [...]“.

31 S.a. Kosch, *Tora*, 291–311; Lührmann, „Feinde“, 422; Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 345; Strecker, *Bergpredigt*, 90. Ähnlich Radl, *Evangelium*, 396–97, der allerdings 6,32–33 an die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe anschließen lässt, was dann durch die Sprüche über den Verzicht (6,29–30) fortgesetzt wird; anders z.B. Merklein, *Gottesherrschaft*, 222–23, der 6,29–30.31 als „Einfügung der lukanischen Redaktion“ begreift, wohingegen Mt 5,38–42; 7,21; 5,43–44 die ursprüngliche Reihenfolge wiedergäbe; ähnlich Klein, *Lukasevangelium*, 253, der das Lohnthema Lk 6,32–34 in Q nach der goldenen Regel und vor der Feindesliebe stehen sieht.

32 Vgl. z.B. Bovon, *Evangelium*, 316–17. Nach Van Unnik, „Motivierung“, 284–300, liegt hier in Anknüpfung und Abgrenzung eine scharfe Polemik gegen das hellenistisch-ethische Modell der Gegenseitigkeit in der sozialen Interaktion vor.

33 Z.B. Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium. I. Teil*, 188; Luz, *Evangelium I*, 306; Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 346; s.a. Kosch, *Tora*, 257–88.

34 Vgl. Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 188; zu Lk 6,27a: z.B. Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 4–5; Radl, *Evangelium*, 394; Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 256: es geht um die „Anschaulichkeit“; Zeller, *Mahn-sprüche*, 102. Anders z.B. Fleddermann, *Q*, 289; Merklein, *Gottesherrschaft*, 225; Schulz, *Q*, 127; Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 345–46.

35 Vgl. z.B. Bovon, *Evangelium*, 315. Anders z.B. Fleddermann, *Q*, 290; Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 5; Luz, *Matthäus I*, 306; Merklein, *Gottesherrschaft*, 225; Piper, *Love*, 56; Schulz, *Q*, 128. Für Schotttroff, „Gewaltverzicht“, 213 Anm. 77, ist die Differenz zwischen beiden Verben „unerheblich“. Mit Lührmann, „Feinde“, 416, bestimmt Kosch, *Tora*, 255–56. 290, *μισέω* aus Lk 6,22.27c als ursprünglich.

36 Daher spricht Becker, *Jesus*, 313, davon, dass „das Thema Feindesliebe speziell auf die von außen auf die Israelmission andrängende Verfolgung“ gehe.

sich in der Fürbitte für die Verfolger konkretisiert, bekommt mit ὅπως eingeleitet eine Motivation: γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν³⁷ (Mt 5,45), die der lukanischen Wendung καὶ ἔσεσθε υἱοὶ ὑψίστου vorzuziehen ist.³⁸ Wenn man in der weiteren Rekonstruktion weiterhin Matthäus folgen kann, so schließt sich der Zusage des Lohnes eine weisheitlich anmutende Begründung für die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe an. Die in der skeptischen Weisheit verzweifelt wahrgenommene Fürsorge Gottes gegen die Bösen begründet für Q die Feindesliebe positiv im Gottesbild. Der Schöpfergott erhält seine Schöpfung³⁹ ohne Berücksichtigung der ethischen Qualität seiner Geschöpfe (τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς⁴⁰); zu diesem Gedanken passt die Parallelformulierung aus Mt 5,45 καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους so gut, dass sie sich in ihrer Einheitlichkeit trotz der Bedeutung der Gerechtigkeitssemantik für die mt. Theologie bereits für Q reklamieren lässt.⁴¹

So ergibt sich folgende Textrekonstruktion für Q:

Q 6,27–28.35

27 ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν

28 καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς,

35 ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν,

ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς
καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους.

27 Liebet eure Feinde

28 und betet für die, die euch verfolgen.

37 Die Gottesbezeichnung τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς lässt sich dem mt. Erzähler zuweisen: z.B. Kosch, *Tora*, 256; Schulz, *Q*, 128; anders Kuhn, „Liebesgebot“.

38 Zur Analyse vgl. z.B. Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 6; Merklein, *Gottesherrschaft*, 226; Schulz, *Q*, 128; s.a. Strecker, *Bergpredigt*, 94; anders Fleddermann, *Q*, 290; Zeller, *Mahnsprüche*, 102.

39 Vgl. auch den für das Glaubensverständnis von Q zentralen Abschnitt über das Sorgen *Q* 12,22b–31.

40 Die Formulierung ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀχαρίστους καὶ πονηροὺς ist erneut der lk. Gestaltung zuzuschreiben; s.a. Schulz, *Q*, 128.

41 Vgl. z.B. Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 6; Schulz, *Q*, 128–29. Zweifel bleiben allerdings angebracht. Becker, *Jesus*, 312, rechnet allein den Gegensatz ungerecht / gerecht zur alten Tradition.

- 35 damit ihr Kinder eures Vaters im Himmel werdet,
 denn er lässt seine Sonne aufgehen über Bösen und Guten
 und er lässt regnen über Gerechte und Ungerechte.

Was bedeutet es den „Feind“ zu lieben?

Der Appell zur Feindesliebe steht betont am Anfang der Mahnung. Im Folgenden wird der Frage nach der Pragmatik des Gebots, aber auch der Veränderung in der Wahrnehmung des Feindes nachgegangen. Dass im Imperativ zur Liebe (ἀγαπάτε) gemahnt wird (V.27a), macht deutlich, dass es nicht um einen menschlichen Affekt, sondern um konkretes und damit aktives Handeln der Angesprochenen geht.⁴² Diese handlungsorientierte Interpretation wird durch die Fortsetzung unterstrichen, die erneut den in der vierten Seligpreisung eingeblendeten sozio-kulturellen Kontext gesellschaftlicher Pressionen aufnimmt: Betet für die, die euch *verfolgen* (6,28): vgl. Q 6,22 (μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἰπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν ἕνεκεν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου).⁴³ Die Wiederaufnahme der Bedrohung der Adressat*innen in der Mahnung zur Fürbitte kontextualisiert das Gebot der Feindesliebe mit den konkreten feindlichen Erfahrungen der Jesusnachfolger von Q,⁴⁴ die in mangelnder Anerkennung durch Ablehnung der Botschaft, aber wahrscheinlich auch sozialer Ausgrenzung bestehen und wohl körperliche Gefährdungen (vgl. Q 6,23c mit 11,49–51), aber auch juristische Folgen einschließen wird (Q 12,11).

Die Aufforderung zum fürbittenden Gebet (προσεύχεσθε ὑπέρ) gibt ein Beispiel der Feindesliebe, die sich für den Feind als Verfolger sogar vor Gott einsetzt. Vielleicht liegt in dieser Konkretisierung des apodiktischen Liebesgebotes bereits ein Moment der Abschwächung der ursprünglichen Forderung, da das Angebot eines konkreten Handlungsmodells die Spannbreite der Liebe eher einschränkt als öffnet. Die Konkretion mit dem Hinweis auf die Verfolgung liegt auf der literarischen Ebene der Q-Redaktion.

42 S.a. z.B. Schottroff, „Gewaltverzicht,“ 214.

43 Eine Verfolgung der in der Eingangsrede angesprochenen Jünger ist intratextuell unvorbereitet und zusammen mit der direkten Anrede in den Seligpreisungen so konkret, dass die Kommunikation die Textwelt öffnet und die Adressat*innen mit ihrer Alltagswelt in den Blick nimmt und anspricht. Ohne die Konstruktivität von Textwelten zu bestreiten, liegt in Q 6,22 und damit wahrscheinlich auch in Q 6,27 ein Fenster zur gedeuteten sozialen „Wirklichkeit“ der Adressat*innen vor.

44 Zur Diskussion, ob man von einer Gruppe sprechen kann, die als Adressat*innen des Q-Dokuments angesprochen werden können, vgl. Heil, „Q-Gruppe,“ 163–66; zum Bezug des Wortes auf die Gemeindesituation Wolter, „ἐχθρός / ἔχθρα,“ 236: „auf das Verhalten der Gemeinde zu ihren Feinden bezogen“.

Begründet wird die Mahnung mit ihrer Konkretion durch zwei relationale Formulierungen, die in engem Bezug stehen. Mit Hilfe der Familienmetapher werden diejenigen, die ihre Feinde lieben, als Kinder Gottes identifiziert (Q 6,35c: υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν).⁴⁵ Trotz mangelnder Anerkennung durch den Anderen gehören sie in die Familie des Gottes, der in der zweiten Wendung sein schöpfungserhaltendes Handeln sowohl bösen als auch guten Menschen zu Teil werden lässt (Q 6,35d). Seine Fürsorge gilt Freund *und* Feind, konkret πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς bzw. δίκαιους καὶ ἀδίκους,⁴⁶ als Teil seiner Schöpfung, was nicht ausschließt,⁴⁷ dass er von beiden Rechenschaft fordert (vgl. Q 6,37). Die Liebenden sind durch die ihre Gruppengrenzen und damit die Wahrnehmung des Anderen als Feind überschreitende Liebe als Kinder Gottes Teil der familiären Gemeinschaft mit ihm, so dass sie durch ihre anerkennende Liebe von Gott her Anerkennung als – metaphorisch gesprochen – Teil seiner Familie erhalten. Weil sie wie Gott die liebende Fürsorge nicht an den Grenzen der Gemeinschaft oder am eigenen Wohlergehen ausrichten und so wie Gott selbst in seiner Fürsorge für seine Schöpfung handeln (Q 6,35), erweisen sie sich seiner Gemeinschaft als würdig – der Akt der Feindesliebe ist ein Akt des Vertrauens in Gottes Vorbildliches Handeln, der somit als Ausdruck der Liebe zu Gott verstanden werden kann. Damit ist nicht allein in dem die Gruppengrenzen transzendierenden Liebenshandeln die ausgrenzende Funktion der Bezeichnung „Feind“ neu bestimmt, sondern die den Feind erhaltende Liebe wird zu einem „identity marker“ der Gruppe, die sich als Glieder der Gottesfamilie bestimmen. Nicht im Negativum der Abgrenzung durch die Konstruktion eines Feindbildes gründet die Gruppenidentität, sondern im eigenen pro-aktiven Handeln, das zugleich die Ingroup religiös und moralisch von anderen abhebt,⁴⁸ was den Aspekt der Anerkennung relativiert.

Folgt man der vorgestellten Rekonstruktion des Textaufbaus, so schließen sich in lockerer Folge weitere Anweisungen an (Q 6,29.30), die sprachlich

45 Von Theißen, „Gewaltverzicht“, 161, als „Imitationsmotiv“ bestimmt und im Rahmen der mt. Bergpredigt interpretiert, das von der eschatologischen Motivation in der lk. Formulierung καὶ ἔσεσθε υἱοὶ ὑψίστου zu unterscheiden ist.

46 Diese Generalisierung warnt davor, das Gebot der Feindesliebe in 6,29–38 auf die Situation der Pression zu beschränken, sondern weitet den Horizont auf eine generell feindlichen Akten ausgesetzte menschliche Existenz, die sowohl die Volksgenossen als auch die römische Besatzungsmacht mit den alltäglichen Bedrohungen thematisiert. Die Liebe hat sich in allen diesen genannten und ungenannten Fällen als selbstlose Liebe in der Anhängerschaft Jesu zu bewähren und sie hat nicht vor dem Feind halt zu machen, der in Gottes Fürsorge steht. Das Dokument Q bezieht Jesu Appell auf seine Krisensituation, ohne dass der grundlegende Charakter des Gebots aufgehoben wird.

47 Hierzu kurz Schlosser, „Gott“, 66–67.

48 Vgl. Theißen, „Gewaltverzicht“, 173, der dies als „Abhebungsfunktion“ bezeichnet.

nicht mehr so eng mit den Stichworten Verfolgen – Feind verbunden sind, aber den Appell zur Feindesliebe so erläutern, dass sie den Impuls zum Selbstschutz gegenüber dem Anderen hinterfragen. Der lukanische Erzähler hat mit feinem Gespür diese Anweisungen in seine Komposition zur Feindesliebe eingefügt, und auch im Kontext von Q wird der Blick von der Feindesliebe hin zur Duldung von feindlichen und zerstörerischen Akten ausgeweitet. Es geht um den Verzicht der Vergeltung (Ohrfeige), die juristische Auseinandersetzung um Schulden, den militärischen Frondienst, die Erfüllung einer Hilfsbitte und empathisches Leihwesen. Die goldene Regel (Q 6,31) und das Thema selbstloser Liebe (Q 6,32.34.36) legen einerseits die praktische Seite der Feindesliebe aus,⁴⁹ erweitern andererseits zugleich die ethische Idee generell auf das Wesen der pro-aktiven Liebe, die Feindes- und Nächstenliebe umschließt. Die Aufforderung zum Rechtsverzicht im Anschluss thematisiert angesichts der Richtkompetenz Gottes (Q 6,37–38 [μὴ κριθῆτε [...] κριθέσεσθε im *passivum divinum*]; vgl. 6,29.30⁵⁰) die Akzeptanz Gottes als Instanz letzter Rechenschaft, die durch den eigenen Rechtsverzicht anerkannt wird – so kommt die Liebe zu Gott in einer kritischen Weise in den Fokus des Kontextes der Feindesliebe, da die Akzeptanz Gottes als Richter die Erwartung eines gerechten und damit dem jeweiligen guten und bösen Handeln (des Feindes) entsprechenden Gerichts beinhaltet.⁵¹

Wie die Analyse des literarischen Kontextes zeigt, ist die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe folglich kein rhetorisches Konstrukt oder utopisches Modell, sondern *integraler Bestandteil der ethischen Orientierung von Q*. Mit den in Q 6,22 genannten Beispielen wird auf eine bedrohte Alltagswirklichkeit der Adressat*innen hingezielt.⁵² Zugleich nimmt die Mahnung eine andersartige Position im Ehre-Schande-Katalog der antiken Gesellschaft ein, die den Feind anders behandelt, als es im Kontext etablierter Verhaltensnormen gerechtfertigt ist.⁵³ Um geliebt zu werden, muss der Feind nicht erst Freund werden, sondern ihm wird in seinem Anderssein Zuwendung zu Teil.

49 Fleddermann, Q, 283–84, fasst die Sprüche von Q 6,29–36 unter der Überschrift „Love“ zusammen, um daran die Einheit „Judgment“ (Q 6,37a.38c.41–45) als neuen Abschnitt anzuschließen.

50 Die Verbindung der beiden Einheiten liegt in der Rekonstruktion von Q 6,29c; darf man mit Mt 5,40 καὶ τῷ ἐχθρῷ σου κριθῆναι [...] lesen (so auch Fleddermann, *ibid.*, 286. 293), dann ist die Verbindung der beiden Abschnitte Q 6,29.30 und 6,37–38 durch die Verwendung des Verbs κρίνω semantisch eng begründet.

51 S.a. Piper, „Language“, 66.

52 Vgl. Schnelle, *100 Jahre des Christentums*, 175.

53 S.a. Bjorndahl, „Honor Map“, 65 (ohne seine Gesamtthese, unterschiedliche Konzepte des honor-and-shame Modells unterschiedlichen Q-Schichten zuzuordnen, aufzunehmen).

Ein „Feind“ ist ein Feind, böse und ungerecht, und bleibt dennoch Geschöpf Gottes und Mit-Mensch

Haben wir in einem ersten Schritt *die Aufforderung zur Liebe* im literarischen Kontext in ihrer Bedeutung für die Wahrnehmung „Feind“ und seine Funktion für die Identitätsbildung untersucht, so wenden wir uns nunmehr der Betrachtung des „Feindes“ durch die Erzähler von Q zu. Der Begriff begegnet – zumindest in der Rekonstruktion, die bei Christoph Heil und Paul Hoffmann zugrunde gelegt ist, – nur einmal im Text von Q. Daher muss die Kontextualisierung seine Bedeutung und Funktion für die Pragmatik des Dokuments ergeben.

So umstritten die Frage nach aktiv erlebter Verfolgung der Adressat*innen von Q ist, so deutlich spiegelt sich die Wahrnehmung gesellschaftlicher Marginalisierung im Konzept der Sinnbildung von Q.⁵⁴ In dieser Wahrnehmung von Ausgrenzung ist die Konstruktion von Feindbildern in der antiken Literatur als Lösungsmodell plausibel.⁵⁵ Wie in gängigen Feindbildern üblich wird nicht auf negative Wertungen verzichtet; der Feind wird in seinem gefährdenden Tun wahrgenommen und als Gefahr durch die Stigmatisierung als „böse“ und „ungerecht“ negativ qualifiziert. Die allgemeinen moralischen Konnotationen *πονηρός* und *ἄδικος*, die sich in der Begründung zur Mahnung finden (Q 6,35d), gehören zur Agenda der Konstruktion von Feindbildern hinzu. Vor diesem Kontext zeigt sich, dass die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe in Q *den Feind als einen die eigene soziale, aber wohl auch körperliche und juristische Integrität in Frage stellenden Anderen wahrnimmt*⁵⁶ mit konkreten Gefahren und Problemstellungen in dem Alltag der Jesus-Anhänger*innen; angesichts des engen durch das Verb *δῶχω* gebildeten Rahmens ist der *ἐχθρός* derjenige, der sich gegen die Jesuanhänger*innen und ihre Verkündigung wendet und ihre Existenz gefährdet.⁵⁷

54 Vgl. Labahn, „Sinn,“ 131–73; s.a. ders., *Der Gekommene*, 578–87; Piper, „Language,“ 58, 60. Dabei muss die Frage teilweise unbeantwortet bleiben, wie einschneidend die Gefahren durch die gesellschaftlichen Pressionen waren; die Beantwortung hängt an Fragen der zeitlichen und geographischen Verortung von Q wie auch an der Beurteilung des konstruktiven Charakters des Textes.

55 S.a. Schreiber, „Häresie,“ 197.

56 S.a. Schottroff, „Gewaltverzicht,“ 216.

57 Auf das Verkündigungswirken bezogen bei Klein, *Lukasevangelium*, 254. Zu den Bedrohungserfahrungen kann auch die politische Gesamtsituation gerechnet werden, aber aufgrund anderer Rekonstruktion des Q-Textes ist m.E. das semantische Leitwort für die Interpretation der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe *δῶχω*, wobei sich das Gebot nicht primär auf die Besatzungssituation beziehen lässt; zu Hoffmann, „Tradition,“ 26–30. Schulz, Q, 133, spricht vom religiösen Feind und

Die Figur des „Feindes“ nimmt Erfahrungen der Adressat*innen des Dokumentes auf. Wenngleich der Begriff „Feind“ auf die Mahnung zur Feindesliebe beschränkt ist,⁵⁸ so findet sich eine weitergehende und generalisierende Deutung der Situation von Ausgrenzung in der Sinngebung von Q, die die Frustration vergeblicher Verkündigung im Sinne des gemeinsamen Erbes alttestamentlich-jüdischer Tradition kompensiert.⁵⁹ Mit Hilfe des deuteronomistischen Motivs vom gewaltsamen Prophetengeschick⁶⁰ wird im Anschluss an die Einleitungsrede Jesu „diese Generation“ (ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη: Q 7,31; 11,29.30; 11,31.32; 11,50–51)⁶¹ als Erzählcharakter eingeführt. „Diese Generation“ wird intratextuell zur entscheidenden Figur für die Opposition gegen Jesus als den Menschensohn. Darin ist diese textuelle Figur anschlussfähig für die Adressat*innen und ihre Situation, so dass auch ihre Verfolgung im Horizont als Ausdruck der deuteronomistisch inspirierten Geschichtsschau gedeutet wird.⁶² „Diese Generation“ wird zu einer Art „Feindbild“, die zwar nie direkt mit dem Begriff „Feind“ verbunden wird, aber als Deutungselement vergeblicher Verkündigung Ablehnung und Ausgrenzung verbindet. Auch die Figur „diese Generation“ könnte man als dialogisch, weil vom gemeinsamen Erbe geprägt, bezeichnen, wenngleich diese literarische Figur nicht mit der Aufforderung zur Liebe verbunden ist.

Auf dem Hintergrund von Q 6,22–35d. ist der „Feind“ eine Literalisierung einer konkreten Größe der sozialen Interaktion. Soweit verbleibt die Wahrnehmung des Anderen in Strategien der Selbstsicherung der Gruppe in einer Krisensituation verhaftet – man könnte formulieren: in einem Kampf um Anerkennung –, die diese Herausforderung durch Verschriftlichung der Jesuserinnerung zu bewältigen versucht und sich hierzu auch der Mahnung zur Feindesliebe bedient. Andererseits bricht diese Selbstversicherung der Identitätskonstruktion nicht die Interaktion mit dem Anderen durch

verweist auf die Situation der „von Feindschaft und Hass zerrissenen und sich bekämpfenden religiösen Gruppen im palästinischen Spätjudentum“. Nicht nur, dass eine solche Pauschalisierung ein Zerrbild entstehen lässt, vielmehr geht es in der Komposition von Q um konkrete soziale Relationen.

58 In Q 12,53 hat die Rekonstruktion wohl eher Lk 12,53 denn die matthäische Formulierung καὶ ἔχθροὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οἱ οἰκιστοὶ αὐτοῦ (Mt 10,36) vorzuziehen. Lk 19,27 ist wie Mt 25,30 ein redaktioneller Abschluss des Gleichnisses vom anvertrauten Geld (Q 19,12–26), und daher ist die Wendung τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μου τούτους τοὺς μὴ θελήσαντάς με βασιλεῦσαι ἐπ’ αὐτούς nicht für Q zu reklamieren; vgl. z.B. Heil, „Parabel vom anvertrauten Geld?“, 356.

59 Hierzu s.a. Labahn, „Königin“, bes. 104–6.

60 Vgl. noch immer Steck, *Israel*.

61 Vgl. hierzu z.B. die Analysen bei Labahn, *Der Gekommene*, 412–24.

62 Z.B. Tiwald, „Gott“, 70.

Abgrenzung und dynamisierende Verfeindung ab, sondern die Bezeichnung des Anderen als Feind wird Teil einer Neu-Bestimmung der Identität durch die Kreativität der Liebe – der Feind wird trotz seiner Andersartigkeit als Geschöpf Gottes anerkannt und Teil einer weitergehenden positiven sozialen Interaktion. Aus der Anerkennung des Anderen wird Anerkennung des gefährdeten Selbst und damit Sicherung der eigenen Identität, die durchaus elitäre Züge trägt.⁶³

Duldung, „Anerkennung“, Toleranz? Pragmatik und Identitätsbildung im Appell zur Feindesliebe in Q

Wie bereits in beiden vorangehenden Abschnitten gezeigt, wird die Konstruktion eines Feindbildes zur Identitätsbildung durch die Aufforderung zur „pro-aktiven“ Liebe flankiert und interpretiert. Zugleich erweitert die Begründungsmatrix in Q 6,35 den Horizont der Identitätsbildung von einer Abgrenzungsstrategie zu einem positiv begründeten Identitätsmodell der Zugehörigkeit zur Familie Gottes, die den Feind als Teil des schöpfungserhaltenden Werks Gottes und damit als Mit-Mensch anerkennt. Im Gegensatz zur Abgrenzung dynamisierenden Aufrichtung eines Feindbildes steht die Mahnung zur Liebe. Sie konkretisiert sich in der Fürbitte für die Verfolger. Liebe soll also aktiv erfolgen und sich *für* den Anderen, den Feind, einsetzen. Liebe ist nach Q damit mehr als ein tolerierendes Erdulden eines möglicherweise Schaden zufügenden Feindes. Das Gebot der Feindesliebe enthält die Bereitschaft, das wenige Eigene für den Anderen einzusetzen, auch wenn dieser im Unrecht ist oder durch dessen Handeln die eigene Existenz bedroht wird. Ein solchermaßen qualifiziertes, fürsorgliches Handeln ist mit dem Begriff „pro-aktiv“ gemeint und bedenkt den anderen mit „a positive, normative status that does not have to be based on agreement or shared values“.⁶⁴

Als Motivation zu diesem Handeln spricht Q den so Liebenden die Kinderschaft Gottes zu (γέννησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς; 6,28), weil sie nach dem Vorbild des fürsorgenden Gottes handeln.⁶⁵ Damit wird der Begriff

63 In diesem Konzept der Identitätsbildung geht es um weit mehr als um „Selbstüberwindung“ (so Bultmann, *Jesus*, 79, in seiner Interpretation des Gebots der Feindesliebe bei Jesus), sondern tatsächlich um das Gegenüber als bleibender Bestandteil gesellschaftlicher und religiöser Interaktion.

64 Lehtipuu, „Male“, 254, als Kennzeichnung von Anerkennungstheorien im Verhältnis zu Toleranzmodellen. Lehtipuu bezieht sich auf Kahlos, Koskinen and Palmén, „Introduction“, 1–6.

65 S.a. Strecker, *Bergpredigt*, 94.

des „Feindes“ um einen weiteren Aspekt erweitert, dessen Bedeutung nicht zu unterschätzen ist. Zwar entspricht es der Generierung von Feindbildern, dass der Feind im Gegensatz zum eigenen Selbst als *πονηρός* und *ἄδικος* gekennzeichnet ist, aber als Gegenstand des Handelns des fürsorgenden, seine Schöpfung durch Sonnenschein und Regen erhaltenden Gottes steht der böse und ungerechte Feind auf einer Ebene mit den guten und gerechten Kindern Gottes; er ist ein wie sie auf Gottes Fürsorge angewiesenes Geschöpf und daher als Mensch angesprochen. Allerdings, und dies scheint erst am Ende des literarischen Kontexts durch, muss er als böser und ungerechter Mensch vor diesem fürsorgenden Gott Rechenschaft abgeben – wie alle anderen Menschen auch (vgl. 6,37–38). Ohne eigene positive Vorleistung wird der Feind nicht nur toleriert, sondern als Geschöpf Gottes wird ihm deshalb – wie durch Gott selbst – Gutes getan. Er ist damit auch ein Geschöpf, das für sich und sein Handeln verantwortlich ist, worin zugleich eine Grenze der Liebe als Anerkennung gezogen ist – als Feind gehört der Andere für sein eigenes Tun verantwortlich zum Bösen und ist dem Urteil des richtenden Gottes unterworfen. Verbleibt der Feind in seinem lebensfeindlichen und damit Gottes schöpfungsbewahrendem Handeln zuwiderlaufenden Wirken, so ist er im Gericht dem Vernichtungsurteil ausgesetzt, an dem nach Q auch die Verfolgten teilhaben (Q 20,30).⁶⁶ Rechenschaft über das eigene Handeln ist jedoch keine exklusive Forderung an den Anderen, sondern ein universelles Konzept, dem sich auch die Jesusanhänger*innen selbst zu stellen haben.

Das pragmatische Konzept erinnert an einen in der antiken Philosophie belegten Gedanken, der aus dem Feind einen Verbündeten und Freund zu machen sucht.⁶⁷ Das Liebesgebot in Q hält die Kommunikation mit dem feindlich handelnden Anderen offen. Ziel ist es, den völligen Sprachverlust in einer bedrohten Konversationssituation zu verhindern,⁶⁸ indem

66 Damit findet eine beachtenswerte Umwandlung von Opfern zu Handelnden statt; zum Verständnis s.a. Labahn, *Der Gekommene*, 410–11.

67 Z.B. Plut Mor 218a: „Jemand lobte die Kleomenes berichtete Maxime, der als er gefragt wurde, was ein guter König tun müsse, sagte: Den Freunden Gutes tun, den Feinden Böses tun. Da antwortete er: Wieviel besser ist es, Freund, den Freunden Gutes zu tun, die Feinde aber zu Freunden zu machen.“ (Übers.: Schnelle, in: Schnelle/Lang, *Neuer Wettstein*, 507)

68 Vgl. bes. Bovon, *Evangelium*, 319–20: „Im Akt der Feindesliebe handelt der Christ für die Zukunft seiner Gegner. Jesus wie die Träger der Überlieferung und die Evangelisten hoffen, dass die neue Einstellung den Feinden die Gelegenheit und die Möglichkeit geben wird, selbst aus ihrer Feindschaft herauszutreten. In der Haltung der Christen entdeckt der Feind ein Gegenüber, wo er einen Gegner erwartete. Wenn er diese neue Situation anerkennt, darf man eine neue Einstellung zu sich selbst, zu seinen Mitmenschen und zu Gott erhoffen.“ S.a. Stegemann, *Jesus*, 294; „Der kommunikative Sinn dieser Forderung ist offenbar der, *Gemeinschaft wiederherzustellen*,

der „Feind“ durch seine Anerkennung als Geschöpf Gottes Aufgabe einer pro-aktiven Liebe wird.⁶⁹ Es wird eine mentale Landkarte entworfen, die sich einerseits der Bestimmung von Gruppenzugehörigkeit in der Identitätsbildung angesichts mangelnder Anerkennung stellt. Sie sucht aber andererseits die Gruppengrenzen durchlässig zu halten, um so dialogfähig zu bleiben.⁷⁰

Giovanni Bazzana hat in seiner klugen und herausfordernden Studie zur politischen Theologie der Schreiber des Q-Dokuments nach der sozialen Identitätskonstruktion dieser Gruppe gefragt, die auf verschiedenen Ebenen der rural-dörflichen Gesellschaft interagieren muss. Das Modell einer „discrepant identity“⁷¹ entspricht seiner Analyse folgend der notwendigen sozialen Interaktion aufgrund der bürokratischen Aufgabenstellung der Dorfschreiber.⁷² Die Gruppe ist vor die Aufgabe gestellt, mit unterschiedlichen gesellschaftlichen Schichten und Personen konstruktiv zu interagieren und dabei zielgerichtet Lösungsmodelle zu erarbeiten und darin unterschiedliche soziale Funktionen zu applizieren. Dies ist nicht allein kulturgeschichtlich als Existenz zwischen den Herodianern und der römischen Herrschaft moduliert, sondern beinhaltet die Interaktion mit den Bewohner*innen ihrer jeweiligen Dörfer. Dies dürfte die sozialen Bedingungen beschreiben, in denen das Gebot der Feindesliebe als Kommunikationsoffenheit seine Plausibilität gewinnt, indem es konfliktentschärfend aktive Gesprächsfähigkeit in unterschiedlichen gesellschaftlichen Situationen ermöglicht und zugleich eine eigene, in der Gotteskindschaft fundierte elitäre Identität als Jesunachfolgernde generiert.

man könnte auch sagen: es geht um die Wiederanbindung des sozialen Feindes an die Gruppe“. Nach Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 345, geht es um „Feindschaft um des Glaubens wegen.“

69 Diese Pointe scheint mir in den bedenkenwerten Überlegungen zum Ethos von Q 6,27–36 bei Douglas, „Love Your Enemies“, 124–25, nicht beachtet. Die Motivation zur Feindesliebe in Q 6,35c–d versteht er als „criticism of limited good“, wobei die Opposition zwischen Gut und Böse nicht im Sinne der gleichgewichteten Güte Gottes, sondern im Sinne einer Steigerung und damit Selbstversicherung interpretiert wird; daraus ergibt sich durchaus unseren Überlegungen nahestehend: „The purpose of the pericope was not to strengthen group boundaries, but its converses point toward the use of the reference to God as Father for purposes of demarcation.“

70 S.a. die Überlegungen bei Labahn, „Sinn“, 161–70.

71 Vgl. Mattingly, *Imperialism*, 203–45; hier geht es um die Wahrnehmung unterschiedlicher kultureller Identitäten in verschiedenen Situationen.

72 Bazzana, *Kingdom*, 154: „The text of Q itself reveals the complex ways in which its authors were able to deploy elements of the Jewish tradition alongside traits of the Hellenistic administrative and political terminology and ideology in order to advance their own agenda and imaginative construction of the future.“ Vgl. *ibid.*, 155–62.

Der Appell zur Feindesliebe ist in Q als Reaktion auf sozialen Druck und Pressionen formuliert. Sie ist damit Teil der Bemühungen um soziale Anerkennung, die durch selbsttätige Anerkennung generiert werden soll. Als integrierende Identitätskonstruktion stellt sie eine diffizile auf unterschiedliche Kommunikationssituationen applizierbare Identitätskonkretion dar; die Identifikation der Verfolger als Feinde entspricht dem Versuch, nicht die Interaktionsfähigkeit und damit durch Eskalation der Situation die eigene Existenz zu verlieren, sondern durch pro-aktives und anerkennendes Handeln die Existenz und Interaktion zu bewahren. So wird die Gefahr vermieden, durch Aufrichtung eines aggressiven Feindbildes mit entsprechenden Verhaltensmustern in einen dynamisch verschärfenden Konflikt zu geraten. Die Existenz des Anderen in seiner Gefährlichkeit wird in ein lebenserhaltendes Tun transferiert. Motivation und Begründung hierfür liegen im Handeln Gottes, an dessen Fürsorge der Feind partizipiert, wie er menschliche Proexistenz und Fürsorge verdient. Diese Pragmatik ist mehr als eine *Er-Duldung* vor dem Hintergrund von Toleranzmodellen und verdient als Form voraussetzungsfreier Anerkennung Anderer Beachtung.

Die Wahrnehmung des Feindes in der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe bei Jesus

Sucht man nach einem kritischen Zentrum der ethischen Aussagen Jesu im Rahmen seiner Gottesreichsverkündigung, so beansprucht das Doppelgebot der Liebe zu Gott und zum Nächsten⁷³ die zentrale Stellung.⁷⁴ Auffällig, provozierend und zum Widerspruch reizend verhält sich dazu Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe, das den Gedanken von Gottes- und Nächstenliebe in besonderer Weise fortschreibt und akzentuiert. Auch wenn der exakte Wortlaut⁷⁵ und der konkrete Sitz im Leben der Verkündigung Jesu in der mündlichen Erinnerungsspur und durch die Verschriftlichung verloren gegangen sind, fügt sich die Paradoxie von der Liebe zu dem, der diese

73 Vgl. hierzu z.B. Nissen, *Gott*; zum Liebesgebot bei Jesus vgl. z.B. die Literaturliste Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 577–80.

74 Z.B. Schnelle, *Theologie*, 107.

75 Die Aufforderung ist in unterschiedlicher Fassung auch außerhalb der neutestamentlichen Evangelien frühchristlich überliefert: Did 1,3; Justin Apol 1,15,9; Athenagoras Suppl. 11,1; Theophilus Ad Autol 3,14; strittig ist dabei, ob es sich um selbstständige Überlieferungen handelt (z.B. Betz, *Sermon*, 297) oder um Wirkungsgeschichte der Evangelienüberlieferung (z.B. Becker, *Jesus*, 314; s.a. Kuhn, „Liebesgebot“, 196–98).

Liebe am wenigsten verdient, dem Feind, sprachlich sowohl in die durch die Texte der Evangelien erkennbaren Paradoxien der Jesusverkündigung⁷⁶ wie seinen Gottesgedanken, seine weisheitliche Argumentationsfiguren⁷⁷ und sein Liebesgebot ein, so dass die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe⁷⁸ zum Kernbestand der Jesuserinnerung zu rechnen ist.⁷⁹

Zu Gestalt und Inhalt des Gebots der Feindesliebe in der Reichgottesverkündigung Jesu

Bei der Analyse der Jesusverkündigung kann der Q-(Kon-)Text nicht naiv mit der Jesusverkündigung gleichgesetzt werden. Zu deutlich ist der literarische Kontext Ergebnis eines Redaktionsprozesses und zugleich auf die Situation der Q-Gruppe bezogen. Zudem bleibt die mündliche Vorgeschichte – noch dazu auf Basis eines lediglich rekonstruierten Textes – ein analytisches Abenteuer, da die Jesuserinnerung im neuen Schriftmedium nur ein „Abdruck“ des gesprochenen Wortes sein kann, das sich einem bewahrenden, aber auch aktualisierenden Überlieferungsprozess verdankt. Trotz dieser stark diskontinuierlichen Abläufe bleibt die historische re-konstruierende Forschung erlaubt; damit sind die Fragen zu stellen, wie sich die apodiktische Forderung der Feindesliebe in ein plausibles Verständnis der Reichgottesverkündigung durch Jesus einfügen lässt und welche Wahrnehmung des Anderen der paradoxen Mahnung zur Liebe des unliebsamen Feindes zu entnehmen ist.

76 So Heil, „Nachfolge Jesu,“ 80.

77 S.a. z.B. Becker, *Jesus*, 316–17; s.a. Schnelle, *Theologie*, 100–3.

78 Auch wenn verschiedentlich die direkte und unbedingte Forderung zur Feindesliebe als einer in dieser Pointierung nur bei Jesus zu findenden ethischen Herausforderung in Frage gestellt wird, bleibt die Annahme einer der Verkündigung Jesu zuzuschreibenden Mahnung – ungeachtet dessen, dass sich sprachliche und inhaltliche Parallelen der Aufforderung Jesu zur Feindesliebe in religiösen und philosophischen Konzepten seiner Mitwelt finden – weitgehend unbestritten; vgl. z.B. Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 256, der ein differenziertes Urteil fordert, in dem die Forderung, die Feinde zu hassen, als ein beachtliches Kontinuum der antiken Enzyklopädie auffällt (vgl. z.B. Jos Ant 7,254; 1QS 1,9–10), zu der die synoptische Begrifflichkeit deutlich im Kontrast steht (Wolter, *ibid.*; s.a. Kuhn, „Liebesgebot,“ 224). Zu den motivlichen Analogien zum Appell der Feindesliebe vgl. das Material bei Schnelle / Lang, *Wettstein*, 484–522, zu Mt 5,44, und bei Kuhn, *aaO.*, 225–26.)

79 Zur Authentizität der Forderung der Feindesliebe in der Reichgottesverkündigung Jesu vgl. aus der umfangreichen Literatur z.B. Becker, *Jesus*, 313–14; Betz, *The Sermon*, 309; Klassen, „Authenticity“; Kuhn, „Liebesgebot,“ 222–23; Lührmann, „Feinde,“ 413; Luz, *Matthäus I*, 307; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 528–51; Merklein, *Gottesherrschaft*, 229–31; Piper, *Love*, 56; Wischmeyer, *Liebe*, 48–51. Dagegen z.B. Sauer, „Erwägungen,“

Im Q-Text lässt sich die generalisierende Forderung der Liebe gegenüber dem Feind als Kern erkennen: *Liebet eure Feinde*,⁸⁰ um den herum sich eine Begründung und eine situative Verortung gebildet haben. Da der literarische Kontext insbesondere dem Thema der Verfolgung der Pragmatik des Dokuments verpflichtet ist, lässt sich über weitergehende Gedanken, Begründungen und Exemplifikationen in der Kommunikationssituation Jesu methodisch nur spekulieren. Dennoch kann die Begründung, die nicht von der Erhaltung des Feindes, sondern von „gut“ und „böse“ spricht, als Jesuserinnerung verstanden werden und den gedanklichen Kontext für das Feindesgebot bilden, ohne notwendigerweise ursprünglich mit der Aufforderung selbst verbunden gewesen zu sein.⁸¹

In der apodiktischen Forderung Jesu treffen in der Kennzeichnung und der Handlungsaufforderung zwei gegensätzliche Wahrnehmungen des „Anderen“ aufeinander.⁸² Der Andere wird einerseits als Feind angesprochen und andererseits als Ziel aktiver Liebe anerkannt. Seiner Bezeichnung als „Feind“, den man als Gefahr für das eigene Leben üblicherweise nicht liebt, steht das „Lieben“ entgegen. Durch die Mahnung zur Liebe wird der Feind als Mit-Mensch in die Liebesethik integriert.

Der „Feind“ in der Wirklichkeitsgestaltung der Reichgottesverkündigung Jesu

Die Toleranzkonzepte überschreitende „Anerkennung“ des andere gefährdenden Feindes in der Aufforderung zur Liebe ist mit ihrer apodiktischen Rhetorik im Kontext der Gottesreichsverkündigung Jesu zu verstehen. Allerdings ist die Figur des Feindes soziologisch schwierig zu bestimmen. Sicher greifbar ist der Begriff „Feind“ in der Jesusverkündigung nur in der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe.⁸³ Da sich die Bezeichnung des Anderen als Feind keiner konkreten soziologisch analysierbaren Konfrontation der

80 Vgl. z.B. Lührmann, „Feinde“, 425–26; zustimmend Wolter, „ἐχθρός/ἐχθρα“, 236.

81 Anders z.B. Kuhn, „Liebesgebot“, 224.

82 Angesichts der oben angestellten Überlegungen zur Re-Konstruktion der Jesusverkündigung wird im Folgenden auf den Versuch verzichtet, die ursprüngliche Botschaft sprachlich zu bestimmen.

83 Die in der exegetischen Literatur meist als Gegner bezeichneten Diskussionspartner Jesu werden, soweit erkennbar, nicht als Feinde deklariert – ebenso wenig lässt sich am vorhandenen Überlieferungsbestand nachweisen, dass Menschen, die die Gottesreichsverkündigung ablehnen, mit diesem Begriff bedacht werden (so Klein, *Lukasevangelium*, 254; s.a. Kosch, *Tora*, 384). Auch dort, wo die römische Herrschaft in den Blick kommt, fehlt, soweit es die literarischen Quellen erkennen lassen, die Bezeichnung „Feind“. Zur marginalen Verwendung des Feindes in der Verkündigung Jesu z.B. Becker, *Jesus*, 316.

vita Jesu zurechnen lässt,⁸⁴ kann nicht von einer konfrontationsbezogenen Konstruktion eines Feindbildes gesprochen werden. Die Bezeichnung des Anderen als Feind dient in der Mahnung außerdem keiner aktiven Aufrichtung von Gruppengrenzen oder der Abgrenzung des sich ausdehnenden Gottesreiches, das sich durch apokalyptische Bedrängnisse hindurch (vgl. Lk 19,43) gegen satanische Widerstände durchsetzt und deren Negativherrschaft beendet; dieses Bildprogramm ist nicht durch die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe eingespielt.

Somit ist es eher die existentielle Erfahrung von Feindschaft, die in die ethische Argumentation Jesu aufgenommen wird. Die Einladung zur Feindesliebe ist rezeptionsoffen und durch je eigene Erfahrungen der Adressat*innen zu füllen. Die Gestalt des Feindes wird zum Teil des Kommunikationsgeschehens zwischen dem Prediger des Gottesreiches und den von ihm Angesprochenen. Ihre Erfahrung von Feindschaft im Alltagsleben und ihre Wahrnehmung des Anderen als Feind werden in die Botschaft des nahe kommenden Gottes und seines Reiches hineingeholt und von dieser Wirklichkeitswahrnehmung her neu entfaltet. Formen von Lebensbeschränkung und das vom Überlebenskampf geprägte Leben der Landbevölkerung Galiläas⁸⁵ mit der Machtlosigkeit des Einzelnen stehen im Fokus;⁸⁶ hierzu gehören die römische Besatzungsmacht und der politische jüdische Widerstand.⁸⁷

84 Anders Wolter, „ἐχθρός/ἐχθρά“, 236, der die Unterweisung der mit Jesus verkündigenden Wandercharismatiker als Adressat*innen versteht und daher „die Feinde der Jesusleute“ angesprochen sieht (s.a. Theißen, „Gewaltverzicht“, 186–91, der in dem von Jesus initiierten Wandercharismatentum den plausiblen soziologischen Ort für die Feindesliebe findet – er bezieht sich ausdrücklich auf Q: der von Jesu Forderung inspirierte Wandercharismatiker ist frei, seinen Feind stellvertretend für die lokalen Gemeinden zu lieben. „Er ist wirklich frei. Er kann den Ort seiner Niederlage und Demütigung verlassen“ [ibid., 191]). Für die Begrenzung sprechen die Anwendung des Gebots in Q und die in den Aussendungsworten erkennbare Situation der Abweisung. Allerdings lässt Q zugleich einen Kontext ethischer Aussagen Jesu erkennen, der nicht auf einen engen Personenkreis allein zu beschränken ist, sondern als Herausforderung für alle die bestimmt ist, die sich durch die Verkündigung des Gottesreiches leiten lassen (für Q ähnlich Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 25). Hinsichtlich der jesuanischen Forderung sieht Theißen, ibid., 192–95, im gewaltfreien Widerstand der Juden gegen die Aufstellung der Kaiserbilder durch Pilatus (26 n.Chr.; Jos Ant 18,55–59; Bell. 2,169–74) das geistesgeschichtliche Milieu für Jesu Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe bereitet, erkennt gleichwohl an, dass Jesu Forderung grundlegender ist, was sie nach Theißen aktualisierbarer macht.

85 Zur sozialen Situation in Galiläa zur Zeit Jesu vgl. z.B. Bösen, *Galiläa*; Freyne, *Galilee*, 99–255; zu den zahlreichen existenzgefährdenden Konflikten z.B. Schnelle, *100 Jahre*, 175–77.

86 Dies soll nicht als Beschränkung der Wahrnehmung des Anderen auf den „dem Einzelnen je und je begegnenden Feind“ bezogen werden (so Zeller, *Mahnprüche*, 107), als ob der religiös-politische Bereich der Lebenserfahrung des Einzelnen entzogen wäre.

87 Zu dieser umfassenden Deutung des „Feindes“ vgl. z.B. Merklein, *Gottesherrschaft*, 235; Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 51; Hübner, *Gesetz*, 106–7; Kuhn, „Liebesgebot“, 227; Strecker, *Bergpredigt*,

Das Gottesbild Jesu und die Thematik der Liebe zu Gott und dem Nächsten werden zur Verstehensgrundlage für die Erfahrung von Feindschaft gemacht. Die Bedrohung, die von diesem Anderen ausgeht, wird nicht bestritten, sondern sie bleibt Teil seiner Bestimmung als Feind. Die kreative Applizierung der Mahnung durch die Adressat*innen auf ihr Alltagsleben im Horizont der neuen Wirklichkeit⁸⁸ des ankommenden Gottesreichs⁸⁹ macht sie jedoch zu kreativen Künstlern, die unabhängig von der Gefahr als Liebende mit der Anerkennung des Anderen *die Wirklichkeit des Reiches in ihrem Leben wahr machen*.⁹⁰

Das bedeutet im Blick auf die Diskussion um Toleranz und „Anerkennung“, dass die apodiktisch knappe Formulierung nichts an der sozialen Bestimmung des Anderen als Feind ändert. Allerdings wird der Feindes als Feind in der Mahnung zur Liebe als Mit-Mensch anerkannt.⁹¹ Dabei wird der Feind in Toleranzkonzepte überschreitender „Anerkennung“ ohne Wertediskussion der Liebe aufgegeben, wobei, wie noch zu zeigen ist, die Anerkennung des Feindes in der Liebe ihm nicht die Verantwortung für sein „feindliches Tun“ nimmt. So wird zugleich den „Opfern“ feindlichen Handelns Anerkennung erweisen.

Die Feindesliebe als Teil der Ethik des Gottesreichs

Welche Pragmatik kommt der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe vor diesem offenen Hintergrund für die ethischen Aussagen Jesu zu? Die Antwort ist schwierig, da die mit Vorbehalt rekonstruierbare Jesusverkündigung keinen auf Vollständigkeit angelegten ethischen Sinnentwurf bietet. Aus den überlieferten Jesuserinnerungen lässt sich zwar ein beachtliches Bild

91; s.a. Wischmeyer, *Liebe*, 50; Schlosser, „Gott“, 75–76. Die These, dass das Gebot der Feindesliebe gegen politischen Widerstand gerichtet ist (Seitz, „Love your Enemies“, nachdem „Jesus may have met and countered [...] an expression of religious and patriotic fanaticism“, *ibid.*, 51), ist vor dem Kontext der erkennbaren Reichgottesverkündigung zu eng.

88 Zum Diskurs um die „Wirklichkeit“ vgl. jetzt z.B. Gabriel/Krüger, *Wirklichkeit*.

89 Vgl. Labahn, „Wirklichkeit“, 60–65.

90 *Ibid.*, 63. Zur Theologie des Gottesreichs als zentralem Deutungshorizont der Feindesliebe vgl. mit anderen Entfaltungen z.B. Diebold-Scheuermann, „Gewaltverzicht“, 214; Kuhn, „Liebesgebot“, 227; Merklein, *Gottesherrschaft*, 236.

91 Nach Becker ist die Pragmatik des Begriffs „Feind“ nicht in der Ausweitung des Adressatenkreises der Liebe zu suchen; es geht also nicht um das Objekt des Liebens als solches, sondern um die inhaltliche Bestimmung der Liebe: „Die Nennung des Feindes macht alles klar: Alle ausnahmslos und gleichrangig sind Objekte der Liebe“ (Becker, *Jesus*, 316). Die Erfahrung des Feindes ist hingegen derartig existentiell, dass seine Erwähnung auf die Wirklichkeitswahrnehmung einwirkt, zu der die Erfahrung von Feindschaft hinzugehört.

seiner Reichgottesverkündigung gewinnen, aber im Blick auf die aktuelle Fragestellung ist mit Abbrüchen zu rechnen.

Die Forderung der Feindesliebe steht in der Jesusverkündigung in Zusammenhang mit einem ethischen Begründungsmodell, das durch das *Doppelgebot der Liebe* geprägt ist (Mk 12,29–31 par. Mt 22,37–39 par Lk 20,27).⁹² Die Liebe zu Gott und zum Nächsten sind entscheidende Grundmomente eines dem Willen Gottes zum Heil der Menschen und ihrer Gerechtigkeit entsprechenden Lebens.⁹³ Der „Feind“ wird in diesem Konzept als ein dem Nächsten *gleichgewichteter* Mit-Mensch ohne jede Abstufung oder Relativierung anerkannt;⁹⁴ er ist nicht als bedrohende Gefahr und Gegenstand einer aggressiven Abwehrreaktion mit Hass und Gewalt vorgestellt, sondern wird durch seine Bedrohung hindurch als Mensch und damit als Geschöpf Gottes transparent (vgl. Q 6,35 par Mt 5,45 par Lk 6,35), dem Gott Leben gewährt und es bewahrt.

Dabei ist die Liebe wie in Q nicht im Sinne eines Affektes, sondern im Sinne des aktiven Handelns zu verstehen. Dafür spricht, dass die in Q 6,29–30 gesammelten Anweisungen zwar nicht von einem Feind sprechen, aber im Verkündigungsrahmen Jesu auf feindliche und / oder existenzgefährdende Handlungen nicht mit Vergeltung, sondern mit über die Grenzen des Verantwortbaren hinausgehenden Handlungsvorschlägen antworten und damit wahrscheinlich ebenfalls Elemente der provozierenden Ethik Jesu vom ankommenden Gottesreich sind. Die einzelnen Forderungen von Q 6,29–30 sind unterschiedlicher Natur und tragen exemplarischen Charakter. Teilweise können sie als Illustration verstanden werden, wie Gewalt, die den Anderen zum Feind macht bzw. die die Feindschaft des Anderen erweist, mit Handlungsformen der Liebe beantwortet wird. Die provokante Rhetorik illustriert das, was mit dem Verb „lieben“ in der Forderung zur Feindesliebe gemeint ist. Wie in der Nächstenliebe wird das Eigeninteresse gegenüber der Fürsorge für den Anderen zurückstellt. Auch die Aussagen vom Rechtsverzicht illustrieren dieses Bild weiter, so dass eine gewisse Kohärenz zwischen den einzelnen Aussagen und Themen entsteht, bei der Liebe ein pro-aktives, auf Kompensation und eigenen Vorteil verzichtendes Handeln zugunsten eines Anderen darstellt, der als Feind das eigene Wohl und Leben gefährdet.

92 Vgl. z.B. Diebold-Scheuermann, „Gewaltverzicht“, 206–15.

93 Vgl. Sänger, „Recht“, 38–45, der das Doppelgebot der Liebe Jesu in Bezug auf das Thema Recht und Gerechtigkeit Gottes untersucht.

94 Insofern ist der oben genannte Widerspruch von Becker, *Jesus*, 316, gegen das Verständnis der Feindesliebe als Resultat einer „abgestuften(n) Objektreihe“ zu beachten.

Eine ethisch-moralische Bewertung des Feindes erfolgt in der apodiktischen Form des Jesuswortes anders als in Q 6,35 nicht. Dennoch ergibt sich aus dem Gesagten auch die Konsequenz, den Gedanken der Feindesliebe mit den Aussagen Jesu zum Rechts- bzw. Gewaltverzicht zusammen zu denken. Der Rechtsverzicht gründet in der für Jesus charakteristischen Vorrangstellung Gottes (vgl. Mk 10,18b), dessen die Schöpfung erhaltendes Handeln Gute und Böse am Leben erhält (Q 6,35), dem aber auch das ausschließliche Vorrecht des Gerichts zugebilligt wird (Q 6,37). Damit ist die Pragmatik der Feindesliebe ein aktiver Akt der Liebe zu Gott, in der dessen Fürsorge und dessen Richtersein anerkannt werden.

Der Bestimmung des Feindes als Feind und der Aufforderung zu seiner Liebe entspricht, wie Carola Diebold-Scheuermann betont, die Aufforderung, dem Bösen⁹⁵ nicht zu widerstehen (Mt 5,39a).⁹⁶ Das Böse wird zwar als etwas Lebensbedrohliches wahrgenommen, aber zugleich die menschliche Handlungsspirale der Vergeltung durchbrochen. Dies geschieht nicht allein durch das Verbot der Wiedervergeltung, sondern durch ein aktives Handeln, das im Verzicht des eigenen Rechts besteht.⁹⁷ Ob dabei der moderne, psychologisch fundierte Gedanke des Aggressionsabbaus⁹⁸ eine Rolle spielt, ist ebenso fraglich wie der modern klingende Gedanke von der „souveräne(n) Freiheit, die sich an das Lebensförderliche bindet“,⁹⁹ oder der der Feindesliebe als „Mittel zur Überwindung von Feindschaft“.¹⁰⁰ Die exemplarisch genannten Konzepte machen dennoch zu Recht darauf aufmerksam, dass der Vergeltungsverzicht wie die Feindesliebe selbstzerstörerische Handlungskreisläufe der Gewalt außer Kraft setzen und so zur Selbstachtung des Liebenden und der Selbstanerkennung seines bedrohten Selbst beitragen.

Die Grundlage der Mahnung zur Feindesliebe bildet das *Gottesbild* Jesu. Es gehört zur Radikalität der Einladung in das Gottesreich, dass den Adressat*innen der Verlust ihres Lebens im Vertrauen auf den Leben

95 Die Bezeichnung des Anderen als Bösen / böse kann allerdings nicht generell zum Verständnis des Feindes eingebracht werden, da sie einen anderen semantischen Wert beinhaltet.

96 Zur den Problemen der Interpretation vgl. z.B. die Darstellung der Diskussion bei Diebold-Scheuermann, „Gewaltverzicht“, 208–9.

97 Vgl. Labahn, „Nachfolge“, 447–49.

98 Diebold-Scheuermann, „Gewaltverzicht“, 208–9.

99 Becker, *Jesus*, 318. Anregend auch Ebner, „Feindesgebot“, 140, der Gebot der Feindesliebe als „Strategie zum Überleben des eigenen Lebensengagements“ versteht.

100 Schreiber, „Jesus“, 188.

schenkenden Gott zugemutet wird (vgl. z.B. Q 17,33,¹⁰¹ s.a. 12,4–5; 14,27). Den Adressat*innen wird zugetraut, dass das Vertrauen zum liebenden und fürsorglichen Vater stärker ist als die vom Feind ausgehende Gefahr. Die Gottesreichsverkündigung lädt ihre Adressat*innen ein, die Grundlagen ihrer Existenz von Gott als fürsorgendem Vater her zu begründen (vgl. z.B. Q 11,9–13; 12,22–31) und in diesem Vertrauen seinem schöpfungsbewahrenden (Q 6,35) und barmherzigen Verhalten (6,36) nachzueifern¹⁰² – darin zeigt sich ein Verhalten, das der Fürsorge Gottes entspricht und das – mit dem Appell zur Feindesliebe – aus dem Negativkreislauf von Vergeltung und Zerstörung herausführt. Die Adressat*innen können so neue Handlungsspielräume in ihrem Alltagsmilieu entwickeln, so dass der zerstörerische Zirkel negativer und bisweilen selbstzerstörerischer Handlungsmodelle verlassen wird. Das Risiko der Feindesliebe wird vom Vertrauen auf den fürsorgenden Gott getragen. Gegenwärtiges Unrecht und Einschränkung der Lebensmöglichkeiten werden dabei akzeptiert zugunsten des Vertrauens in Gottes lebensbewahrendes Handeln im Gottesreich.

Feindesliebe als neues Leben und die Frage nach Toleranz und „Anerkennung“

Im Licht des Gebots der Feindesliebe ergibt sich für die Anhänger*innen der Botschaft Jesu, die sich aufgrund seiner Einladung als Glieder des Gottesreiches verstehen, folgendes Bild: sie sichern entsprechend der Gottesreichsverkündigung ihre Identität nicht in der Abgrenzung durch die Konstruktion stereotyper Feindbilder, sondern durch die Gewinnung einer neuen von Jesus zugesprochenen Identität als Glieder des Gottesreiches (Seligpreisungen [Mt 5,1–4.6 par Lk 6,20–21], die eschatologische Realität antizipierenden Mahlgemeinschaften etc.).¹⁰³ Die Gefährdung in der Alltagswelt Galiläas wird nicht ignoriert. Feinde werden ihrem Handeln entsprechend weiterhin als Feinde erfahren und bestimmt. Die Existenz- und Identitätskonstruktion der Adressat*innen werden jedoch durch Gottes Nähe, Fürsorge und Güte neu bestimmt, die ihnen wie auch ihrem Feind gelten. Sie nehmen ihr Leben und dessen Erhalt als Gottes gütiges Schöpfungshandeln wahr, was

101 [ὁ] εὐρ[ών] τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολέσει αὐτήν, καὶ [ὁ] ἀπολέσ[ας] τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ [ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ] [ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ] εὐρήσει αὐτήν.

102 S.a. Becker, „Feindesliebe“, 384. Nach Schneider, „Imitatio Dei“, 165–67, wäre das Motiv der Nachahmung Gottes aus jüdischer Tradition von Jesus aufgenommen und in seine Verkündigung des Gottesreiches integriert und so Teil des Abschnitts in Q geworden; nach Schneider besteht ein ursprünglicher Zusammenhang von Lk 6,35 und V.36.

103 Vgl. kurz Labahn, „Wirklichkeit“, 60–61.

„gute“ wie „schlechte“ Menschen einschließt. Damit wird die Alltagswelt nicht durch Abwehrhandlungen, Spiralen der Gewalt oder Feindbilder konstruiert, sondern durch die positive Haltung des Vertrauens auf den nahe gekommenen Gott und als „Versuch [...], punktuell-situativ die Gegenwart der Herrschaft Gottes wahrzunehmen als Chance für eine neue Weise des Lebens“.¹⁰⁴

Auch wenn dabei der Feind auf sein Mensch-Sein hin transparent wird, weil er Gottes Geschöpf ist, ist Vorsicht geboten, die radikale Botschaft von der anbrechenden, bereits zur Zeit der Jesusverkündigung und durch sie im Fragment vollzogenen Gottesherrschaft zu eng mit neuzeitlichen Toleranzkonzepten oder Anerkennungstheorien zu verbinden. Positiv gesehen, findet durch das Gebot der Feindesliebe keine Vereinnahmung oder naive Idealisierung des Anderen statt – er ist trotz des pro-aktiven Handelns der Feind, der, in welcher Form auch immer, die Existenz des Liebenden beschädigt und bedroht. Dabei bleibt er aber immer zugleich Geschöpf Gottes und damit Mit-Mensch wie der Nächste in Jesu Doppelgebot der Liebe,¹⁰⁵ worin durchaus Impulse und Wurzeln für spätere Diskussionen gesehen werden können, wenngleich die theologische Einbindung nicht Teil der Diskursgeschichte von Toleranzkonzepten oder Anerkennungstheorien ist.

Der Verzicht auf Recht und auf Vergeltung mündet zudem nicht in einem naiven Verzicht auf die Durchsetzung von Gerechtigkeit, die durch Rechtsverletzung eines Anderen verursacht ist. Auch wenn der Begriff des Feindes nicht der Formung identitätsstiftender Feindbilder dient – Jesu Forderung kann „gruppenunspezifisch“¹⁰⁶ genannt werden –, wird feindliches Tun realistisch wahrgenommen. Sprachlich, soziologisch und theologisch wird der Feind weiterhin als Feind beschrieben. Er ist damit weiterhin eine negative Größe, die im Vorstellungsrahmen von Jesu Reichgottesvorstellung als Charakter zu verstehen ist, der in seinem Tun verantwortlich ist und so der Sanktionierung Gottes in seinem Kommen zum Gericht ausgeliefert ist. Das Vertrauen in den auch den Feind erhaltenden Gott ist zugleich ein Vertrauen in den Rechenschaft fordernden und damit Unrecht verurteilenden Gott (vgl. z.B. Q 6,47–49; 12,5; Lk 12,16–20). Damit wird nicht die Erfahrung der Existenzgefährdung durch einen Anderen verändert, sondern die mit ihm verbundene Gefahr bestätigt. Im Blick auf die Angesprochenen verändert sich jedoch die eigene soziale Gestaltungsfähigkeit zu Ungunsten selbstzerstörerischer Affekte wie Hass, Vergeltung oder Verfeindung; gerade wenn

104 Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 53.

105 Forst, *Toleranz*, 64, handelt von der Feindesliebe als Beispiel einer *mutua tolerantia*.

106 Becker, „Feindesliebe“, 385.

Unrecht durch machtvollere Menschen und Institutionen einschließlich der Fremdmacht Rom verursacht wird, droht Widerstand zur Selbstzerstörung zu führen. Umgekehrt wird auch der Feind in der Alltagswelt nicht in seiner Lebensentfaltung durch die Reaktion der angefeindeten Menschen bedroht, was in Bezug auf das Zusammenleben in der ruralen Dorfgemeinschaft von signifikantem Wert für das Überleben der Gemeinschaft sein kann.

Die Duldung des Anderen ist somit eine bedingte Akzeptanz (oder Toleranz) des Anderen in seiner Andersartigkeit,¹⁰⁷ insofern sie dort, wo sie sich als Verweigerung der Einladung in das Reich darstellt, unter dem Verdikt des Ausschlusses aus dem Reich steht. Und doch wird die Möglichkeit gewährt, die Einladung anzunehmen, und damit schafft die Aufforderung zur Liebe Raum für neue Handlungspotenzen auch des Feindes, der seinerseits nicht in eine Negativspirale von Vergeltung hineingezogen wird.

Zusammenfassung

Der Gedanke der Feindesliebe in der Reichgottesverkündigung Jesu ist nicht naiv, konfliktscheu oder weltfremd, sondern eigenständig und reflektiert. Die Sanktionierung des durch einen Feind erlittenen Unrechts ist – wenn die vorliegende Systematisierung zutrifft – Teil der Einladung zur Feindesliebe in der Verlässlichkeit und Gerechtigkeit Gottes. Zugleich durchbricht die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe die Grenzen selbst- und identitätsgefährdender menschlicher Verhaltensmodelle und verschließt nicht den Blick davor, dass der Existenz gefährdende Feind als geliebter Feind Geschöpf Gottes und somit ein Mit-Mensch ist. Als Mit-Mensch, den der Schöpfergott erhält, ist er / sie in das pro-aktive Liebeshandeln des Liebesgebotes eingeschlossen.

Ergebnis

Ob man dazu bereit ist, Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe mit der Diskussion oder Entwicklung des Toleranzgedankens in Beziehung zu setzen, hängt auch vom jeweiligen Konzept des Toleranzbegriffs des Betrachters / der Betrachterin ab. Dennoch konnten in den beiden Abschnitten zur Jesuserinnerung in Q wie bei der re-konstruierenden Rückfrage nach Jesu

107 Wesentlich positiver urteilt Pellegrini, *War Jesus tolerant?*, Pellegrini, „Jesus, Verkünder der Toleranz,“, dass Jesus (nicht allein literarische) Toleranz evoziert: „Die Botschaft und das Verhalten Jesu gelten insgesamt als hervorragendes Beispiel und Modell für Toleranz.“ (*War Jesus tolerant?*, 110.)

Gottesreichsverkündigung Aspekte beobachtet werden, die zwar keine naive Eintragung von Toleranzkonzepten oder Anerkennungstheorien erlauben, aber Beachtung für die Geschichte der Idee des Toleranzgedankens verdienen. Ähnliches gilt zum Paradigma der „Anerkennung“, ohne dass die Differenzen übersehen werden können.

Das Konzept der Feindesliebe ist differenziert, reflektiert und auf unterschiedliche theologische wie soziologische Kontexte bezogen. Die pro-aktive Liebe zum Feind, die auf das fürsorgende Handeln Gottes vertraut, nimmt weiterhin die Bedrohung durch den Feind wahr. Feindschaft wird nicht geleugnet; wobei die Rezeption des Gebots der Feindesliebe im literarischen Kontext von Q sogar als Konstruktion eines Feindbildes betrachtet werden kann. Anders als in der Formung von Feindbildern zur Identitätssicherung mit ‚eigendynamischer‘ und konfliktverschärfender Wirkung ist die durch die Sinnstiftung von Q entwickelte narrative Identität jedoch zugleich durch den Versuch geprägt, Grenzen zur Mitwelt offen und Kommunikationsmöglichkeit beizubehalten,¹⁰⁸ um im sozialen Lebensgefüge wirksam zu bleiben. Feindesliebe will oder kann Umkehr der Anderen oder Kommunikation mit den Gegnern ermöglichen. Insofern soll (Q) oder kann (Jesus) das Anderssein des Anderen verändert werden. Weder Ausgrenzung noch passives Ertragen des Anderen als Feind entspricht dabei der Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe, vielmehr durchbricht sie die Komfortzone, in der sich das Individuum oder eine Gruppe durch ihr Feindbild einrichtet, indem der Appell zur Liebe sie zum Abenteuer einer Feindschaft abrogierenden, fürsorgenden Lebenswandels aufruft, das die Veränderung des Anderen, wenigstens aber die Neugestaltung der sozialen Interaktion im Blick hat; die beschriebenen Konzepte der Feindesliebe wirken der Eskalation von Feindschaft entgegen¹⁰⁹ und lassen sich – zumindest partiell – als Akt voraussetzungsloser Anerkennung beschreiben,¹¹⁰ ohne dass sich das Gebot der Feindesliebe vollständig in die Grammatik der Anerkennungstheorie einschreiben ließe.

Weder die Jesuserinnerung von Q noch die Jesusverkündigung verharren auf der Ebene der Abgrenzung und der Verweigerung von Interaktion zum

108 Insofern darf man wohl nicht allein für die Jesusverkündigung, sondern zurückhaltender auch für Q davon sprechen, dass das Gebot der Feindesliebe – wie es Paul Hoffmann betont – die Grenzen der „Clan-Solidarität“ überwindet (Hoffmann, „Tradition“, 54).

109 Zu diesem Aspekt von Feindschaft kurz Geulen, von der Heiden, Liebsch, „Einleitung“, 10.

110 Im Blick auf Q wäre eine Analyse der sozialen Interaktion mit Methoden und Konzepten des „Kampfes um Anerkennung“ über den Blick auf das Gebot der Feindesliebe hinaus wünschenswert, da Fragen von Anerkennung, Identitätssicherung, aber auch einer integrierenden Identität im Konflikt mit der Mitwelt aufgeworfen sind.

Feind. Im Kontext der Gottesreichsverkündigung Jesu lässt sich eine ähnliche Grundstruktur finden, deren wesentliches Element (1) im uneingeschränkten Liebeshandeln der Menschen nach dem Vorbild Gottes und in Entsprechung zum Doppelgebot der Liebe liegt, um so die Lebensordnung des Gottesreiches abzubilden, der (2) im Vertrauen auf Gottes Fürsorge (3) auf das Verurteilen anderer Menschen verzichten und damit zugleich (4) die Ausschließlichkeit des Gerichts Gottes anerkennt. Weil Rache als Deliktahndung in das Souveränitätsrecht Gottes fällt, wird vor menschlicher, eigenmächtiger Strafe gewarnt. Die Wahrnehmung des Anderen als Feind steht nach der literarischen Konzeption von Q (1) in enger Verbindung mit der Erduldung konkreter Pressionen durch die Umwelt, die die Verkündigung der Q-Gruppe ablehnt. Diese Verbindung spricht den Feind in einem auf sozialer Ebene wahrnehmbaren Gefährdungshandeln an; in der Bezeichnung des so Handelnden als Feind trägt das Liebesgebot durchaus (2) zur Aufrichtung eines Feindbildes bei. Gleichzeitig wird aber gegen eine Spirale der Gewalt (3) zu pro-aktiver Liebe aufgefordert, so dass (4) Handlungsspielräume entstehen, die die Kommunikation und das Zusammenleben mit den Anderen ermöglichen. (5) Begründet ist dies im segensreichen und gütigen Handeln Gottes an Guten wie Bösen. (6) Der Verzicht auf das Recht lässt dem richtenden Gott Raum für sein Gericht. Beide Konzepte erkennen im Feind den Mit-Menschen an, der in gleicher Weise Geschöpf Gottes ist, wie ihm die Fürsorge Gottes gilt, er aber in der Verantwortung von Rechenschaft über sein Handeln steht.

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4. Was Paul Tolerant?

An Assessment of William S. Campbell's and J. Brian Tucker's "Particularistic" Paul

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Abstract

Challenging the "particularistic approach" to Paul deployed by William Campbell and J. Brian Tucker (according to which Paul allows Jewish and pagan followers of Christ to live "in Christ" without abandoning their former identities as Jew or Gentile), this article applies the "mutual intergroup differentiation model," which emphasizes the importance of using vague prototypes to foster acceptance within a group. It further argues that modern interests and theological tendencies should not overly direct historical analysis.

Keywords: Paul of Tarsus; mutual intergroup differentiation; tolerance; Gentiles

Introduction

William Campbell and J. Brian Tucker have devised an interpretation of Paul as someone who favors a *particularistic approach* to different ethnic and civic identities in Christ. According to this view, Paul is consistently invested in supporting the existence of various ethnic and civic identities within a superordinate identity in Christ. This means that Jews are, for Paul, saved as Jews and Gentiles as Gentiles. Besides ethnic identities, Paul is also considered to have an interest in protecting the Roman civic identity of the Christ-believers. Such a Paul can, with good reason, be described as tolerant towards different identities.

The purpose of this article is to assess Campbell's and Tucker's position with an eye on social identity and tolerance in particular. The article will

first introduce Campbell's and Tucker's position and terminology, then critically take up some internal discrepancies in the approach. While Tucker has already expertly applied *the social identity approach* formulated by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner in his work, this article will extend the analysis by assessing Paul's tolerance in the light of Amélie Mummendey and Michael Wenzel's observations concerning the role of prototypes in creating tolerance.

Finally, the article will take up two problematic issues in the modern quest for Paul's identity and tolerance. The first one has to do with the assumption that Paul can only be ascribed a singular identity and attitude. Both the social identity approach and the mere diversity of the scholarly solutions suggest that the matter is not so simple. Paul, like any other person, should be viewed as exhibiting various contextual identifications. Accordingly, the possibility should be considered that he could have been in a very real sense a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles. Secondly, the article will address the need to distinguish between modern interests and historical research. Modern interest in religious tolerance – although strongly commendable and welcome in itself – should not guide historical research into ancient documents. The article will suggest that the recent trend which considers Roman imperial power to be Paul's main "opponent" may be a historically untenable attempt to divert attention from the disturbing fact that Paul, too, participated in religious hostility.

Universalism and Particularism according to Campbell and Tucker

William S. Campbell and J. Brian Tucker both speak of a "particularistic" Paul and understand most of scholarship to represent another, "universalistic" view.¹ In their view, the universalistic stance claims that Paul taught that all believers share one, universal identity in Christ and required that previous identities be somehow eradicated. In practice, the discussion largely concerns the question of Jewish versus Gentile identity, which figures prominently in Paul's letters, especially in Romans and Galatians.

Tucker takes up several prominent modern scholars, whom he categorizes as proponents of universalism, such as Philip Esler, Bengt Holmberg, J.D.G. Dunn, Daniel Boyarin, Judith Lieu, Denise Kimber Buell, and David Horrell.²

1 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 66–67.

2 Ibid., 66–79. The following are mentioned as well: Richard Hays, Giorgio Jossa, Francis Watson, N.T. Wright, John M.G. Barclay, and Beverly Gaventa (ibid., 67, n. 20).

Although all these scholars admit – to a varying degree – that Paul did not call for complete erasure of previous identities for Christ-believers, Tucker still sees them as gravely underestimating the significance of previous ethnic and/or civic identities for Paul. Tucker points out, for example, that the view has led scholars such as Bengt Holmberg and J.D.G. Dunn to downplay Jewish identity by defining it around concrete markers such as circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws, which furthermore are deemed “outward dimensions” of identity.³

Tucker sees universalism, for example, in Daniel Boyarin’s view, who states that Paul allowed Christ-believing Jews to continue observing the law “*until such observance conflicted with the fundamental meaning and message of the gospel as Paul understood it.*”⁴ A similar universalistic tendency is detected in Boyarin’s understanding of baptism as the creation of “a new humanity” where differences are erased (albeit without complete success in real social life).⁵

Campbell, in turn, takes up the prominent New Testament scholar N.T. Wright as someone who promotes universalism. Wright has argued that for Paul the Christ-event signified God’s new relationship with both Jews and Gentiles simply on the basis of their humanity.⁶ In fact, Campbell claims that universalism is a false sequitur from the originally correct observation that Paul seeks to establish equality between Jews and Gentiles.⁷ He claims that universalism falsely identifies oneness with sameness.⁸

Particularism, then, is what Campbell and Tucker suggest to serve as a correction to universalism. The central idea is that Paul did not require Christ-followers to give up their previous identities. He did not “eradicate ethnic distinctions” or “encourage Gentiles to become Jews.”⁹ On the contrary, Paul believed in “the retention of one’s *particularity* in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile”¹⁰ and considered “diversity [... to have] a central value.”¹¹ Accordingly, Campbell concludes that, for Paul, “God is thus the

3 Ibid., 71–72. Quote from Holmberg, “Jewish *versus* Christian Identity,” 417.

4 Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, 112 (emphasis original).

5 Ibid., 187; Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 74.

6 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 149–50.

7 Ibid., 9: “The almost complete scholarly consensus that Paul aims to achieve equality between Jews and Gentiles in Christ has been mainly responsible for the unquestioned assumption that Paul’s advocacy of equality involves, even necessitates, the abrogation of difference, or the elimination of ritual distinction, or at best the indifference to difference.”

8 Ibid., 1.

9 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 63.

10 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 156 (emphasis mine).

11 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 66.

God of two distinct entities, both of Israel and the nations.”¹² Tucker goes on to specify Paul’s procedure as the creation of *hybrid communities* with distinct identities rather than communities where particular identities are fused into one.¹³ Both Campbell and Tucker admit that, after Paul, the church did eventually become a Gentile community with a universalistic outlook and parted with Judaism – but neither believe the process was begun or even foreseen by Paul.¹⁴

In terms of continuity and discontinuity, the particularistic view claims to represent a believable continuity between previous identities and identity in Christ. Campbell criticizes the existential, Bultmannian stress on “the radical newness of the Christ-event” and the idea of “unpredictable divine incursions into the human scene” (which he calls “punctiliar revelation”).¹⁵ He sees a similar disconnect in many reconstructions of Paul’s “conversion,” which assume that Paul’s previous identity as a Jew was completely removed in the process.¹⁶ The universalistic idea of Paul and Christianity is, according to Campbell, “in danger of developing a self-understanding as a new religious movement originating in the first century, a Jesus cult lacking any significant pre-history.”¹⁷

According to Tucker, universalistic thinking also underlies the hypotheses of scholars, such as Judith Lieu and Denise Kimber Buell,¹⁸ who stress the constructive, fluid, and textual nature of identity.¹⁹ Following Campbell, Tucker opts for the continuing importance of primordial dimensions of ethnicity, although he simultaneously describes his own approach as more open to the discursive nature of identity.²⁰

Interestingly, for Campbell and Tucker the particularistic retention of previous identities does not mean that they remain completely untouched. Both argue that “everything is relativized at the point of entering the body of Christ” and that this necessitates some form of transformation of

12 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 10. The “Paul within Judaism” movement – with scholars such as Mark Nanos, Magnus Zetterholm, and Pamela Eisenbaum – has expressed similar views (see Nanos and Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism*). Zetterholm indeed places Campbell and Tucker in the movement (Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism,” 46).

13 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 64–65.

14 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 7; Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 74.

15 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 143.

16 Ibid., 147–48.

17 Ibid., 140.

18 Tucker deems Buell’s views “ethnoracial universalism” (Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 79).

19 Ibid., 75–78.

20 Ibid., 78; Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 51–57. See Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 4–5.

identity.²¹ While previous identities are not “imperialistically obliterated” or replaced, as the universalistic view suggests, they are still re-evaluated and reprioritized.²² Campbell also suggests that Jews underwent less change than Gentiles upon entering the Christ-identity.²³ Tucker specifies the argument with the help of the *social identity approach* (SIA) and the concepts of identity hierarchy and identity salience.²⁴ According to him, Paul is chiefly interested in ensuring the salient, prominent position of the Christ-identity in the hierarchy of the believer’s various social identifications, which, in turn, entails transformation of other identities.²⁵

Campbell has focused his studies on ethnic identities as reflected in Romans and Galatians. On this issue Campbell and Tucker agree: they claim Paul offered salvation in Christ “for Jews as Jews and Gentiles as Gentiles.”²⁶ Tucker continues his research in Campbell’s footsteps by applying the particularistic view to 1 Corinthians. The letter, however, differs from Romans and Galatians in that, according to Tucker, the central question does not concern Jewish identity, but rather the continuation of *Gentile* social identity in a Christ-believing community.²⁷ Furthermore, instead of ethnic identity, Tucker sees that 1 Corinthians centers on the continuance of *Gentile Roman civic identity*.²⁸ Tucker considers ethnic and civic identifications comparable, since they both represent “subcomponents” of social identity.²⁹

21 Ibid., 166. Campbell states it is a question of “transformation rather than new creation” (ibid., 8). An example of relativizing of ethnic identity is Campbell’s statement: “Although [Paul] asserts that both circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing, he does not mean this absolutely but only comparatively. Thus, the Christ-follower’s past life does count for something even if it is of relatively little significance compared with being in Christ” (102).

22 Ibid., 14 (quote), 156.

23 Ibid., 166; Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 268.

24 For SIA and the explanation of concepts, ibid., 41–54.

25 Ibid., 80–81.

26 Ibid., 64. Campbell stresses that he does not see it as correct to speak of a separate covenant for Gentiles, but rather believes that Paul considered the Gentiles to share in God’s (transformed) covenant with the Jews (*Creation of Christian Identity*, 37). According to Tucker, the only corporate social identity Paul attributes to the mixed crowd is “in Christ” and possibly “the body of Christ” (*You Belong to Christ*, 66).

27 Ibid., 61–62. Tucker, ibid., deals with 1 Cor 1–4, and Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, continues with the rest of the letter.

28 A civic-religious identity is something that links “an individual to a particular city or colony” and in early imperial times, Roman imperial ideology. Major features included the patronage system, allegiance to the emperor and Roman myths, such as the Roman eschatological vision (Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 91).

29 Ibid., 65.

As for Paul's own identity, both agree that "Paul, like Jesus, still operated within a Jewish symbolic universe."³⁰ Paul is understood to have fully retained his Jewish identity,³¹ upheld the Mosaic law,³² and not to have set "his understanding of the power and grace of God specifically in contrast to his own former life."³³

Can a Transformed Identity Remain the Same?

The process of defining identities and drawing boundaries with others is at the very core of identity construction and maintenance. According to SIA, one of the main motivations for social identity is the need of human beings "to reduce subjective uncertainty about their social world and [the individual's] place within it" (the principle of *uncertainty reduction*). This motivation for clarity is closely linked to social categorization and prototypes, since both essentially describe how group members should behave and understand themselves.³⁴ In fact, the need for a coherent self-conception and a feeling of meaning and order sometimes surpasses even the need for positive self-esteem.³⁵

As was noted above, Campbell and Tucker assume that, in Paul's view, previous identities are at the same time "retained" but also "transformed" in the context of the superordinate identity "in Christ." While this ambiguity reduces the clarity of identity, it also suggests quite a realistic scenario where a new identity is built on top of the previous one with minimal change or effort.³⁶ According to Tucker, previous identities are not destroyed or displaced, but they must undergo "transformation," "reevaluation," and "reprioritization"

30 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 143.

31 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 83. A similar assumption is often made by members of the "Paul within Judaism" movement, who criticize the "New Perspective on Paul" for not taking Paul's Jewish identity and context seriously enough (see e.g. the introduction to Nanos and Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism*)

32 Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 114.

33 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 88.

34 Hogg, "Social Identity Theory," 120–21.

35 The need for certainty can lead to situations where groups choose to remain in a subordinate status because challenging the status quo would result in too much self-conceptual uncertainty (cf. Jost and Hunyadi, "Antecedents," who explain this through their "system justification theory"). See also Hogg and Abrams, "Social Motivation," 42–47.

36 This can be supported by cognitive research as well. See István Czachesz's discussion of the transmission of religious information and the "scripts" encoded in human memory. According to Czachesz, "we tend to preserve our scripts and accommodate new information to them, rather than the other way around" (Czachesz, "Rethinking Biblical Transmission," 51).

in the light of the salient identity “in Christ.”³⁷ Campbell describes this transformation even as “radical change.” For those who are originally farther from the new identity, it can also mean “reversal of values.”³⁸ In the case of Gentiles, Campbell speaks even of “Gentiles converting to an entirely new faith.”³⁹ However, even in this case Campbell insists one’s previous identity “abides as a formative and defining element in the new existence.”⁴⁰

But can an identity simultaneously both change and remain the same? How much transformation can the identity undergo before it becomes a completely different one? What is the distance between one identity and another? Can one identity be many, even contradictory things at the same time? Obviously, there are no clear answers to these questions. Definitions of identity are subjective and fleeting. Lines are drawn and redrawn differently by various (sub)groups and individuals at different times and in different contexts; they are negotiated and proposed, accepted, and rejected. The social identity approach suggests people have different identifications, which can even be contradictory. This complex reality, however, is not what seems to guide Campbell and Tucker. Although Tucker speaks of hybrid identities, he and Campbell both insist that it is the *same* identification (Jew, Gentile, Roman), which stays the same and changes simultaneously. The impression is that Campbell and Tucker emphasize and wish for continuity, and only unwillingly admit transformation. They seek to claim Paul accepted everyone as they were but are faced with the fact that the source material often expresses demands of “radical change.”

Campbell and Tucker, however, do not always restrict themselves to discussing Paul’s views or claims concerning identity but go beyond this to treat “Jewish identity” as something objective. As already noted, Campbell explicitly confesses a belief in a primordial core of identity. A belief like this is quite understandable in light of the universal human need for defined identities and the ensuing “entitativity.”⁴¹ Even more importantly, it is necessary if Paul’s claims are to be given universal leverage. Thus, the choice is both natural and ideologically motivated. It is my contention, however, that Paul cannot and should not be treated as more than an individual entrepreneur of identity. Furthermore, to suggest a stable definition of Judaism – and one that Paul in particular reflects and adheres to – risks being patronizing to

37 See e.g. Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 63; Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 79.

38 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 166.

39 Ibid., 168.

40 Ibid., 166.

41 Entitativity denotes the feature of a particular category that makes it appear a cohesive unit, and distinct from other entities (Hogg, “Social Identity Theory,” 118).

both ancient and modern Jews. That Paul's understanding of Judaism was *not*, in reality, shared by everyone in his time is clear from the fact that not all (or even that many) Jews accepted Paul's offer of a "transformed Judaism" as real Judaism. Campbell himself acknowledges this where he says that Paul's innovation to let Gentiles into the movement without the demands of the law was considered by many Jews as "a threat to the very identity of their faith."⁴² It needs to be admitted that even though Paul (often, but not always) professed to follow and promote Judaism, his view of what constituted Judaism is his own.

What Exactly Is the Difference between Universalism and Particularism?

That previous identities were not completely eliminated in Christ must be intuitively clear to all who have read the New Testament. Thus, although Paul in Gal 3:28 claims there is "no longer Jew or Greek [...] no longer slave or free [...] no longer male and female [...]," he is still happy to call Euodia and Syntyche "women" in Phil 4:3, to discourage Christ-believing slaves from pursuing freedom in 1 Cor 7:21 and to encourage Christ-believers to work with their own hands in 1 Thess 4:11. The union of Prisca and Aquila is also accepted without further ado (1 Cor 15:19). As for Jewish identity, it would be unrealistic to claim that, although circumcision was sometimes surgically undone (1 Macc 1:15), matters such as parental lineage or tribe (Phil 3:5) could be made to somehow disappear. To my knowledge, no scholars have denied this reality.⁴³ Paul's words in Gal 3:28 necessarily represent a level other than that of everyday life – be that level eschatological, salvific, or philosophical.⁴⁴ This means that previous identities are, to a varying extent,

42 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 6. When quoting Schiffman, who states that Judaism survived the challenge of Christianity because of "its definition of Jewish identity," Campbell (*ibid.*, 8) does not hesitate to claim that Schiffman has misunderstood Paul, who, according to him, did not intend to change Jewish *halakha*. On this basis alone, then, Campbell apparently assumes that Schiffman should be able to accept Paul even though his aim was also "to reconfigure the relation between people who are and who remain different" (Jews and Gentiles) and to whom this "new relation implied a transformation in the symbolic universe of these peoples in the light of the Christ-event."

43 Some have seen evidence of disregard for mundane categories in the alleged supporters of "realized eschatology" in Pauline churches. For the uncertainty of the category and phenomenon, see Nikki, *Opponents and Identity*, 202–4.

44 Interestingly, Paul's thinking in Gal 3:28 resembles Stoicism. The Stoics believed that everyone is equal simply on the grounds of belonging to humanity and "different ranks are just like roles

retained in both universalistic and particularistic approaches. Whenever Tucker and Campbell create a different impression of the universalistic model, they, in reality, campaign against a straw man.⁴⁵

Actual differences between particularism and universalism often escape the reader of Campbell and Tucker. In both, some identifications remain while others change. Philip Esler, whom Tucker considers a universalist, stresses that Paul in Romans aims to realign various identities under the same Christ-identity *without* eradicating ethnic identities.⁴⁶ Tucker, however, still criticizes Esler for “ultimately” ending up with a universalistic view of Christ-identity, where “the transcendent aspect of the ‘in Christ’ identity [...] overshadows other identities which then lose their fundamental significance.”⁴⁷ But how is Esler’s view really different from Tucker’s, who claims that Paul (in 1 Cor) required the Christ-believers “to make adjustments in their current social identity hierarchy so that what resulted would be a salient ‘in Christ’ identity”?⁴⁸ In comparison to Boyarin’s quote about the limits of law observance in the light of the gospel, how does Tucker actually disagree, where he states that the different “categories of identity retain their fundamental significance [...] but may] be reprioritized if they are not consistent with the social implications of the gospel”?⁴⁹ It inevitably comes to mind that the categories “universalistic” and “particularistic,” and their respective polarizations, are tools for modern categorization and meant to create difference where it is not, in reality, very obvious.

A Tolerant Paul? A Social Identity Approach

What is tolerance? Gordon Allport (1954) made a distinction between tolerance as enduring or putting up with something one dislikes or disapproves of and a “warmer grade of tolerance,” which means not simply enduring but

composed by the divine Playwright” (Huttunen, “How Fantasy Comes True,” 102). These roles are to be played as well and faithfully as possible, but they are, in essence, *adiaphora* (something Tucker and Campbell deny in holding that Paul considered previous identities to be retained). Interestingly, Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor 7 to retain previous identities has considerable technical similarities to Stoic philosophy (Huttunen, *ibid.*, 103).

45 See e.g. Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 149.

46 Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 307.

47 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 67–68.

48 *Ibid.*, 79.

49 *Ibid.*, 86. Campbell, at one point (*Creation of Christian Identity*, 158), suggests “It is their sinful nature that is transformed not their ethnicity.” Gal 2:15, however, reveals that Paul is not, not at least consistently, aware of such a division (Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί).

actively accepting and even positively esteeming difference.⁵⁰ Tolerance as simply putting up with someone is “characterized by ignorance and disregarding the other,” which originates in a psychological (and often spatial) distance from the other and a lack of inclusion in the same superordinate group.⁵¹ Acceptance-tolerance, on the other hand, is more engaging and necessarily involves a (re)evaluation of “what is good.”⁵² Only this latter form is considered true tolerance by Amélie Mummendey and Michael Wenzel (1999), who state that “tolerance cannot properly be understood simply as a lack of social discrimination.”⁵³ It is clear that the particularistic approach promoted by Tucker and Campbell suggests active tolerance by Paul, who is said to have actively promoted diversity among Christ-believers to the extent that he “even supports Jewish Christ-followers living a different life-style from Gentiles in Christ.”⁵⁴ Plurality is understood to be at the heart of Paul’s message, a value in itself.

In the light of SIA, when does such tolerance appear? In the 1960s, Muzafer Sherif’s functional study showed that tolerance ensues when groups have a common goal and experience positive interdependence. Henri Tajfel, however, was more pessimistic: his minimal paradigm studies suggested that simple categorization into groups (that is, the existence of groups) elicited discrimination since groups necessarily seek to establish *positive distinctiveness* in relation to each other. Tajfel’s results rightly raise the question posed by Mummendey and Wenzel: “[I]s a positive relationship between groups, despite their differences, possible?”⁵⁵

In their answer, Mummendey and Wenzel present criticism of the minimal paradigm view. They note that experimental evidence after the original tests has indicated that ingroup favoritism (which Tajfel’s tests accurately captured) does not necessarily produce an equal amount of outgroup discrimination.⁵⁶ The two do not represent opposite sides of the same coin and, therefore, should be conceptually distinguished from each other.⁵⁷ Mummendey and Wenzel go on to present an approach to social discrimination and tolerance which takes into account the evaluation of the outgroup’s “specific attributes, positions and values” as a real explanatory

50 Allport, *Nature of Prejudice*, 425.

51 Mummendey and Wenzel, “Social Discrimination,” 169.

52 Ibid., 167.

53 Ibid., 158.

54 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 158.

55 Ibid., 160.

56 Ibid., 161. The phenomenon is called “positive–negative asymmetry.”

57 Ibid., 161.

factor in discrimination/tolerance.⁵⁸ Special emphasis is put on the role of subjective legitimization of discrimination by the ingroup.⁵⁹

Importantly for the current topic, it has long been agreed that comparison between social groups always takes place in relation to “their shared next more inclusive social category.”⁶⁰ This brings the idea of prototypicality⁶¹ prominently into play, since comparison is done with an eye to the prototypical and normative features of the superordinate group. Ingroup favoritism thus essentially means that the ingroup views itself as more prototypical than the outgroup in terms of the next level of abstraction.⁶² In this view, discrimination ensues from a process of “projection of ingroup attributes onto the inclusive category” and the denial of the prototypicality and legitimacy of the outgroup in this regard.⁶³

Tucker understands Paul to achieve plurality and tolerance between different subgroups of Christ-believers by stressing the saliency of the one common “Christ-identity.”⁶⁴ The figure of Christ is thus set up as the prototype whose qualities are exemplified by real-life characters (*exemplars*) such as Paul and his companions.⁶⁵ According to Tucker, Paul posits the common Christ-identity at the top of the hierarchy of the believers’ various identifications, thus seeking to ensure its salience at all times.⁶⁶ The procedure is called recategorization, that is, “categorization on a higher level of abstraction.”⁶⁷ Philip Esler has suggested that Paul engages in recategorization in Romans, where he attempts to mediate between Greek and Jewish believers. Esler defines recategorization as “redefining a situation of conflict so the members of rival groups (or subgroups antagonistic to

58 Ibid., 159.

59 Ibid., 162.

60 Ibid., 164.

61 A prototype is “a fuzzy set of attributes (perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors) that are related to one another in a meaningful way and that simultaneously capture similarities within the group and differences between the group and other groups.” Prototypes follow the principles of metacontrast and entitativity, and thus serve to highlight the difference between the in- and outgroups and the cohesiveness of the ingroup (Hogg, “Social Identity Theory,” 118).

62 Mummendey and Wenzel, “Social Discrimination,” 164. That this really happens is predicted by the assumption of SIA that humans always have a tendency towards positive enhancement of their social identity.

63 Ibid., 165.

64 Salience denotes the activation of a particular identification in a given situation. Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 84.

65 See Nikki, *Opponents and Identity*, 174, for the procedure in Philipppians.

66 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 80–81. For my similar solution, see Nikki, “Flexible Apostle,” 87–88.

67 Mummendey and Wenzel, “Social Discrimination,” 166.

one another) are subsumed into a larger single, superordinate category.”⁶⁸ The particularistic view emphasizes that the subidentities do not fuse into one, but remain distinct, albeit transformed.⁶⁹ This is well in line with how recategorization is best understood to function: previous identities, such as ethnic ones, need to be kept intact in order for the procedure to work.⁷⁰

The efficacy of recategorization (or common ingroup model) in creating tolerance has, however, been criticized on many levels. Miles Hewstone, for example, takes up problems with the original tests that proved the hypothesis and expresses a general doubt on the efficacy of the procedure (“can [recategorization] overcome powerful ethnic and racial categorizations on more than a temporary basis?”).⁷¹ Mummendey and Wenzel similarly claim that neither decategorization (“categorization on a lower level of abstraction,” “personalization”) nor recategorization actually allows the groups to be viewed separately. Instead, both essentially lead to assimilation.⁷² Thus it becomes evident that Tucker’s and Campbell’s model is not free from the implications they see as problematic with the universalistic option. The much repeated references to “transformation” and “reevaluation,” in fact, already revealed the same.

As a truly tolerant and pluralistic option, Mummendey and Wenzel suggest the model of “mutual positive intergroup differentiation” (originally formulated by Hewstone and Brown in 1986),⁷³ which is tied to a more precise definition of tolerance as “the acceptance and positive estimation of intergroup difference.” The model does not posit any form of inclusion or unification of the groups nor any single, superordinate system of norms that would produce the evaluation of groups against the same standards. Superordinate categories function only as “the background for evaluating intergroup difference.”⁷⁴ In this model, the prototype has four essential characteristics. (1) The representation of the prototype needs to be weak and unclear, so that no clear standard of evaluation can be posited. (2) The scope of the prototype should be small, that is, it should not cover many areas of life. Tolerance will follow when many attributes are simply not

68 Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 29.

69 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 84.

70 Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 178.

71 Hewstone, “Contact and Categorization,” 351.

72 Mummendey and Wenzel, “Social Discrimination,” 166–67.

73 Hewstone and Brown, “Contact Is Not Enough.” The model is known as the “mutual intergroup differentiation model” in distinction from the “common ingroup identity model.” Both rely on simultaneous activation of superordinate and subordinate categories.

74 Mummendey and Wenzel, “Social Discrimination,” 167.

prescribed by norms. (3) The prototype should be broad and scattered in the sense that it allows a great variance of normative positions. (4) It should also be multimodal and complex so that it covers a wide range of different positions.⁷⁵ This model proposed by Mummendey and Wenzel is of course prescriptive. It is meant to help in establishing tolerance. In historical research, however, the objective can only be descriptive. Our task can only be to evaluate whether Paul fits the model.

Since prototypes are discussed here, it is important to note that in the study of early Christianity the role of Jesus/Christ is often emphasized unduly. The terms “Christianity” or even the less anachronistic “Christ-believers” imply that all who found some sort of meaningfulness in the figure of Jesus/Christ, necessarily considered him their primary prototype or symbol. With the choice of the term, the figure of Christ is set up as the agreed prototype and the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers is viewed solely in the light of this superordinate category. To be sure, Jesus/Christ is viewed as central by most of the New Testament writers – excluding James perhaps. We cannot, however, assume that historically those Jews who in one way or another “believed” in Jesus/Christ also considered him their primary prototype or viewed “in Christ” as their salient superordinate category. In fact, as groups tend to be loyal to their previous identifications and history,⁷⁶ it is more likely that Jewish Christ-believers were more inclined to view themselves in relation to other Jewish groups. If and when it is reasonable to assume that the Jerusalem community considered Judaism in general to be the next level of abstraction (following the example set by the historical Jesus!), it becomes understandable that Paul had disagreements with them. In their eyes Gentiles – no matter how much they venerated Jesus – would appear as non-normative and be stereotyped as an outgroup. Paul on the other hand offers in his letters Christ as the one and only option for the superordinate group and prototype.

But what does this prototype look like in the light of Mummendey and Wenzel’s model? In terms of clarity/uncertainty, Paul’s Christ-prototype can be deemed quite vague. As such, it supports diversity. Christ is detached from the historical figure of Jesus and transformed into a near abstract concept. The concept is then attached to very general, poetic, and ambiguous themes such as resurrection, death, love, etc. Accurate descriptions of how to act according to these examples are often missing. Consider, for example, Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians to have the mind of Christ, who,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 167–68.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 165.

though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God
 as something to be exploited,
 but emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave,
 being born in human likeness.
 And being found in human form,
 he humbled himself
 and became obedient to the point of death –
 even death on a cross.

(Phil 2:6–8)

Obedience and humility are clearly in view, but such qualities can be understood in different ways. Paul himself likens the physical illness of Epaphroditos to being obedient “unto death” (Phil. 2:30)! As for the scope, the prototype seems quite large. Although we only have a few letters by Paul and not all areas of life are covered in them, the frequency with which Paul refers to Christ in various contexts suggest that he wanted the prototype to be widely present. A good example of how the Christ-prototype is present in all aspects of life is Paul’s discussion concerning marriage in 1 Cor 7, where he essentially recommends celibacy in order that mundane relationships not interfere with the constant consciousness of “the Lord.” In Galatians (2:20) he even exclaims that his whole identity has been replaced by Christ, and in Philippians he insists that life itself is “Christ” for him (1:21). Thus, it should be noted that even though Paul in practice allowed many previous identities to exist, he at least sometimes idealized a life where secular identifications would give way to spiritual ones.

The last two characteristics of the prototype are the ones that, according to Mummendey and Wenzel, enable active acceptance and positive evaluation of the outgroup’s differences instead of just passive tolerance.⁷⁷ The idea of a complex and multimodal prototype is illustrated by Mummendey and Wenzel through the official Canadian policy of the 1970s. The policy denied the existence of an official Canadian culture and insisted that different groups retain their distinctive features – they are all prototypical – so that the whole has the appearance of a mosaic. This model considers diversity to be prototypical – much as Campbell and Tucker insist Paul did.⁷⁸ This fits the Paul we meet, for example, in 1 Cor 8 juggling two contradictory

⁷⁷ Ibid., 168.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

norms concerning consumption of meat offered to idols. On the one hand he claims, “no idol in the world really exists,” on the other hand, he admits “there are many gods and many lords.” On the one hand, those who eat idol meat will clearly not be harmed, but on the other hand, those whose beliefs include false gods will suffer according to their faith. But this complexity of norms is not constant in Paul. In Galatians justification is tied to faith in Christ, and law observance is nullified for both Jews and Gentiles (Gal 2:15–16). It would simply not be fair to conclude that Christ as prototype was, for Paul, void of specific content, although it can with good reason be described as ambiguous. As a promoter of the broad prototype, which allows great variance in norms, 1 Corinthians is again representative. In the question of divorce, for example, Paul even goes as far as to relax the specific prohibition of the Lord (1 Cor 7:10–11) in order to make room for variance.

A Systematic and Singular Paul?

Perhaps the most serious problem with the interpretation of Campbell and Tucker (and many others) is the unexpressed presumption that Paul's beliefs and behavior must conform to a single, coherent view and that his thoughts can be arranged into a systematic whole. The rationale is that even when the theology is not completely visible in the letters, Paul must have had a full, coherent system operating in the background.⁷⁹ He cannot hold contradictory views. The consistency of Paul's argumentation has been discussed vigorously at least since Heikki Räisänen's work *Paul and the Law* (1983). In this work Räisänen concluded that Paul's argumentation concerning the Mosaic law could not be viewed as a systematic and consistent whole. Rather, Paul seemed to have certain “intuitions” about the law which he then, with varying success, attempted to justify with scripture.⁸⁰ What allowed Räisänen to view Paul in such a fundamentally human light was the methodological distinction between theology and history.⁸¹ When Paul was viewed like any other historical figure, his texts also revealed a completely human thinker whose argumentation was imperfect and often

79 Thus, Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul*, 17.

80 Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 268.

81 Clarified thoroughly in Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology*. Interestingly for the topic of plurality and tolerance, Räisänen held adamantly that historical critical exegesis of the Bible was key to producing tolerance towards other religions. Being critical towards our own tradition allows us to view ourselves as similar and equal to others (Räisänen, “Biblical Critics in the Global Village,” 27).

unsystematic. Even though the idea of a human Paul may be intuitively clear and acceptable to all (who would explicitly claim otherwise!), it seems that the idea is seldom followed through rigorously. The reason is most likely the status of the letters as part of the Christian canon and an understanding of Paul as a timeless authority.

Another matter that effects both how Paul's consistency and relationship to Judaism is understood has to do with the relationship between Acts and Paul's letters. The two offer very different portraits of Paul. In the story of Acts, Paul is depicted in harmonious and respectful continuity with his Jewish past, while his own letters offer a much more confused and fragmented image.⁸² The Paul of Acts, however, is largely fictional and there has been a strong demand to study the historical Paul considering his letters alone.⁸³

Tucker seems quite aware of the possibility that Paul argues differently at different times. In response to Dale Martin's contention that Paul considered Gentiles in Christ as no longer Gentiles but as part of Israel, Tucker responds that he permits "the possibility of polysemy" and that the presence of universalistic thinking does not exclude the possibility that particularistic discourse may also appear.⁸⁴ The notion could and should be taken further.

One way to illustrate and support the notion of a "fully human Paul" – and everything that follows from it – is to apply to him the concept of *social identity*. In SIA, social identity is understood as the person's self-conception as a group member, comprising knowledge of belonging together with emotional and value judgements of this membership.⁸⁵ Since a person belongs to many groups, he or she will naturally have many social identifications.⁸⁶ Two aspects of social identity are particularly important for current purposes. Firstly, social identifications are contextual in nature. This means that the existing environment, together with variables such as the *fit* and *accessibility* of an identity,⁸⁷ determines which identification becomes salient.⁸⁸ Secondly, various identifications do not necessarily cohere with

82 Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 21, on Paul's Pharisaic background: "The contrast in the intention of these relatively similar biographical notes remains unbridgeable. Luke wants to depict Paul in his continuity with Judaism, while Paul himself wants to express the radical break with all that had once been dear to him as a Pharisaic Jew faithful to the law."

83 See Nikki, *Opponents and Identity*, 93–95.

84 Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 117.

85 Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 7.

86 Abrams and Hogg, "Introduction," 2.

87 Hogg, "Social Identity Theory," 119.

88 According to *ibid.*, 115: "in any given situation only one identity is psychologically salient to govern self-construal, social perception, and social conduct. As the situation or context changes, so does the salient identity, or the form that the identity takes."

each other. They may even be conflicting. Logically, contradictions may be expected to occur especially between identifications that are situated at the collective end of the personal–social continuum. In these situations, the person can become depersonalized and adopt the group's belief and value system completely.⁸⁹

What, then, follows from the fact that Paul, too, had several social identifications that were contextual and not necessarily coherent with each other? Most importantly, either/or questions lose significance. While the questions of Paul's Jewish/non-Jewish identity remain interesting, the need to decide whether Paul was a law-observing Jew or not disappears. In fact, we can trust Paul's own observation of the contextual variation of his identities: he was a Jew when with Jews, and a Gentile when with Gentiles (1 Cor 9).⁹⁰ In the context of 1 Corinthians, or any of his other letters for that matter, Paul never loses sight of the superordinate "in Christ" identity. Thus, in 1 Corinthians, he clearly considers Jew and Gentile to be its subidentities, exactly as Tucker suggests. But what he reveals in 1 Cor 9 is that these identities were no longer fixed: they can be transcended and alternated. Furthermore, although Paul's letters portray him as identifying strongly with the Christ-identity,⁹¹ we cannot rule out that when Paul was "a Jew with the Jews," he, too, viewed Judaism as the superordinate identity.

As for tolerance towards various subidentities in Christ, Paul's view varies as well. It is true that in 1 Cor 7:17–24 Paul encourages the retainment of previous identities and argues for their equality in Christ. The meaningfulness and prescriptive role of the idea is evident from Paul's insistence that he teaches the same rule in all his churches. This guideline was not, however, as clear as Paul portrays it to be: the same letter already testifies (1 Cor 9) that the rule did not apply to Paul himself.

The situation becomes even more complex when we look at Paul's other letters. I have elsewhere discussed the Letter to the Philippians and insisted that it shows no tolerance towards Jewish identity.⁹² The context of the letter is key: the audience is fully Gentile, and Paul's intention is to warn against some

89 Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 25.

90 Tucker's suggestion (*Remain in Your Calling*, 102–5) that the term "under the law" in 1 Cor 9:20 refers to a Pharisaic subgroup within Judaism is quite forced. That Paul must define the same term in Phil 3:5 ("as to the law, a Pharisee") speaks against Tucker's interpretation.

91 Paul generally comes across as a "high identifier," that is, someone who has invested much in a particular identification and generally sees similarity with other groups as a threat more easily than a "low identifier." For high and low identifiers, see Jetten et al., "Similarity as a Source of Differentiation," 621–40.

92 Nikki, "Flexible Apostle"; Nikki, *Opponents and Identity*, 173–75.

who wanted the Gentile Christ-believers to assume Jewish identity markers. These “opponents” were Jewish Christ-believers and, while they may have considered “in Christ” to be the superordinate identity, they apparently did not view this as automatically implicating the equality of Gentiles as Gentiles. It is by no means a given that a prototype based on the historical Jesus, who was completely saturated with Judaism, would even have encouraged this. It is also possible that the opponents, although highly respectful of Jesus/Christ, eventually considered Judaism the imperative identity.

Either way, Paul counters the view of these Jewish Christians by taking an extreme position: he portrays Jewish identity as unacceptable in Christ and describes it in slanderous terms. Christ is depicted as the prototype – not of Jews and Gentiles alike – but only of those who “have no confidence in the flesh” (a negative reference to circumcision) and who do not consider that “god is the belly” (a slanderous reference to food regulations). The procedure is a clear example of discrimination as Mummendey and Wenzel describe it: “discrimination results from the generalization of ingroup attributes to the inclusive category, which then become criteria for judging the outgroup.”⁹³

Paul’s interest is chiefly in protecting the Philippians’ Gentile background and in preventing them from taking on a Jewish identity. But the procedure goes well beyond this: Paul castigates his *own* Jewish past as well. It has proven hard to understand that Paul, who in Rom 11 states that Jews are advantaged “[m]uch, in every way,” suddenly calls them “the [people of the] Mutilation” (Phil 3:2)⁹⁴ and describes his own Jewish credentials as “garbage/excrement” (Phil 3:8). A common solution has been to deny the harsh nature of the claims and see them only as a statement of perspective or degree. Many have interpreted Paul’s point in Phil 3 to be merely to “relativize” Judaism in the light of the Christ-identity – but not as its full out denial.⁹⁵ This interpretation, however, seems to arise from an inherent need to regard Paul as a coherent thinker and person. If the matter is considered from the point of view of secular social psychology, Paul’s texts only reveal

93 Mummendey and Wenzel, “Social Discrimination,” 158.

94 The term *κατατομή* (mutilation) is a word play on the term *περιτομή* (circumcision). The latter was used as a collective term for the Jewish people (Gal 2:7–9, Rom 15:8, Eph 2:11), which means that the term mutilation refers to the people as well (“the Mutilation”).

95 E.g. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 316. Betz, *Studies in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 55–59, divides Paul’s list of gains in Phil 3:5–6 into two, the first set “identifying him as a Jew, and the other set as a Pharisee.” He suggests Paul’s “re-evaluation pertains to [his previous] Pharisaic way of life.” But the text does not suggest such a division; cf. Francis Watson, who states that in this connection Paul “renounces [...] his whole covenant-status as a Jew” (Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, 78).

to us the vacillation of Paul's social identifications in different contexts.⁹⁶ In Philippians he is "a Gentile to Gentiles" and acts accordingly, even to the point of applying Gentile anti-Jewish slander.⁹⁷

Are Romans the New Jews?

A further problem presents itself in Tucker's and Campbell's counter-imperial reading of Paul. There has been a trend in recent Pauline scholarship to shift the emphasis in Paul's opponents from Jews and Jewish Christians to Roman imperial power.⁹⁸ Campbell and Tucker openly join this trend, albeit in more moderate form than its most radical proponents.⁹⁹ Whereas the existence of disagreement between Paul and Jewish-Christian faction(s) of the earliest church is widely accepted, Campbell and Tucker deny it and claim that "Peter and Paul were not engaged in competing missions" and that their missions were "not competing but complementary."¹⁰⁰ They join those who view the imperial context as "a corrective to the traditional view that the primary focal point of conflict in the early Christ-movement was between Jews, Jewish-Christians, and Paul's communities" and, indeed, claim that "Paul's ultimate opponent was Rome."¹⁰¹

Although it is difficult (and often unnecessary) to speculate about motivations behind these kind of judgements, it is hard to escape the feeling that the "interpretative choice"¹⁰² is mainly propelled by modern concern for diversity in the church (applaudable in itself!)¹⁰³ and/or an ideologically motivated

96 For the role of Paul's attempted prototypical leadership in a Gentile context, see Nikki, "Flexible Apostle"; Nikki, *Opponents and Identity*, 174–79.

97 Ibid., 164.

98 Most notably Warren Carter (*Roman Empire and the New Testament*) and Richard Horsley (together with the several contributors to Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, such as Neil Elliot and Dieter Georgi).

99 Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 124.

100 Ibid., 63.

101 Ibid.. One difference between Tucker's and Campbell's views concerns the so-called problem of realized eschatology in Corinth. Campbell favors the traditional view (*Creation of Christian Identity*, 86–87), but Tucker believes Paul is criticizing Roman imperial eschatology (*You Belong to Christ*, 65, 206–26).

102 A term used by Tucker, *ibid.*, 61.

103 For the role of contemporary matters on empire-critical interpretations, see Klostergaard Petersen, "Imperial Politics," 103–4. Zetterholm justifies the "Paul within Judaism" outlook by stressing that historical research should be conducted "regardless of its consequences for Christian theology" ("Paul within Judaism," 46). I completely agree. But this does not give license to bring other, modern ideological factors into play.

wish to portray the beginnings of the Christian movement as unanimous and harmonious. Curiously, a similar trend is visible already inside the New Testament. The Book of Acts in particular notoriously ignores Paul's letters and their compromising material, projecting the well-known disagreements in the church unto an unnamed, probably fictional, "third party."¹⁰⁴

Tucker's interpretation also poses a problem of continuity. According to him, Paul is invested and interested in protecting Roman civic identity among Gentile Christ-believers. This is regarded as necessary in order to keep Paul non-sectarian and pro-diversity, whereas Horrell's radically anti-imperial Paul is accused of undue egalitarianism which, like universalism, erases diverse identifications.¹⁰⁵ Tucker positions himself between Horsley's radicalism and Joseph Marchal's compliant Paul, who continues to support the patriarchal structures of the empire. Tucker sees Rome as Paul's "primary interlocutor" but refuses to see Paul as completely unaccepting of Roman values such as hierarchy and household.¹⁰⁶ Inasmuch as the ingroup Roman identity is a continuation of the outgroup Roman identity, the question arises as to how much this identity actually needs to be "transformed" in order to move from most unwanted outgroup identity to an accepted, even protected, ingroup identity. How much can actually be "retained" in a radically "transformed" identity and can the identity still be viewed as the same one?

On a more general note, it is worrisome that the anti-imperial readings of Paul remain almost untouched by methodological advancements in "mirror-reading"¹⁰⁷ that have been achieved in the long-lived study of Paul's Jewish/Jewish Christian/Christian opponents. These studies have pointed out, for example, how important it is to critically separate informative evidence from material that is rhetorically too saturated to reveal anything about the "real world" behind the text. Furthermore, these studies have demonstrated the wide range of possible interpretations of any given text and the risk of choosing one over others without decisive evidence.¹⁰⁸ Various "covert," "hidden," or "subversive" readings are thus, with good reason, to be considered suspect.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Nikki, *Opponents and Identity*, 122–23.

¹⁰⁵ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 125.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 126–27.

¹⁰⁷ The term is often used negatively, but I prefer to understand it as a neutral term for a necessary procedure.

¹⁰⁸ See Nikki, *Opponents and Identity*, 28–31, for the problems and limitations of mirror-reading.

¹⁰⁹ Diehl, "Anti-Imperial Rhetoric," 69, defines subversive language as "reinterpretation or a new construal of established, commonly understood concepts," so that the message can spread

Tucker's notion of Roman imperial eschatology serves as an example of problematic mirror-reading. Tucker joins the discussion about Corinthian eschatology, and suggests a novel solution: he believes the eschatological error of the Corinthians had its roots in Roman imperial eschatology and that Paul encountered in Corinth "a group of Christ-followers [who] had become more confident in the Augustan gospel of the new age."¹¹⁰ Tucker, quite correctly to my mind, criticizes previous interpretations of the Corinthian exigency, which rely on the notion of overrealized eschatology as the underlying problem.¹¹¹ However, there is nothing in his own suggestion that indicates a methodologically and/or epistemologically sounder solution. Tucker, for example, suggests that in 1 Cor 2:6–9 Paul is reminding the Corinthians that Rome's power is perishable.¹¹² But there is no actual indication that Paul is *correcting* the Corinthians' view with this particular statement. The underlying antagonism in the context is between the strong and the weak in the Corinthian church, and the key question in the literary context is wisdom. It is at least equally plausible to see the reference to the perishing power of "the rulers of this age" as one element in the chain of dangerous repercussions Paul links to the mindset of the strong. Similarly, there is no tangible evidence to suggest that Paul's recommendation of celibacy (1 Cor 7:29–30) is directed against Augustan marriage policy.¹¹³

As for the overall believability of the anti-imperial interpretations, several scholars have recently expressed their criticism and called for moderation. Anders Klostergaard Petersen, for example, believes that "more weight is being ascribed to the relevance of the imperial cult as an appropriate context for the interpretation of Pauline texts than it actually merits."¹¹⁴ Niko Huttunen does not consider Paul to be a political dissident, either. In

"throughout the empire without putting the authors or the readers into a treasonous position." For the concept of "hidden transcript," see Heilig, *Hidden Criticism?*, 50–54. Hidden transcript can either be allowed to appear in public contexts by the dominant culture, be restricted solely to the subgroups, or appear in public in "veiled form" and "within the limits of a sanction-free realm" (ibid., 54). The latter is how Paul's imperial criticism is understood. For reservations about the attribution of imperial criticism on the basis of verbal correspondences with imperial terms, see Klostergaard Petersen, "Imperial Politics," 110–12. In mirror-reading terms, Petersen is referring to problematic "latching onto particular words" (see Barclay's criteria for mirror-reading, Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter").

¹¹⁰ Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling*, 226.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 193–200.

¹¹² See ibid., 206–8.

¹¹³ Ibid., 211–12.

¹¹⁴ E.g. Klostergaard Petersen, who expresses criticism also of the concept of imperial cult. He considers it mainly a scholarly reconstruction and "a second-order concept" and warns against its anachronistic use ("Imperial Politics," 109).

fact, he points out that the *only* place where Paul explicitly discusses Roman authorities, Rom 13:1–7, comprises an “unlimited theological justification for the state.”¹¹⁵ The anti-imperialist interpretation of the passage relies on the notion of irony,¹¹⁶ which makes it another example of mirror-reading gone haywire. Interpretative guidelines are clearly missing when a simple affirmation is read as its polar opposite.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to assess J. Brian Tucker's and William S. Campbell's reconstruction of a tolerant, “particularistic” Paul, who supported the existence of various ethnic and civic identities within the superordinate category of Christ-believers. The model was approached critically with an eye to internal consistency and believability, hermeneutical issues, and questions of identity and tolerance. Paul's tolerance was further examined with the help of the so-called mutual intergroup differentiation model, which stresses the role of broad, complex, and vague prototypes in creating acceptance between subgroups. In the light of this model, Paul was found to apply the Christ-prototype both in tolerance-promoting and in discriminative ways.

Finally, it was concluded that the question of Paul's tolerance cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Paul, as a human being, exhibits a natural variation between different social identifications and concomitant attitudes depending on the social context. While in 1 Corinthians and Romans – the latter dealt with less in this article – Paul stresses tolerance for diversity very much in the manner suggested by Campbell and Tucker, in Galatians and Philippians we meet a Paul who identifies with the Gentile Christ-believing addressees and shows no tolerance for a Jewish identity. In these situations, Paul projects onto the superordinate category “in Christ” only the characteristics and norms of the Gentile Christian ingroup, which is to be viewed as an act of discrimination against Jewish Christ-believers.

115 Huttunen, “How Fantasy Comes True,” 95. Huttunen has shown that Paul in Rom 13 subscribes to the common ancient view of the law of the stronger (*ibid.*, 98–101), “an ancient mindset that people are classified by their strength – even in intellectual, moral, and spiritual matters” (103). This thinking claims that a superior position is a sign of God's favor and that “God is on the side of the powerful” (who are also required to show moderation toward those who are weaker; 100–1). Huttunen sees Paul's thinking as a form of political realism (101).

116 This is how Diehl, “Anti-Imperial Rhetoric,” 56–58, interprets the passage; similarly, see Huttunen, “How Fantasy Comes True,” 97.

This article has suggested that it is best to view Paul's letters and other biblical writings in the light of the methodological distinction between history and theology, as suggested for example by Heikki Räisänen, who has also stressed that true tolerance requires that one be able to view one's own tradition critically. In this logic, Paul or any other biblical author need not disappoint us, since *our* tolerance as readers of the Bible is considered separately from the (in)tolerance of *biblical authors*.

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5. Since When Were Martyrs Jewish?

Apologies for the Maccabees' Martyrdom and Making of Religious Difference¹

Anna-Liisa Rafael

Abstract

This article examines three fourth-century homilies (by Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo) on the so-called Maccabean martyrs. It calls into question the scholarly commonplace that these homilies offer a case of Christian appropriation of Jewish martyrs and argues instead that a positive notion of Jewish martyrdom – that is, martyrdom for Christ before Christ – develops within the early Christian martyrological discourse expressly with the help of the Maccabean martyr figures.

Keywords: Maccabean martyrs; Gregory Nazianzen; John Chrysostom; Augustine of Hippo

The late antique Christianization of the so-called “Maccabees” – that is, the seven brothers, their teacher Eleazar, and their mother² – is often presented in historical scholarship as an “extremely interesting case of Christian appropriation of Jewish culture.”³ Scholars have suggested that in the second half of the fourth century, Christian homilies on the Maccabees were composed for the feast of the Maccabees in order to justify the Christian

1 I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer of this article for insightful and compelling comments that forced me to reorganize my argument and my thoughts. My colleagues Vilja Alanko, Siiri Toiviainen Rø, and Timo R. Stewart were also invaluable in this process.

2 The name “Maccabees” (Gr. Μακκαβαῖοι; Lat. *Machabei*) is commonly used to denote these figures in late antique Christian literature, though in the books of the Maccabees only Judas is called “Maccabee.” For their stories, see 2 Macc 6–7, as well as 4 Maccabees.

3 De Wet, “Old Age,” 54.

reverence of these “Maccabean martyrs [who] were not Christians but [...] extremely self-conscious Jews.”⁴ The Christianization of the Maccabees shows how “early Christian scriptural exegesis was a double-edged sword that could be used to induce violence against others as well as to validate its results ideologically once such violence had taken place.”⁵

But how remarkable is it that late antique Christians tolerated – and some even adored – these Maccabees? This article questions the commonly accepted assumption underlying the scholarly reconstructions of the Christianization of the Maccabees in late antiquity, which presents Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother prior to their Christian appropriation as unattractive to Christians due to their Jewishness. I argue instead that these Maccabees become increasingly, though not entirely, “Jewish” in the process of their “Christianization” in late antiquity.

I build my argument primarily on three homilies that are straightforward apologies for the Maccabees’ martyrdom. I contend that these homilies do not reflect intolerance of Jews or Judaism as much as they bear witness to the making of a difference between being Christian and being Jewish: their notions of being Christian and being Jewish are not necessarily binary, nor are they mutually exclusive, and the distinction between the two groups is far more blurred than the prevailing scholarly view assumes. Working on the premise that the Maccabees can be declared to be either Jewish or Christian only when a suitable, culturally meaningful, and solid enough difference between “Jews” and “Christians” exists, I provide a fresh perspective on the Maccabees and their “Christianization,” which I also claim to be historically more accurate. My argument is that such a distinction between “Jews” and “Christians” was only integrated into the Christian discourse of martyrdom in the fourth century – and with the help of these Maccabees.⁶

I shall proceed as follows. First, I introduce the apologetic character of the three late antique homilies under discussion, paying attention to their mutual differences as well as their similarities in rhetoric and literary

4 Rouwhorst, “Emergence,” 83. I speak of homilies without maintaining a distinction between a homily and a sermon, as I consider them to be written speeches, literary products, regardless of their possibly oral origin. I also prefer to speak of the feast, or veneration, instead of the cult. However, the research literature used in this article is not unified on these points.

5 Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 9.

6 My discussion is limited to the discourse of martyrdom within Christian sources. Even so, I do not presume that all early or late antique Christian views on martyrdom were similarly disposed; for martyrdom as a concept under constant negotiation, see Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 8–15. Thus, I do not operate with any fixed definition of a “martyr” but rather understand the term (Gr. μάρτυς; Lat. *martyr*) as part of the studied discourse; the same goes for the terms “Christian” and “Jew(ish).”

strategy. Secondly, I provide an overview of the twentieth-century historical scholarship on the Christianization of the Maccabees, which reflects the primary context of interpretation of these homilies and has resulted in excessive emphasis on the Maccabees' Jewishness. Thirdly, I make some critical remarks concerning this context and the ways in which "Jewish" and "Christian" are displayed therein as fixed categories. In the second half of the article, I argue that martyrdom, not Jewishness, is the focal issue in the homilies that are apologetic of the Maccabees. In fact, these homilies barely connect the Maccabees with anything Jewish. In my reading, they neither present a case of Christian intolerance of Jews nor do they introduce a sign of tolerance. Rather, I suggest that late antique Christians, unlike modern scholars, were not accustomed to conceptualizing a category such as "Jewish martyrs".

Three Homilies on the Maccabees as Late Antique Christian Apologetic Literature

Three homilies dated to the late fourth or early fifth century present the martyrdom of the Maccabees as a matter of debate and use the opportunity to defend it: Gregory Nazianzen's homily *In Praise of the Maccabees* (*Mach. laud.*), John Chrysostom's *On Eleazar and the Seven Boys* (*Eleaz. puer.*), and Augustine of Hippo's *On the Solemnity of the Maccabean Martyrs* (*Mart. Mach.*).⁷ Their presentations of the Maccabees as contested martyrs comprise a new phenomenon in comparison to previous Christian presentations, in which these heroic figures appear as exemplary and honorable, being often included in lists of the pious of the past.⁸ The novelty of Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's homilies is to provide two opinions, not just one, concerning these Maccabees: the preferred, "Christian" opinion and another one to be refuted. This feature leads all these homilies to be apologetic of the Maccabees' martyrdom. Yet, while the homilist always defends the Maccabees' martyrdom, the view they refute is in each case somewhat different and represented by a different kind of opponent.

7 I use the English translations (slightly modified) and follow their division into paragraphs. The Greek and Latin editions are the same as used for the translations. For full references, see Bibliography under each author.

8 Vinson ("Gregory Nazianzen's Homily 15," 171–75) classifies references to the Maccabees in Greek Christian literature before the late fourth century as "historical," "exegetical," and "hagiographical."

The earliest surviving homily composed for the feast of the Maccabees is ascribed to Gregory Nazianzen.⁹ The apologetic element can be identified in its opening lines:

Who are the Maccabees? The festival at hand is theirs, who are not held in honour among many because their contest did not take place after Christ; even so, they are worthy of everyone's respect because of their endurance for the ancestors.¹⁰

According to Martha Vinson, such an opening bespeaks the novelty of the feast: "the congregation really does not know whose feast it is or why the Maccabees should be so honoured." Moreover, it reveals that speaking about the Maccabees as martyrs must have sounded odd to Nazianzen's contemporaries: the "sense that Gregory is breaking new ground is only confirmed when he [...] devot[es] all of the first two sections of his homily to justifying the veneration of Jewish, that is, pre-Christian, martyrs."¹¹ Nevertheless, only a few lines later Nazianzen exhorts his audience to admire the Maccabees in the following manner:

Where did they [i.e. the Maccabees] come from? What kind of culture and education did they have so as to rise to such a peak of valour and renown that they are both honoured annually with these festal processions and every heart treasures their glory in greater measure than these visible expressions indicate?¹²

This passing reference to the unreserved popularity of the Maccabees may come across as surprising, considering that Nazianzen has just lamented that many do not honor them. If one wishes to take both these descriptions as referring to the historical context of the feast, one must conclude that the "many" were in Nazianzen's audience but he quickly persuaded them to "treasure the glory" of the Maccabees; in the rest of the homily, there is no further mention of the many or their view. Alternatively, Nazianzen's description of the "many" or his reference to "every heart" – or both of these – may not be loyal to the people's real attitudes towards the Maccabees

9 Ibid., 175.

10 *Mach. laud.* 15.1.

11 Vinson, "Gregory Nazianzen's Homily 15," 176. Vinson's view is generally widely accepted; see e.g. Wendy Mayer, in Mayer, ed., *Cult of the Saints*, 119–20, 135–36; Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories*, 33–34.

12 *Mach. laud.* 15.2.

or their feast; rather, they could both be rhetorical devices used by the homilist to emphasize the significance of his topic.

Chrysostom and Augustine share Nazianzen's admiration of the virtuous character of the Maccabees, which connects the Maccabees to other martyrs.¹³ Yet, they do not develop this theme to the same extent as Nazianzen. Instead, both devote themselves to discussing the actual cause for which the Maccabees died. While they confidently identify that cause to have been Christ, they both also acknowledge the possibility that someone might think it was the law, following literally the accounts of these marturdoms. Consequently, to defend the view that the Maccabees were martyrs, both homilies provide minute guidelines on how to understand the law in relation to Christ: having died for the law, they had really died for Christ.

Regardless of these similarities, Chrysostom and Augustine differ from one another with respect to the opponent they have in mind. Chrysostom refutes the view represented by "the weaker among our brothers and sisters." He is concerned with any fellow Christian who would "celebrate the festival [of the Maccabees] in ignorance of the festival's basis," for

many of the more naïve, due to a mental incapacity, are being swept along by the Church's enemies [and] do not hold the appropriate opinion of these saints, nor, in the same way, do they number them in the rest of the chorus of the martyrs, saying that they didn't shed their blood for Christ but for the law and that the edicts that were in the law, in that they were killed over pig's flesh.¹⁴

Interestingly, however, this is about as much as Chrysostom has to say about the Maccabees' martyrdom; he does not explore their story in order to show that they truly had been martyrs for Christ. Instead, he shifts the discussion onto the law and onto Paul, who "clearly understands the matters concerning both old and new" and who thus would take no issue with Christ being the lawgiver.¹⁵ "But," Chrysostom adds,

if the Jew cannot endure these words, come, let us capture him with his own weapons, engaging him in debate with nothing from Paul, Peter or

¹³ See e.g. *Eleaz. puer.* 5; *Mart. Mach.* 300.5.

¹⁴ *Eleaz. puer.* 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 5; cf. 1 Cor 10:1–3. Regardless of whether or not this description of Paul is accurate, it is descriptive of how Chrysostom knew Paul.

John, but from the prophets, so that he might learn that while the facts are on his side, the meaning is on ours.¹⁶

The problem related to the feast of the Maccabees ties in with an exegetical problem that Chrysostom seems more determined to solve: his discussion of the Maccabees only introduces the topic which the bulk of the homily is devoted to, namely, the true identity of the giver of the old and the new covenants, as attested by the prophet Jeremiah. He uses Jeremiah's words to make his argument that Christ had presented both the new and the old covenants.¹⁷ Only having proven that it was "Christ [who] gave the law," he returns to the "people who were killed for the law" and who therefore must have "shed their blood for the giver of the law."¹⁸

When Chrysostom enters into dialogue with "the Jew" and seizes the Jew with his "own weapons," he leaves aside the topic of the Maccabees and the weaker brothers and sisters, suggesting that the Maccabees did not belong to the Jewish scriptural heritage.¹⁹ With respect to the Maccabees, Chrysostom's opponent is an ill, more naïve – or perhaps more ignorant – fellow Christian, not a Jew. It is fellow Christians who might not discern the meaning behind the letters but stick to them, thinking that the Maccabees had been "killed over pig's flesh."²⁰ Augustine alone circulates Jewish claims of ownership of the Maccabees:

Some Jew steps forward and says to us, "How can you reckon these people of ours to be your martyrs? How can you be so unwise as to celebrate their memory? Read their confessions; see whether they confessed Christ."²¹

Augustine's defence of the Maccabees as martyrs of Christ (*martyres Christi*) in response to the Jew crystallizes the distinction between the "plain" and "hidden" ways of the martyrs. Using Paul's metaphor, he claims that the practice of dying for the Mosaic law, which actually entailed dying for "Christ veiled in the law," did not differ in any significant way from the practice

16 *Eleaz. puer.* 6.

17 *Ibid.* 7. Yet Chrysostom's "words of Jeremiah" already anticipate his Christian interpretation thereof; see Tolonen, "Interactions."

18 *Eleaz. puer.* 16.

19 For these two discussions that remain separate throughout the homily, though their argumentation is clearly parallel, see Tolonen, "Preaching, Feasting," 123–29.

20 *Eleaz. puer.* 4.

21 *Mart. Mach.* 300.3.

of dying for “Christ unveiled in the gospel.” Only a Jew could not see this, their eyes still being veiled.²²

Scholars have taken these presentations of the Maccabees’ martyrdom as a genuine reflection of the historical realities of the fourth century: Leonard Rutgers identifies in these homilies a “feeling of unease among certain Christians” caused by the “wholehearted acceptance of the Maccabees by important representatives of the church.” He adds that “the main criticism must have been that the Maccabees died [...] in defence of the Jewish law.”²³ Gerard Rouwhorst specifies the attitudes reflected in these homilies as resulting from reluctance or even embarrassment to extol Jewish subjects, which he deems to be something that one could expect from late antique Christians.²⁴ Both Rutgers and Rouwhorst read these homilies as immediate top-down responses of Christian leaders, which were purposed to ease negative feelings towards the Maccabees within their respective communities by “effac[ing] the chronological and historical differences between the original Jewish and later Christian martyrs’ accounts” and “leaching this [i.e. the original] account of its Jewish characteristics.”²⁵

In light of the literary analysis I have presented above, one might ask why a reflection of real, historical opponents should be derived from these homilies in the first place. Could not the “many,” the “weaker brothers and sisters,” and “a certain Jew” simply share a rhetorical and literary function, namely, to be lacking appreciation for the kind of view that the homilist presents?²⁶ I am inclined to read these homilies on the Maccabees as apologetic literature and their opponents as rhetorical constructions, being conventions of their time, rather than as bearing witness to real, historical Christians (or Jews). Yet, the scholarly opinion that these homilies convey the indifference towards or even repulsion for the Maccabees among historical Christians is

22 *Mart. Mach.* 300.5; cf. 2 Cor 3:14–16 quoted in *Mart. Mach.* 300.5.

23 Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 30–31.

24 Rouwhorst, “Emergence,” 93–5. The same shame narrative also underlies Rouwhorst’s first article on the topic, in which he discusses the status of the Maccabees in the eyes of (Western) Christians, from the establishment of their feast until their “final decline” in the twentieth century. See Rouwhorst, “Maccabean Brothers,” esp. 203–4.

25 Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 32.

26 This method of argumentation is common in late antique rhetoric and beyond. The “many” (πολλοί), which occurs in Nazianzen’s homilies abundantly, is the least specified of the three and probably the one most frequently used until today. On the opponents in Chrysostom’s rhetoric, such as the sick/sickness, wolves, or drunkenness, see Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, 116–22. For the particular Christian use of the “stereotyped” Jew, who “possessed the truth of Christianity in their own Scriptures but were unwilling to embrace it,” see e.g. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories*, 45–46; Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication*, 4–5, n. 9.

not solely based on literal analyses of the homilies but also on an external premise that something historically unique happened to the Maccabees in the fourth century. To engage in conversation with these scholars, one must familiarize oneself not only with these late antique receptions of the Maccabees but also with their reception in historical scholarship over the last century.

The Maccabees' Late Antique Afterlife in Twentieth-Century Historical Scholarship

The late antique afterlife of the Maccabees did not emerge as a topic of scholarly interest because of Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's homilies, but because of the "rediscovery" of the Maccabees' relics under the main altar of St. Peter in Chains in Rome in 1879. The appearance of the relics – that is to say, "the Maccabees" – sparked the need to trace their way to Rome. But it also raised the question of their transfer from Jewish to Christian ownership; after all, the history of the relics extended all the way back to their burial, which should have taken place not too long after their executions reported in 2 and 4 Maccabees.²⁷ Indeed, the survival of the Maccabees' relics affirmed both their execution and burial as real historical events. The burial is not recorded in 2 or 4 Maccabees, but the sixth-century chronographer John Malalas reports on an otherwise unknown incident from the time of the Maccabees: a "man named Judas, a Jew by race," had asked the Seleucid king for "the Maccabees' remains" and then buried them in Antioch, in an area where there was a synagogue.²⁸ Though somewhat dubious, Malalas's report provides the missing link to Antioch, as well as to the Jewish possession of the relics.²⁹

27 See e.g. Schatkin, "Maccabean Martyrs," 97–99, 110–11. The first article after the "rediscovery" of the relics was published by Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro (1899), who traced the progress of the relics from their placement in Antioch after the martyrdom of the Maccabees to their transfer to Constantinople and, finally, to Rome in late antiquity. Schatkin ("Maccabean Martyrs," 99–100) accepts Rampolla's assumption that the execution and burial of the Maccabees were real historical events that had taken place in Antioch.

28 *Chron.* 8.23–24.

29 Malalas's account, though attempting to bridge the gaps, seems far from historically credible: the aforementioned Judas the Jew appears from nowhere to address Demetrianos, who reigned after Antiokhos and his son Antiokhos Glaukos. This is to say, the Seleucid kings kept the Maccabees' remains somewhere for several years before Judas buried them. Malalas's data concerning the Seleucid history of Antioch is not that reliable in general; see Mayer and Allen, *Churches*, 90, n. 169.

Yet, even Malalas does not tell how the Maccabees' relics ended up in the hands of Christians. Thus, scholars took it as their task to fill this gap in the history of the Maccabees' remains. As long as one considered the Maccabees' relics to date back to the times of the Maccabees, the idea that they had originally been kept in the custody of Jews seemed only natural; there were no Christians around at the time when the Maccabees were executed. In the absence of fourth-century evidence for the transfer of the relics, scholars identified Antiochene Jewish-Christian rivalries in the late fourth century as the more general context in which Christians could have robbed Jews of the relics. Chrysostom's homilies and, in particular, the series "against the Jews" became significant for this interpretation.³⁰ While the takeover of a synagogue that had hosted the Maccabees' relics could not be confirmed, the lack of such evidence did not need to stand in the way of the plausibility of the hypothesis, as several other known synagogues had been converted to churches in late antiquity.³¹

The three homilies on the Maccabees were harnessed to support this historical reconstruction, regardless of the fact that they do not even hint at the possibility of exchange of any physical Maccabean properties between Jews and Christians.³² Scholars who analyzed these homilies were not asking whether a takeover happened or not, but how it had happened; in the course of the twentieth century, the Maccabees had already become known as the exceptional martyrs once venerated by both Jews and Christians and as physical property that was transferred from the possession of the Antiochene Jews to Christians at some point during the fourth century.³³

Leonard V. Rutgers and Gerard Rouwhorst have taken a more critical stance towards this historical reconstruction, yet aligning broadly

30 See e.g. Schatkin, "Maccabean Martyrs," 104–8; Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, 36, 88–90; Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories*, 43.

31 On synagogues that were reportedly converted into churches, see Schatkin, "Maccabean Martyrs," 106. Vinson ("Gregory Nazianzen's Homily 15," 179–86), whose reconstruction is by far the most detailed and complex, argues that in the aftermath of the newly established Christian feast, Antioch had witnessed competing Jewish and Christian sites of veneration of the Maccabees; she also points out that synagogues were not yet converted into churches at the time. In careful agreement, Mayer and Allen (*Churches*, 90–3) conclude that there was a church in Antioch which was built and dedicated by Christians to the Maccabees, as well as a martyrion, a cave or a grotto (but not a synagogue), outside Antioch which had hosted the Maccabees' relics and been in the possession of the local Jewish community.

32 In one of his other homilies on the Maccabees, Chrysostom indicates the presence of their relics, but no competition over them is suggested; cf. *Macc.* 1.1.

33 Already Obermann ("Sepulchre," 250–51, 253, 258) speaks of the "real or legendary" relics. He does not, however, question the transfer of the relics from Jews to Christians in the fourth century, only the claim concerning their origin.

speaking with the same historical narrative. Rutgers refutes the long-standing view that Antiochene Jews would have kept the physical remains of the dead in their synagogue, basing his argument on the Jewish purity laws and the absence of documented evidence for such ancient Jewish practices. Thus, the relics of the Maccabees were more probably a Christian invention, though Christians had drawn motivation for it from scriptural traditions concerning the Maccabees, which Rutgers claims were Jewish. They were motivated by the need to rehabilitate the Antiochene “Judaizing Christians” known to have been attracted to Jewish feasts and practices. Moreover, Rutgers maintains that Antiochene Christians did take over a synagogue from local Jews, which “in one way or another, was associated with [the Maccabees’] memory,” even if it did not host the Maccabees’ relics.³⁴ He thus dismisses Malalas’s report, suggesting that Malalas tells more about his own time than he does about ancient Jews:

by the time Malalas wrote, veneration of the bones of martyrs had become common enough in early Christianity for him to assume that at some time in the past the Jews of Antioch had behaved similarly.³⁵

Rouwhorst questions another long-standing scholarly view, according to which the cult of the Maccabees emerged in order to decrease the influence of the local Jewish community on the so-called Judaizing Christians and to bring them back. He remarks that the Maccabees would have been most unfitting for such a rehabilitation task; as Jewish martyrs, they had the potential to encourage, rather than distract, Christians already fascinated by Jewish practices and beliefs. Rouwhorst explains the emergence and the rapid spread of the feast of the Maccabees by their popularity among some Christians, while taking Nazianzen’s, Chrysostom’s, and Augustine’s

34 Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 35–42, 44; see also 7–8. Rutgers’s argument was first published in 1998; my references are to the revised version published in 2009. His claim is based on the changes in the burial practices that were due to Christian veneration of the dead: against the ancient practice of burying the dead outside the city, Christians began to keep the remains of special deceased within the city walls and in their churches. Rutgers (*Making Myths*, 39, n. 53) calls Vinson’s suggestion of two separate sanctuaries – a Jewish one outside and a Christian one inside the city – as “neither convincing nor in fact necessary,” and he does not credit Vinson (see “Gregory Nazianzen’s Homily 15,” 183–85) for having also discussed Jewish burial practices. Mayer and Allen (*Churches*, 90–93, as well as 142–44) mostly agree with Vinson, while Cummins (*Paul and the Crucified Christ*, 84–85) carefully sides with even older views, according to which Jewish purity laws could have allowed the burial of dead inside a synagogue.

35 Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 48. See also Hahn, “Veneration,” 83–84.

homilies, which justify this veneration, as bespeaking the understandable difficulties of others to accept their “Jewishness.”³⁶

According to the prevailing scholarly view, Nazianzen’s, Chrysostom’s, and Augustine’s homilies on the Maccabees bear witness to a transition period, during which the Jewishness of the Maccabees was effaced and their veneration Christianized. Being products of such a time, their rhetorical constructions of the “many,” the “weaker,” and “a certain Jew” are presented as historical evidence for the now lost voices of the past people who disapproved of the Christian veneration of the Maccabees. The homilies reveal an important crack in the picture of the “success story of the Maccabees in Christian circles,” because they contain hints of real critical attitudes towards the Maccabees.³⁷ They report of “numerous Christians [who] were seriously embarrassed by the veneration of these saints” and show that the Maccabees were truly “problematic” from the perspective of “orthodox Christians.”³⁸ They seem to reflect the difficulties Christians had in coming to terms with things Jewish and their need to suppress and appropriate the potentially impressive representatives of Jews and Judaism.

Since When Were Martyrs Jewish?

Nazianzen’s, Chrysostom’s, and Augustine’s homilies comprise our primary evidence of the late antique debate concerning the Maccabees’ martyrdom. Scholarly readings of these homilies have paid careful attention to the counterarguments preserved in them, aiming to recover the Maccabees’ original and real Jewish identity effaced by Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine. The claim of the Maccabees’ original Jewishness has persisted, even though there has been a shift in the understanding of who, or what, the Maccabees were in the fourth century. Earlier, the Maccabees were primarily identified with their relics, that is, material property, which was in either Jewish or Christian custody, but towards the end of the twentieth century they have been identified increasingly as *originally Jewish* “scriptural traditions,” “Maccabean heritage,” or “memories.”³⁹

36 Rouwhorst, “Maccabean Brothers,” 189–90; “Emergence,” 82; see also Hahn, “Veneration,” 86, 90–91. Rutgers (*Making Myths*, 44–45, n. 63) disagrees, deeming Rouwhorst’s reasoning circular.

37 Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 30–32.

38 Rouwhorst, “Maccabean Brothers,” 190.

39 For the construction of Christian memories as a means of appropriation, see esp. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories*. Although Joslyn-Siemiatkoski (*ibid.*, 42–43) does not fully

The “Christianization” of the Maccabees has mostly been studied as their (forced) conversion from Judaism to Christianity, relying on the premise that the Maccabees’ identity prior to “Christianization” was Jewish. But the position that the Maccabees were “extremely self-conscious Jews”⁴⁰ and martyrs – and thus Jewish martyrs – aligns with late twentieth-century analyses of the portrayals of these figures in the books of the Maccabees.⁴¹ Fourth-century Christians could have perceived the story of the Maccabees quite differently. Indeed, it does not seem to have been customary in any late antique circles, Jewish or non-Jewish, to speak of Jews having martyrs, nor of Jewish martyrs.⁴² Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine are no exceptions: a close reading of the homilies on the Maccabees bespeaks the rarity of the notion of “Jewish martyrs” in the fourth century. None of them speak of the Maccabees as “Jewish martyrs” and, as I shall argue, none of them conceive of them as such.⁴³

Donald F. Winslow remarks that “it was not the Jewishness of the Maccabean martyrs which informed early Christian attitudes but precisely their martyrdom.”⁴⁴ Perhaps incidentally, Winslow makes an analytical distinction that I find more meaningful than Jewish/Christian for the analysis of Nazianzen’s, Chrysostom’s, and Augustine’s homilies on the Maccabees: the Maccabees’ martyrdom and their identity, or Jewishness.

agree with Rutgers, he does not return to the claim that the Jews would have kept the relics. Mayer and Allen (*Churches*, 142–44) still trace the possession of the relics.

40 Rouwhorst, “Emergence,” 83.

41 See e.g. Rajak, “Dying”; Van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*.

42 A story of the mother and her seven sons – possibly dependent on the books of the Maccabees – circulates in rabbinic literature. Yet, the claim that it concerns the “Maccabean martyrs” may be quite misleading, since the rabbinic versions do not situate their story in the Maccabean/Hasmonean context but in the context of the Roman era; nor do they call the mother and her seven sons martyrs. Unlike Latin and Coptic, in which the Greek word “martyr” is introduced as a neologism, or Syriac and Arabic, in which it is derived from the verbs “to confess” or “to witness,” late antique rabbinic Hebrew (and Aramaic) does not develop corresponding terminology for martyrs and martyrdom. Even when sanctification of the Name (*kiddush ha-Shem*) – the rabbinic notion of martyrdom – emerges in medieval Jewish thought, the terminological correspondence with the Christian (or Muslim) martyr remains loose. On *kiddush ha-Shem*, see Rajak, “Dying,” 102. As for non-Jewish late antique literature, I have come across only one instance in which the notion “Jewish martyrs” is employed: it is given as a title of a text that compares to 2 Macc 5:27–7:41 in two fourth-century Coptic manuscripts, one of which is a small codex and the other a papyrus roll; see Meltzer and Bethge, “Jewish Martyrs,” 83–84.

43 Thus my answer to the question – since when were martyrs Jewish? – is not concerned with Jewish martyrdom as a late antique phenomenon (textual or real), on which see esp. Boyarin, *Dying for God*. Instead, I am concerned with a late antique discourse that recognized “Jewish martyrs.”

44 Winslow, “Maccabean Martyrs,” 79. Winslow’s article, published in 1974, is devoid of references to research literature, apart from a few general studies on martyrdom.

This distinction helps to deconstruct the assumption that the Maccabees' martyrdom was necessarily Jewish, leading to an understanding that a debate on the Maccabees' martyrdom was not necessarily a debate concerning Jews and Judaism. Instead of taking for granted the narrative of Christian appropriation of the original (and until then Jewish) martyrs – be they material or immaterial – from the Jews, I consider it possible that these homilies do not bear witness to historical Christian feelings of unease or embarrassment at the Maccabees' Jewishness.⁴⁵ We must suspend our judgment and the accustomed story of Christian intolerance towards Jews and Judaism in order to explore what Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's apologies actually do with the Maccabees.

Few scholars have scrutinized both the similarities and the differences between these apologies for the Maccabees, including the problems linked to the Maccabees' martyrdom and the homilists' solutions to it.⁴⁶ Even fewer have paid attention to the varying degrees to which these issues are connected to Jews or anything Jewish. I find only two particularly striking similarities between these homilies. The first is a distinction made in each of them between something old (that is, pre-Christ) and something present (that is, after-Christ); each homily claims both the old and the new as quintessentially Christ-centered, sharing in the rather general frame of reference that one may by the late fourth century safely call Christian. Secondly, as I have noted above, each mobilizes conventional rhetorical constructions – the “many,” the “weaker brothers and sisters,” or “a/the Jew” – to strengthen their own argument. In each homily, these opponents serve the role of someone who cannot grasp how the old is linked to the new, how “God may be honoured among us through the old and the new.”⁴⁷

Winslow also observes that when a problem linked to the Maccabees' martyrdom emerges, the solution was already there:

The “appropriation” of the Maccabees into the liturgical calendar raised only one problem, namely, the date of their martyrdom, i.e., before Christ.

45 We cannot treat these texts as reflecting preaching on the spot without considering their literary character; see the discussion in Tolonen, “Interactions,” 497, n. 8. For Claudio Moreschini's argument that Nazianzen's homily was never delivered, see Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, 152, n. 23. My analyses of Chrysostom (Tolonen, “Preaching, Feasting,” and “Interactions”) put forth the possibility that the references to the conflict in the festival space may be most meaningfully understood as part of the theological construction of the homily.

46 Rouwhorst (“Emergence,” 93) notes the differences “as to the strategies used,” not in the problems to begin with.

47 *Mach. laud.* 15.12.

But a developing understanding of Christ as the pre-existent Logos was the ready solution to this problem. The solution said, in effect, that we need not worry if the Maccabees were martyred before Christ, since Christ himself was, and was known, before the Maccabees.⁴⁸

I do agree, though in what follows, I shall propose that the solution was *almost* there: although Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine probably agreed that Christ was already known of before and in the time of the Maccabees, at least Nazianzen and Augustine seem to consider it somewhat exceptional to suggest that Christ had been known to the Maccabees.⁴⁹

The differences between these homilies pertain to the more detailed descriptions of the problem itself and of the proponents of the opposing view. In Nazianzen's homily, the "many" appear for only a fleeting moment, not fully comprehending – in Nazianzen's estimation – how the Maccabees' martyrdom could have occurred. In Chrysostom's homily, the "many of the more naïve" (that is, some fellow Christians allegedly intellectually inferior to Chrysostom) lack the skills to interpret correctly the Maccabees' deaths for the law as being for the lawgiver, Christ. Although Chrysostom's homily also features a Jew, he is theologically opinionated about the words of Jeremiah and has nothing to say about the Maccabees. Likewise, Chrysostom does not count these Maccabees among the Jew's "own weapons." In Augustine's homily alone, some Jew, by definition not a Christian, claims that the Maccabees belonged to the Jewish people. In light of these homilies, the Maccabees' Jewishness seems anything but set in stone; the differences suggest that the more room there is for the possibility of the Maccabees' being Jewish, the more Jewish the opponent also becomes.

In contrast to Winslow's somewhat prescriptive and liberal claim that "in the last analysis authentic martyrdom knows no religious boundaries,"⁵⁰ many more recent studies suggest that "authentic martyrdom" did know religious boundaries in late antiquity, so much so that it helped to construct them.⁵¹ I suggest that Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's and Augustine's apologies for the Maccabees betray no social or political views, but the gradual construction of some theological ones, including the making of the distinction between being Christian and being Jewish. Indeed, regardless of the increasing scholarly problematization of these terms both in antiquity and in

48 Winslow, "Maccabean Martyrs," 86.

49 *Mach. laud.* 15.1; *Mart. Mach.* 300.1–2.

50 Winslow, "Maccabean Martyrs," 79.

51 See esp. Boyarin, *Dying for God*.

late antiquity,⁵² studies that aim to account for the changes in the religious identity (or, the “Christianization”) of the Maccabees have thus far taken “Jewish” and “Christian” as fixed and stable analytical categories, accepting their mutual opposition, if not hostility. Such a scholarly treatment of things Jewish, as well as Christian, reinforces a fixed religious difference between Jews and Christians, instead of asking what being Jewish or Christian may have meant to these homilists in their discussions of the Maccabees.⁵³ When we discover fourth-century Christians in the act of “Christianizing” the Maccabees, we should not begin from the conclusion that the target must have been anything but Christian. Instead, we should rather return to Nazianzen’s question, “Who are the Maccabees?” Indeed, who or what were they for late antique Christians, such that they might be claimed martyrs and Christians and, eventually, (not) Jewish?

The Maccabees’ Martyrdom, not Jewishness, as the Focal Issue

Nazianzen’s, Chrysostom’s, and Augustine’s homilies on the Maccabees give us insights into their perceptions of the Maccabees’ identity and martyrdom. Although these sources may reflect changes in the Christians’ attitudes towards Jews and Judaism, as I shall argue below, the “Jewishness” of the Maccabees is not their main concern. Instead, these late antique Christian apologies for the Maccabees seem to focus on another notion that early Christians discussed amply, and upon which they never quite seemed to have agreed, namely, Christian martyrdom. Indeed, these homilies, which present the Maccabees’ martyrdom as a matter of two opinions, demonstrate how three almost contemporaneous Christian writers were able to agree on the desirability of martyrdom without having a shared understanding of its definition or limits. Moreover, their apologies for the Maccabees remind us that “martyrdom,” while being an elastic notion, was usually understood in late antique Christian circles as a particularly Christian phenomenon. This is the case regardless of the fact that modern scholarship has identified many

52 Recently, the hottest debate has pertained to the term *Ἰουδαῖος* and its development during the centuries before and after the Common Era. See e.g. Mason, “Jews, Judaeans,” and the articles in Law and Halton, eds., *Jew and Judean*.

53 Knust (“Who Were the Maccabees?,” esp. 85–87) is an exception, for she integrates the more current discussions on Jewish/Christian as a blurred identity border in her analysis; yet, even for Knust, this blurred identity does not relate to the Maccabees in the fourth century but to fourth-century Jews and Christians. Unfortunately, her article came to my attention too late to be thoroughly integrated in the present discussion.

late antique parallel models of behavior, such as the Greco-Roman noble death tradition, or rabbis slain by the Roman emperor.⁵⁴ In Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's homilies on the Maccabees, the particular discourse of martyrdom is characterized as Christian – witness to Christ being its central concern. Consequently, had the Maccabees not been martyrs of Christ, these homilists would not have taken them to be Jewish martyrs; they would not have been martyrs at all.

Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's discussions of the martyrdom of the Maccabees combine different ancient philosophical approaches to martyrdom adapted by Christians, ranging from admiration and emulation of the martyr's virtue to taking the martyr as a figure that points to ultimate truth. Nazianzen is mostly interested in *how* the Maccabees suffered in a Christ-like manner, while both Chrysostom and Augustine put greater emphasis on the question *why*. Nazianzen refuses to overlook the "noble figures" who had "lived *in accordance with* the cross" simply for the fact that they had "lived *before* the time of the cross."⁵⁵ Such an approach shifts the focus from the timing (before/after the cross) to the perennially virtuous way of the martyrs. The deeds and words of the Maccabees speak for themselves: the bulk of Nazianzen's homily is devoted to detailed and sympathetic descriptions of the Maccabees' martyrdom, regardless of when it happened. The manner of these martyrs is timeless and something one may learn from, while what they confessed does not seem to be that central a question. Chrysostom and Augustine, in contrast, say relatively little about the Maccabees' martyrdom, being chiefly interested in the cause for which the Maccabees died, that is, the law.

Interestingly, while Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine all claim that there could have been martyrs of Christ already before his time, they differ from each other with respect to the more accurate description of the phenomenon of pre-Christ martyrdom. Nazianzen estimates the number of persons who "achieved honour before his [Christ's] day" to be large but does not specify the figure.⁵⁶ While he considers "holding someone in honour" to be synonymous with regarding someone as a martyr, he names Eleazar as the first of "those who suffered [in the manner of martyrs] before Christ" (τῶν πρὸ Χριστοῦ παθόντων), just as Stephen was the first

54 On the Greco-Roman noble death and origins of martyrdom, see e.g. Van Henten, "Noble Death"; on early Christian presentations of their martyrs in the context of and in comparison to the Greco-Roman noble death, see Middleton, "Noble Death or Death Cult?"; for a comparative reading of early Christian and early rabbinic martyr stories, see Boyarin, *Dying for God*.

55 *Mach. laud.* 15.2.

56 *Ibid.* 15.1.

after Christ.⁵⁷ This statement indicates that the large number Nazianzen has in mind is limited to the time between the Maccabees and the birth of Christ, as if there had been a specific era of martyrdom for Christ before Christ; not all the virtuous figures of the old times held in honor were considered martyrs.⁵⁸

Augustine speaks only of “these martyrs” – the mother and her seven sons, without even mentioning Eleazar in his homily.⁵⁹ Like the prophets, these martyrs had “blossomed” from the people born of Abraham.⁶⁰ While recognizing their resemblance, Augustine does nothing to bridge the gap between the Maccabees and the martyrs who lived after Christ, because the former represent for him the martyrs who died for Christ veiled, while the latter died for Christ unveiled.⁶¹ These martyrs, then, are the martyrs of the Old Testament, who foreshadow the coming of the new, Christian era with its martyrs.

Chrysostom gives by far the most peculiar account of the timing of the Maccabees, who “competed at the time when [...] the path of this kind of virtue was as yet untrodden.” While he connects them to the same pre-Christ period when Moses, Elijah, and Abraham lived, he emphasizes that the Maccabees’ performance of virtue was unlike anyone else’s at the time. The Maccabees even surpassed Peter, who feared death even though he had been in Christ’s presence.⁶² Chrysostom explains the Maccabees’ extraordinary courage by stressing the very specific timing of their deaths, which took place

when the sun of righteousness was about to rise [...] just as the dawn appears bright to us when the sun has not yet appeared [...]. For when the sun of righteousness was on the brink of coming, from then on he dissolved the darkness of fear, and although he was not yet present in

57 Ibid. 15.3.

58 Later in his homily, when Nazianzen has the mother compare herself and her children to Phinehas and Hannah (*Mach. laud.* 15.9), he claims them to be as esteemed as Daniel and the “young men in Assyria” (*Mach. laud.* 15.11). Even so, he singles out the Maccabees, repeating that in their imitation “of Christ’s shedding of his blood,” the Maccabees “could not point to many, or such, demonstrations of virtue” (*Mach. laud.* 15.11).

59 According to Tkacz (“Seven Maccabees,” 62), Augustine discusses the seven Maccabean brothers in twenty-two texts and mentions their mother at least ten times; Eleazar is mentioned only once.

60 *Mart. Mach.* 300.1.

61 Ibid. 300.4.

62 *Eleaz. puer.* 5.

the flesh, he was nonetheless close at hand and on the verge, and from then on had a hand in what was happening.⁶³

The differences between Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's more accurate descriptions of the phenomenon of pre-Christ martyrdom suggest that there was no common understanding concerning it. While the Maccabees were already celebrated annually, there was flexibility concerning the details of such martyrdom. Nazianzen underlines the supremacy of the martyrs' virtue and its continuity in times before and after Christ, making the point that it had been possible to live "in accordance with the cross" even before Christ, at least within a specific era that had begun with Eleazar.⁶⁴ Chrysostom and Augustine put more emphasis on the change to an era that took place somewhere between the Maccabees and the later martyrs. For Augustine, this shift correlated with the eras marked by the Christian Old and New Testaments. So impressed was he by the Maccabees' courage, Chrysostom seems almost prepared to compromise the life of Christ as the hinge point.⁶⁵

Earlier in the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea cautioned that "some of the other heresies have immense numbers of martyrs, yet surely we shall not for this reason give them our assent, nor acknowledge that they possess the truth."⁶⁶ His remark clarifies that Christians were not supposed to accept all the martyrs that were claimed, thereby suggesting that causes with people dying for them could have had particular appeal to Christians. According to Daniel Boyarin, Eusebius's account entails the function of martyrs "as counters for internal 'apologies' within Christianity between groups."⁶⁷ Through such internal apologies for "true" martyrs, as well as rejections of "false" ones, concerns for orthodoxy and heresy penetrated the Christian discourse of martyrdom: an authentic martyr had not only suffered, but they had done so in the "right" way and for the "right" cause.⁶⁸

63 Ibid. 5.

64 *Mach. laud.* 15.2.

65 De Wet ("Old Age," 55) instead sees that Chrysostom located the Maccabees' martyrdom in the old covenant.

66 *Hist. eccl.* 5.16 (quoted in Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 102).

67 Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 101.

68 Augustine is often taken as a prime example of a writer who stresses the martyr's cause more than her suffering or death. He is credited for defining martyrdom as distinguished from self-killing (one form of "false martyrdom") and supporting the condemnation of the latter. Augustine's view may reflect his debates over martyrdom with the so-called Donatists, who strongly identified with and as martyrs in their opposition to the emperor-sanctioned *katholikoi*.

Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's apologies for the Maccabees reflect similar concerns insofar as they are eager to assert the authenticity of the Maccabees' martyrdom, giving a proper Christian no excuse to reject it. Yet, although they discuss the correct and incorrect ways of interpreting the Maccabees, the question with respect to that group is whether they were martyrs or not, not whether they were true or false martyrs. The views posited by the "many," the "weaker brothers and sisters," and "the Jew" do not take the Maccabees as martyrs (of the law). They simply oppose Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's interpretation of the Maccabees as martyrs (of Christ). Even in Augustine's homily, in which the Jew claims that the Maccabees belong to his people, he only asks: "How can you reckon these people of ours to be *your martyrs*?"⁶⁹ The Jew does not suggest that his people also venerated martyrs, and Augustine nowhere says, "Do not think they were *Jewish martyrs*."⁷⁰

Although Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine defend the authenticity of the Maccabees' martyrdom, there is no possibility that the Maccabees were false martyrs, who might be compared to the martyrs of heresies. Rather, both Chrysostom and Augustine claim the Maccabees were martyrs of the law while already recognizing Christ in the law. Nazianzen's, Chrysostom's, and Augustine's homilies on the Maccabees are best understood as a subdiscourse of the discourse of Christian martyrdom. The Maccabees' martyrdom thus serves as an object lesson in a Christian discourse of martyrdom that is concerned with the authenticity of martyrdom, because their case – perhaps better than those of any other martyrs – enabled a scrutinizing of the manner of their deaths or the cause, or both. Public examination of the Maccabees' case guaranteed a positive conclusion: the discovery that the Maccabees were most fitting for the chorus of the martyrs, be it due to the appropriate manner of their deaths or the appropriate cause. Yet, the differences entailed in these homilies indicate that there was no "ready solution" to the question of pre-Christ martyrdom, though by the time the question was asked Christian thinkers had theological means by which to solve it.⁷¹

Augustine dismissed the Donatist martyrs as stubborn self-killers and contrasted them with "true martyrs," who had suffered patiently, that is, in the right manner. See Droge and Tabor, *Noble Death*, 168–72; Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 727–30, 744–47.

69 *Mart. Mach.* 300.3.

70 He says, "you should not think they were not Christians"; cf. *ibid.* 300.2.

71 See Winslow, "Maccabean Martyrs," 86.

The Maccabees and Their “Jewishness”: Reading Augustine as a Curiosity

Studies on the late antique Christian receptions of the Maccabees standardly assume that the Maccabees were Jewish in the eyes of fourth-century Christians, or at least that a Jewish interpretation of their deaths as Jewish martyrs was available.⁷² I argue, however, that for Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine, the primary issue was not whether the Maccabees’ martyrdom was Christian or Jewish, because Christian and Jewish martyrdom did not exist in their minds as two comparable alternatives in the way they may exist in the mind of a modern scholar. The issue for them was whether the Maccabees could be called martyrs (of Christ) or not, because they had died before Christ. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine do not seem to have known of a Jewish interpretation of the Maccabees’ martyrdom. There is no indication of a Jew in Nazianzen’s homily, the Jew in Chrysostom’s homily has no opinion whatsoever concerning the Maccabees, and, in Augustine’s homily, the Jew only claims that the Maccabees belong to his people, and he does not call them martyrs. Nevertheless, these homilies may reflect changes in Christian perceptions of Jews during the late fourth century and beyond. In particular, Augustine’s homily, which curiously reports on Jewish claims of ownership of these Maccabees, may be examined as a promising case in this regard.

Augustine differs from Nazianzen and Chrysostom in that he connects the Maccabees not only to later martyrs but also to the prophets. Together with the prophets, the Maccabees arose from God’s chosen people born from Abraham’s line,

which was enslaved in Egypt, and which was delivered from the house of bondage with a mighty arm through Moses, God’s servant, which was led through the Red Sea as the waves sank away, tried and tested in the desert, subjected to the law, placed in the kingdom.⁷³

Augustine’s description of this people is most positive. This is the ancient Israelite community with whom he willingly identifies and whom he labels as God’s people and as “Christian,” though he admits “it is not the usual

72 See e.g. Schneider (“Jüdisches Erbe,” 238), who writes concerning “the weaker brothers and sisters” of Chrysostom’s homily: “Die judaisierenden Gemeindeglieder nehmen demnach den jüdischen Bezugsrahmen und die jüdische Deutung des Martyriums auf.”

73 *Mart. Mach.* 300.1.

way of talking.”⁷⁴ His hesitation suggests that there was another, more common description. The Maccabees provide Augustine with a chance to contest the identity of God’s chosen people with a Jew and a chance to argue that, just like the prophets, who had anticipated Christ’s coming, the Maccabees “with their deeds, [had] anticipated the name Christian that was publicized later on”;⁷⁵ both were Christian, even if it was not the most “usual way of talking.”

Moreover, as Paula Fredriksen argues, obedience to the law was not a negative thing for Augustine, as long as it concerned ancient Israel: not only did Augustine regard the law in itself as good, but he also appreciated the way in which the Jews – including Paul – observed it in the past before Christ’s resurrection. As long as salvation in Christ had not been available,

the Law indeed had been necessary for salvation. (Otherwise, notes Augustine, in an allusion to 2 Maccabees 7, “the Maccabees would have become martyrs for the Law without purpose or benefit.”) But once Christ had come, died, and been raised, the profoundest meaning of Israel’s sacred signs and enactments had been made clear. The Law pointed to Christ himself (*Letter* 40.4,6).⁷⁶

For Augustine, the Maccabees’ deaths were not “on the verge” of Christ’s coming, as Chrysostom emphasizes.⁷⁷ Instead, they had “happened a long time ago, before the incarnation, before the passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁷⁸ One could thus say that Augustine situates the Maccabees in a theologically slightly different era than Chrysostom. According to the latter, the Maccabees belonged to the period of history that already began to fulfil the prophecies,⁷⁹ whereas in Augustine’s view the Maccabees were part of the “prophetically foretold” things that “began to be evidently fulfilled” in Christ after his resurrection; before it, martyrs had confessed Christ “in a hidden manner” and, after it, they would confess “plainly.”⁸⁰ Thus, the Maccabees not only belonged to a distant past but also more specifically to

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid. This comparison is not as evident in Chrysostom’s homily, in which the prophets count as the “weapons of the Jew” but the Maccabees do not; see above.

76 Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 238.

77 *Eleaz. puer.* 5.

78 *Mart. Mach.* 300.1.

79 Hence, Chrysostom’s rather confused reasoning concerning the beginning of the new, Christian era.

80 *Mart. Mach.* 300.5.

the Old Testament, that is, the first part of the Christian scriptures, which was being fulfilled in Christ and in the life of Christians and the church.

Augustine conceives of this Maccabean martyrological history as so integral a part of the (Christian) Old Testament that he goes so far as to imagine the Jew to claim it for his own. This may, however, be an exception, rather than the rule, as Augustine knows that the Maccabean books were not part of Jewish scriptures:

These [the books of the Maccabees] are regarded as canonical by the Church, though not by the Jews, because of the savage, amazing sufferings endured by some of the martyrs who, before Christ's coming in his human body, contended even unto death for the cause of God's Law and held firm under appalling agonies.⁸¹

It is significant that Augustine notes the high status within the church of the books of the Maccabees while admitting the lack of their recognized status among the Jews. Although this view is Augustine's and cannot be taken as definite proof that Jews did not give any value to these texts, it indicates that Augustine believed that they did not. Thus, his portrayal of a Jew who claimed that the Maccabees belonged to his people must entail an argument for historical, not scriptural possession: the Jew held Maccabean history to belong to Jewish history, not Christian.⁸²

According to Daniel Boyarin, the two prime examples of late antique "religion" – Christianity and Judaism – were neither formed nor normalized at any particular center, but at the various borders where "heresy" and "orthodoxy," or "Jews" and "Christians," met and mingled.⁸³ Judaism, as he has famously argued, emerged as a religion mostly in response to the transformation of the concept of "religion" caused by emergent (imperial) Christianity, which has played a significant role since late antiquity in demonstrating what a religion ought to do and have.⁸⁴ Late antique

81 *Civ. Dei* 18.36.

82 According to Joslyn-Siemiatkoski (*Christian Memories*, 53), Augustine's "introduction of a hypothetical Jewish interrogator of Christian practice indicates that his audience was at least familiar with Jewish counternarratives to the Christian interpretation of the history of Israel." Indeed, they did not need to be familiar with any counternarratives concerning the Maccabees, as long as they knew the history recounted in the Old Testament/Hebrew scriptures and its Christian interpretation.

83 Boyarin, "Semantic Differences," 66.

84 Thus, the twins called Christianity and Judaism are both equal heirs of early Judaism, though Boyarin often emphasizes – perhaps in order to stress his opposition to the common idea of Christianity as the younger sibling of Judaism – that in case a sequence of births is to be

Christians rarely conceptualized “Judaism” as a religion on its own, but as something that had been completed by the gospel of Christ or something that was otherwise lacking in what Christianity had. Consequently, they looked at “Judaism” in relation to expectations and criteria shaped by their understanding of “Christianity.”

Boyarin’s argument reminds us to be aware of the fact that Judaism and Jews are often discussed in historical sources and modern research alike using terminology and criteria that are more native to Christianity, not necessarily to Judaism itself. The case of Malalas discussed above provides a good example: in the mid-sixth century, a Christian chronicler could be so accustomed to the practice of venerating bones in Christian sanctuaries that he might mistake it for an ancient tradition not exclusive to Christians and present it as something that Jews had done at the time of the Maccabees.⁸⁵ It seems reasonable to interpret the Jew in Augustine’s homily along similar lines, namely, as telling more about Augustine and about the Christian practices that he took for granted than about his contemporaneous Jews.

In Augustine’s homily, the Jew does more than strengthen the Christian argument. He also affirms the religious identity and practices of Christians by entering into a competition for the ownership of the Maccabees and their feast, that is, the Christian traditions concerning them. Towards the end of his homily, Augustine repeats that “the Maccabees really are martyrs of Christ. That is why it is [...] absolutely right for their day and their solemnity to be celebrated especially by Christians.” Again, a contrast to the Jews reinforces his point, as he asks: “What do the Jews know about such a celebration?”⁸⁶ Augustine’s question implies that the Jews ought to know a great deal about the celebration, were they to claim the Maccabees as theirs. In other words, the Christian way of celebrating saints was for Augustine more than a Christian custom; it was the one and only legitimate way in which these past heroes could be owned. The answer to Augustine’s rhetorical question is that the Jews knew nothing about it, having no calendar of saints or related celebrations. Thus, to Augustine’s knowledge, the Jews had not kept the memory of these Maccabees (not, at least, in any way which Augustine could recognize) and this is why a Jew could not claim them to belong to his people.⁸⁷ This proved Augustine’s point that Christians are

imagined, it was Christianity that should be considered “slightly older.” See Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 5–6; “Semantic Differences,” 65–66, 70–72.

⁸⁵ Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 48.

⁸⁶ *Mart. Mach.* 300.6.

⁸⁷ Triebel (“Die angebliche Synagoge,” 485–87) interprets Augustine’s following remark in a similar vein: when Augustine proclaims that it is Christians who built the Antiochene basilica

the people of the Maccabees and, thus, God's people: "It is *we* who keep, *we* who celebrate their memory; it is among *us* that thousands of holy martyrs throughout the world have imitated their sufferings."⁸⁸

Rutgers claims that the "Christian appropriation of the Maccabees" had been

so successful that in the early fifth century we find Augustine completely flabbergasted upon hearing that there were actually Jews who had the audacity to suggest that somewhere along the line, the Maccabean brothers had once been Jewish.⁸⁹

What Rutgers fails to note, however, is that Augustine nowhere hears such a thing from Jews who "were actually" there. Rather, Augustine's impression of "Judaism" is so much shaped by his understanding of "Christianity" that it enables him to imagine such a curious "Jewish" suggestion. While Augustine may tell very little about his Jewish contemporaries, his homily illustrates how he constructed Jews as contrary to Christians and thereby parallel to them.

If we argue that late fourth- and early fifth-century Christians perceived the Maccabees and the traditions surrounding them as Jewish, we must ask what they would have understood by "Jewish." Alternatively, we might consider the possibility that fourth-century Christians did not automatically perceive the Maccabees or the traditions as Jewish at all. To be sure, among the three homilists, only Augustine shows himself to be aware of a potential Jewish interest in the Maccabees, yet he is even more convinced that the contemporary traditions involving the Maccabees – including scriptural ones – are Christian. Moreover, by making such a distinction between the Maccabees (as potentially Jewish) and the Maccabean traditions (as definitely Christian), Augustine seems to have been an anomaly rather than the clearest and most vocal representative of late antique Christianity.⁹⁰

in commemoration of these Maccabees (*Mart. Mach.* 300.6), it is best to take his words literally.

88 *Mart. Mach.* 300.6 (emphasis mine).

89 Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 45.

90 Augustine's importance for the Western organization of both Christian history and theology can hardly be exaggerated. The fact that Augustine reports Jewish claims of ownership of the Maccabees in one homily has, in my view, carried too much weight in the study of the Christianization of the Maccabees. It has shaped the questions that scholars have asked, making the ownership of the Maccabees a Jewish–Christian matter. Thus, my argument sees him as a curiosity rather than the focal point, keeping in mind the following words of Hervé Ingebert (from a private conversation in Helsinki in November 2016): "We may disagree with him, or

Conclusion

In historical scholarship, fourth-century homilies on the Maccabees are interpreted as a Christian appropriation of either material or immaterial Jewish property. The attraction of this orientation is all the more persuasive as it is based on the grander narrative of the “long” fourth century: the Christianization of the Roman Empire or the “imperialization” of Christianity, and the concurrent Christian repression of Jews and Judaism. By implication, the late antique treatments of the Maccabees illuminate this macrolevel history on a microlevel. I have argued, however, that the scholarly trend to recover the “original Jewishness” of the Maccabean martyrs in the context of the fourth century does not advance our understanding of their Christianization at the time. As a matter of fact, it may have led to exaggerated claims concerning the Maccabees’ religious identity and conversion from Jews to Christians. Against this, I propose that the Maccabees are not made less “Jewish” but perhaps increasingly more so by the process of their “Christianization,” that is, the discourse in which their religious difference is negotiated alongside their martyrdom. Nazianzen’s, Chrysostom’s, and Augustine’s homilies suggest that the more room there is for the Maccabees to be Jewish, the more Jewish the rhetorical opponent is. By claiming that a Jew would claim ownership of these Maccabees, however, Augustine remains a curiosity among late antique writers. These homilies may thus not help us to solve historical issues concerning the Maccabees’ relics, shrine, or Jewish veneration in the fourth century.

By revisiting the Christianization of the Maccabees in these homilies, I call into question the commonly accepted assumption that the so-called Maccabees – Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother – were “Jewish martyrs” in the eyes of fourth-century Christians, who with great efforts appropriated them by effacing their Jewishness. Instead, I propose that Christians did not customarily see these Maccabees as Jewish martyrs, nor were they embarrassed or anxious about that possibility. The issue at stake was whether the Maccabees could be martyrs, even though they had died before Christ. Nazianzen’s, Chrysostom’s, and Augustine’s homilies on the Maccabees indicate that the matter in need of bending was not the identity of the Maccabees but the notion of Christian martyrdom, which was (and is) mostly imagined as a post-Christ practice and phenomenon. Towards the late fourth century, the Maccabees’ martyrdom emerges in Christian homilies as a lesson in “authentic martyrdom,” the authenticity of which

criticize him, but even so, we must always bear in mind how hard it is for us not to be convinced by a writer as influential as Augustine.”

could be proven by careful evaluations of either the manner or the cause of their deaths, or both. Fortunately, the Maccabees ensured arrival at a positive conclusion either way: not only was their virtuous achievement easily accessible to Christians, but the association of their cause (“the law”) with Christ was hardly far-fetched or odd in Christian circles.

It only makes sense to explicate or even imagine two competing views around the martyrdom of the Maccabees – a Jewish one versus a Christian one – after the Maccabees were Christianized and thereby made Jewish. It simply makes more sense to us than it would have to Nazianzen, Chrysostom, or Augustine, or their audiences. Yet, their homilies on the Maccabees may illuminate the ongoing construction of religious difference between Jews and Christians. Both Chrysostom’s and Augustine’s homilies on the Maccabees reflect a self-understanding of writers who increasingly defined themselves as Christians both in relation to and as distinct from Jews. One might thus better understand the late antique Christianization of the Maccabees not as the appropriation of Jewish martyrs for a Christian cause, but as reflecting, in a Christian perspective, the ongoing formation of a more dichotomized contrast between being Jewish and being Christian. Indeed, the focal issue of their homilies is not to object to Jewish martyrdom, which they do not really seem to recognize, but to (re)define martyrdom for Christ as something that is not tied solely to the period after Christ. This reflects an expansion of the Christian discourse of martyrdom to an extent that could almost bring a category of “Jewish martyrs” into being.

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6. Hiding One's Tolerance

Cyril of Alexandria's Use of Philo¹

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Abstract

Even though Cyril, fifth-century bishop of Alexandria, never explicitly mentions Philo, this article maintains that Cyril not only used Philo's works, but was also aware of Philo's Jewishness. Because of his antipathy toward contemporary Jews, however, Cyril did his best to conceal his theological debt to Philo, to hide his tolerance. Because of Philo's prominent place in the Alexandrian exegetical tradition, Cyril could not simply dismiss him, but instead used Philo without acknowledging his own dependence.

Keywords: Cyril of Alexandria; Philo the Jew; anti-Judaism; Platonism

Introduction

Cyril of Alexandria (c.378–444) lived in times when it was beginning to be difficult and even dangerous to adhere to some other creed or cult than orthodox Christianity in the Roman Empire. The first Christian “heretic” to be executed by Christian rulers, Priscillian of Avila, met his death in 386.² The emperor Theodosius I outlawed all “pagan” cults in 392, and Christian monks murdered the famous philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria in 415.³

1 I thank David T. Runia and the anonymous reviewer for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this essay.

2 Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila*.

3 Cyril himself may have had something to do with the lynching of Hypatia, but there is no hard evidence (Haas, *Alexandria*, 307–14; Russell, *Cyril*, 208).

Judaism in Alexandria seems to have been regaining its earlier vitality by the turn of the fifth century, but then the legal position of the Jews started to erode.⁴ Judaism began to be referred to as a *superstitio* instead of a *religio* by 416, and not only temples but synagogues too began to be attacked, and although this was outlawed, a prohibition against repairing and constructing synagogues was put in place in 423.⁵

The paradox at the center of this essay is that despite his own strong anti-Judaism Cyril, bishop of Alexandria from 412 until his death, stood firmly in the Platonically oriented Alexandrian theological tradition that owed so much to a Jew, Philo of Alexandria (c.20 BCE–c.50 CE). It is my main thesis that Cyril, in spite of never mentioning Philo, very probably both used his works and was aware of his Jewishness. Although Cyril had great difficulties tolerating the contemporary Jews, he had to face – and conceal as best as he could – the fact that he had a theological debt to Philo. He had to hide his tolerance of him.

The structure of the argument is as follows: After an overview of Cyril's attitude towards Judaism, I take a look at those Jewish sources besides the Old Testament that Cyril does acknowledge using. Then, a very brief history of the utilization of Philo's ideas among the Alexandrian Christian thinkers up to Cyril is sketched. I then move on to examine what evidence there is concerning Cyril's knowledge of and direct dependence on Philo. Lastly, conclusions are drawn and the need for further research discussed.

Cyril on Contemporary Jews and the Jewish Law

Like many other early Christian authors, Cyril was a profoundly anti-Jewish theologian.⁶ The change of the official mood with regard to Judaism in the early fifth century suited very well his theological concerns about the Jews, but the downgrading seems to have been too modest for him. Soon after becoming bishop in 412 Cyril's anti-Jewish actions went beyond what the law permitted. A Jewish–Christian conflict turned violent, and Cyril took the lead in confiscating the synagogues for the church and let the mob drive

4 Wilken, *Mind*, 50; Haas, *Alexandria*, 113–16.

5 Russell, *Cyril*, 12.

6 According to Wilken, *Mind*, x, Cyril's "attitude toward Jews borders on the irrational [... he] had little but contempt for the Jews." According to Kerrigan, "[t]here is scarcely a page on which he does not lash the Jews for their infidelity to God; he never fails to exploit the slightest allusion susceptible of being twisted into a description of their hostility to Christ and his Church" (Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, 385).

the Jews out of their homes and pillage their property.⁷ The prefect Orestes, from whom the Jews may have expected help, was unable to maintain law and order.⁸ There is evidence of Cyril being criticized for insulting (λοιδορία) the Jews; at least he defends himself against such a charge in his Easter letter for the year 416 (*Ep. pasch.* 4.4.22–23).

For Cyril's theology, the fact that there still *were* Jews was “a standing reproach.”⁹ For him, the recognition of Jesus as the saviour and the Old Testament went hand in hand, and since the Jews failed to do the former, they could not lay claim to the latter.¹⁰ From Cyril's viewpoint, the correct, “spiritual” reading of the scriptures meant a specifically *Christological* reading, whereas literal meaning was attributed to Judaism (see below). Yet not only allegorical exegesis but also linking it with the basic dualism of the Platonic worldview, as Cyril does, go back to Philo – a Jew.¹¹ The two-level model itself is explicitly embraced by Cyril who quotes Plato's classic statement in *Tim.* 27d–28a of that which always *is*, having no genesis, and that which never is, being in the state of continual *becoming*, and declares these to refer to God and the creation (*C. Jul.* 1.30.11–22). He frequently uses the standard Platonist vocabulary of intelligible (τὰ νοητά) and sense-perceptible things (τὰ αἰσθητά), for example,

we will reckon the sense-perceptible manna to be a type of the intelligible. And the intelligible manna signifies to us Christ himself, whereas the sense-perceptible one, at any rate, indicates the earthlier discipline of the law.

(*Jo.* 1.463.10–13)¹²

The lower level is thus that of history, sense objects, Mosaic legislation – and of the Jews –, the higher, of the mystery of Christ and the intelligible realm.

Cyril's basic attitude towards the Jewish law can be expressed using Paul's words in Gal 3:24: “the law was our disciplinarian until Christ

7 See Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.13 and Wilken, *Mind*, 54–57; Russell, *Cyril*, 7–8; Haas, *Alexandria*, 299–304.

8 There had been an extent of mutual support between the Jews and the Alexandrian authorities in the fourth and early fifth century (Russell, *Cyril*, 7–8).

9 As described by Russell, *ibid.*, 14.

10 Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, 177; Wilken, *Mind*, 16.

11 Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, 28, 125–31.

12 My trans. for εἰς τύπον τοῦ μάννα τοῦ νοητοῦ τὸ αἰσθητὸν λογιούμεθα. καὶ τὸ μὲν μάννα τὸ νοητὸν αὐτὸν ἡμῖν κατασημαίνει τὸν Χριστόν, τὴν δὲ γε παχυτέραν τοῦ νόμου παιδευσιν τὸ αἰσθητὸν ὑπαινίσσεται.

came,” paraphrased and elaborated on by Cyril in *Commentary on Isaiah* 70.960.48–54.¹³ Cyril’s attitude towards circumcision is a good example. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (here exegesis of 1:13), Cyril writes, “we understand our spiritual circumcision (τὴν ἐν πνεύματι [...] περιτομήν) to have been prefigured originally in their physical version” (*Jo.* 1.135.25).¹⁴ Cyril continues later, after discussing Gen 17:9–14 and Rom 4:11,

For wishing to unteach the Jews their delight in glorying in the flesh (Gal 6:13), he writes again: “For a Jew is not (a Jew) visibly, nor is circumcision visible in the flesh. Instead, (a Jew is) he who is a Jew in concealment, and circumcision (is) of the heart, in spirit (and) not in letter. The praise for it (comes) not from humans but from God” (Rom 2:28–29).¹⁵ Does he not hereby persuade them to [...] conceive of [circumcision] as something greater and spiritual?

(*Jo.* 1.629.30–630.10 on John 7:22–23)

Cyril comments on the circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2:21–24) in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*. In addition to the fact that the rite indicated Jesus’s Jewish lineage and signified baptism he brings up a further point:

And, thirdly, it is the symbol of the faithful when established in grace, who cut away and mortify the tumultuous risings of carnal pleasures and passions by the sharp surgery of the logos of the faith, and by ascetic labours (οἱ τῶν σαρκικῶν ἡδονῶν καὶ παθῶν τὰς ἐπαναστάσεις τῷ τμητικῷ τῆς πίστεως λόγῳ καὶ πόνοις ἀσκητικοῖς ἐκτέμνουσι καὶ ἀπονεκροῦσιν); not cutting the body, but purifying the heart, and being circumcised in the spirit, and not in the letter. Their praise, as the divine Paul testifies, needs not the sentence of any human tribunal, but depends upon the decree from above.

(*Luc.* 72.500.13–22)¹⁶

These representative examples contain clear and explicit presence of Pauline supersessionist ideas of circumcision in Cyril. However, Paul’s views do not explain the literally “ascetic” twist Cyril here and in some other texts gives

¹³ Trans. *NRSV* as all quotations from the New Testament if not otherwise indicated.

¹⁴ Trans. Pusey like for all quotations from *Jo.* 1 if not otherwise indicated.

¹⁵ My trans. of the verses from Rom, οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαίος ἐστὶν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαίος, καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, οὐδ’ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

¹⁶ Trans. Payne Smith.

to the symbolic meaning of the rite. The allegorization of circumcision as cutting away pleasure and passion comes ultimately from Philo.¹⁷ If Cyril was aware of this, he had a problem. Philo could not be fitted into his dichotomy of Jewish literalness vs. Christian spirituality, a fact that, if recognized, would have undermined the case for not tolerating anything Jewish. What is clear is that Cyril is drawing on the Alexandrian exegetical tradition. Whether there is specific evidence for Cyril's direct dependence on Philo is a question to which I will return below.

Cyril's Explicit Use of Jewish Sources

Cyril mentions the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37–c.100) by name twelve times. On one occasion, Cyril explicitly reveals his awareness of Josephus's Jewishness (*C. Jul.* 6.30) and yet (in an earlier work) calls him “eminent and wise” (*Comm. min. pr.* 2.455.19).¹⁸ Importantly, Cyril only uses Josephus as a source for historical information. Being posterior to Jesus, Josephus could have been accused of not accepting him as the Messiah, had his theological views been discussed.¹⁹

Another thing to note is Cyril's use of exegetical “Hebrew traditions” (Ἑβραίων παράδοσεις) or “treatises” (ἐκδόσεις).²⁰ It is striking that Cyril not only openly uses but also commends these. For example:

But I think that for a more accurate interpretation of what was said above it is necessary to say this too: Hebrews say – thus (we have) again the traditional explanation – that when Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged both Judaea and all the other lands [...].

(*Comm. min. pr.* 2.110.6–9)²¹

17 See below.

18 On Josephus in Cyril, see Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, 308–9.

19 The following comparison of Josephus and Philo by Rogers is worth noting: “Had Philo been used [by Early Christian authors] primarily as a source of Hebrew history or of Judaism at the time of Jesus, as Josephus was, he never would have been ‘converted’ [i.e. adopted into the Christian tradition]. As it is, Philo's biblical exegesis rarely contrasts with early Christian doctrines and his allegorism is specifically at odds with the Christian construal of ‘Jewish’ interpretation as biblical literalism” (Rogers, *Didymus*, 34).

20 On Cyril's use of these traditions, see Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, 309–22; Abel, “Parallélisme exégétique.”

21 My trans. for Χρῆναι δὲ οἶμαι πρὸς διασάφησιν τῶν προειρημένων ἀκριβεστέραν κάκεῖνο εἰπεῖν. Ἑβραῖοι φασιν· ὡς ἐκ παραδόσεως δὲ πάλιν ὁ λόγος· ὅτι πορθήσας τήν τε Ἰουδαίαν καὶ ἀπάσας δὲ τὰς ἄλλας χώρας ὁ Ναβουχοδονόσορ [...].

These traditions – in many cases taken from the Targums – were mediated to Cyril by Jerome, Eusebius and Origen.²² Cyril seems to have regarded them as relatively ancient, because he always says they are “of the Hebrews” – never “of the Jews,” which is the term he uses of his contemporaries. For comparison: Paul describes himself as a Hebrew in Phil 3:5, a verse Cyril invokes against a hypothetical Jewish argument that Paul belongs to the Christians and not the Jews (*Ep. pasch.* 4.5.47–48). Hence, the term “Hebrew” seems to be for Cyril a positive reference to the more distant past, unlike “Jew.”²³ This could be the explanation for why Cyril could present the Hebrew traditions in a positive light – apparently without the fear of (being suspected of) extending any kind of recognition to contemporary Jews.

Philo in the Alexandrian Theological Tradition

To contextualize the task of separating, in Cyril, the general Philonic tradition from specific influences, it is warranted to include a brief description of the extent and ways of the use of Philo’s exegetical and theological ideas among Christian thinkers associated with Alexandria from the late second century up until Cyril’s time.²⁴ The first Christian author to explicitly and extensively use Philo’s writings is Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215). Although Clement takes over many exegetical themes and theological ideas from Philo in the almost 300 passages in the *Stromateis* alone where he uses him, he only mentions Philo’s name four times, calling him twice “the Pythagorean” and never mentioning his Jewishness.

22 See Kerrigan’s conclusions in *Interpreter*, 319–22. As for Cyril’s ability to acquaint himself with the writings of Jerome, who wrote in Latin, Russell (*Cyril*, 71) argues that in Alexandria it would not have been difficult to have (portions of) his works translated into Greek.

23 The situation was similar among Christian authors more generally, although ‘Jew’ too could be used without any prejudice; see the illuminating discussion in Runia, *Church Fathers*, 39–45. Philo as well seems to make a distinction between Jew and Hebrew. For instance, he calls the translators of the LXX Hebrews (*Mos.* 2.32), whereas the end result was still in Philo’s time celebrated annually by the Jews (and others, 2.41). In *Legat.* 194 Philo clearly includes all contemporary Jews under the term Ἰουδαῖοι.

24 For a recent overview of Philo’s connection with Alexandrian scholastic tradition, see Rogers, *Didymus*, 10–16, 25–48; see also Runia, *Christian Literature*; Runia, *Church Fathers*; Runia, “Patristic Tradition”; Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria*; Hoek, “Assessing Philo’s Influence”, and the references to research literature in all these works on which the following is based. On the probable knowledge of Philo on the part of the earlier, Valentinian Christians, see Runia, *Christian Literature*, 119–31; Auvinen, “Philo and the Valentinians.”

Of the little more than a hundred places where Origen's (c.185–254) utilization of his Jewish predecessor is clearest, 80 percent deal with exegesis or allegory, the rest being concerned with theological and philosophical themes. But in Origen, too, there are only three instances of Philo's name. Origen expresses his appreciation but does not explicitly state that Philo was a Jew, although this can be taken as implied through the mentions of his having written about the law of Moses (*Comm. Matt.* 15.3, *Cels.* 4.51). Origen took his copies of Philo's treatises with him when he moved to Caesarea, where there is proof of their presence in the episcopal library at the turn of the fourth century. Through Origen, they also ended up in the hands of Eusebius of Caesarea (265–340) in whose writings Philo's name appears around twenty times, that is, more often than in any other's.²⁵ Eusebius sees no reason to abstain from mentioning that Philo was "Hebrew."²⁶ He never calls Philo a "Jew." He relates that Philo met Peter in Rome, and he is the first author to allege that Philo's *De vita contemplativa* is a description of the life of an early Christian monastic community (*Hist. eccl.* 2.17). The latter contributed to Philo's admission to the Christian "hall of fame" and probably to the legends of Philo as a Christian, even a bishop.²⁷ Jerome explicitly justifies his inclusion of Philo "the Jew" ("Philo Judaeus") in his *De viris illustribus* with Eusebius's (whom he does not mention in this context) claim.²⁸

Philo kept on being read in Alexandria too. There is reason to see not only some Origenian but also certain Philonic ideas behind the teachings of the presbyter Arius (256–336).²⁹ Yet the fierce opponent of both the Arians and the Jews, the Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (c.298–373), nowhere in his polemical writings turns the use of Philo against Arius. Rogers says about Athanasius,

It would not be surprising if he in fact conscientiously attempted to discard whatever Philonism he may have known, even if he could not escape it entirely.³⁰

25 See the list in Runia, "Patristic Tradition," 278–79, which excludes some of the merely passing references.

26 See *Praep. ev.* 1.9.20, 7.13.7, 7.17.4, 7.20.9, 11.14.10, 11.15.7, 11.23.12; *Hist. eccl.* 2.4.2.

27 For references, see Runia, "Patristic Tradition," 283.

28 "Philo the Jew, an Alexandrian of the priestly class, is placed by us among the ecclesiastical writers on the ground that, writing a book concerning the first church of Mark the evangelist at Alexandria, he writes to our praise" (*Vir. ill.* 11, trans. Richardson).

29 Arius can in fact be characterized as "a more traditional Alexandrian than the 'orthodox' leaders who condemned him" (Rogers, *Didymus*, 38).

30 *Ibid.*, 39.

This is very relevant in the context of Cyril, too. What Philonism these bishops could not avoid they had to tolerate. The avoidance was made difficult by the fact that what had begun to emerge was a theological, especially exegetical, tradition

in which Platonism and Philonism [were] so thoroughly integrated that characteristic themes, terms, and language appear in nearly every other sentence.³¹

Opting out of all Philonic influence was no longer possible without a radical break with the past.

The Arian controversy did not yet lead to widespread condemnation of Origen, whose legacy was cherished by “the last great teacher” of the Alexandrian tradition, Didymus the Blind (c.313–c.398).³² Didymus, appointed head of the Alexandrian catechetical school by Athanasius (who says nothing of Philo), mentions Philo with an appreciative tone nine times, that is, more often than any other non-biblical name.³³ Again, there is no mention of Philo being a Jew (or a Hebrew). The number of passages where Philonic influence can be detected comes close to 300 in Didymus’s Genesis commentary alone.³⁴ Soon after the death of Didymus, the Origenian controversy broke out. Importantly, it became clear that being charged with Origenism could be dangerous, even life-threatening. Cyril’s uncle and predecessor as bishop, Theophilus (d. 412, bishop since 385, no references to Philo), was forced to anathematize Origen by desert monks who had come to the city enraged by the Origenian-style condemnation of anthropomorphism in the bishop’s Easter letter for the year 399.³⁵

It is only Isidore of Pelusium (365–435), who was probably educated in Alexandria, who explicitly mentions Philo’s Jewishness in two of his four direct references to him.³⁶ It may be significant that in the two letters where

31 Runia, *Christian Literature*, 243. Runia says this about the tradition in which Gregory Nazianzen (c.319–390) stood. Milner speaks, without mentioning Philo, of “the growing awareness of the previous tradition of biblical commentary, which had [in Cyril’s time] developed so far as to call into question further exposition” (Milner, “Treatment,” 93).

32 The characterization comes from Runia, *Christian Literature*, 197.

33 Rogers, *Didymus*, 9.

34 Ibid., 209. For his analysis of Didymus’s direct references to Philo, see *ibid.*, 75–118.

35 O’Keefe, “Introduction,” 8–13; Haas, *Alexandria*, 263–64.

36 In addition, Isidore uses Philo anonymously in fourteen other letters in his corpus of 2,000 epistles. The two where Philo is brought in as a Jew are 2.143 and 3.19. Additionally, he is mentioned in 2.270 and 3.81. In *TLG* the work number is 2741.003. For other allusions to Philo by Isidore identified by scholars, see Runia, *Christian Literature*, 205, n. 112.

Philo is introduced as a Jew, he is used precisely *as a Jew* in a theological argument against contemporary Jews – an avenue that, in principle, stood open for Cyril as well. In *Ep.* 2.143, when discussing Philo's exegesis of Gen 9:6 ("in the image of God I made the human being") Isidore twice says Philo came "into conflict with his own religion" and approached the Christian concept of Trinity when he spoke of the Logos as "second."³⁷ Even though Philo "fail[ed] to reach perfection" with his Logos doctrine, "nevertheless he did gain a conception of another person."³⁸ Philo is favorably compared with "the uneducated teachers of the Jews" who hold fast to "speaking about God [as] a single person."

I now come to Cyril. He does not reproduce Eusebius's theory regarding the *De vita contemplativa*, and he also ignores the view, passed on by Jerome in his preface to the Latin translation of the Wisdom of Solomon, that some consider Philo to be the author of that book (PL 28.1308A). He opts for the traditional attribution to Solomon (e.g. *Jo.* 2.500.27, *Luc.* 72.828.28).

Cyril uses Philonic language and concepts, but this need not indicate anything else than adherence to the Alexandrian tradition. For instance, although Cyril adopts the Philonic notion of the *death of the soul* declaring it to be the "true" death as opposed to the "common" and "natural" in very much the same way as Philo does, there are in Pseudo-Origen and Eusebius parallels that are even closer to Cyril.³⁹ Likewise, Cyril uses several of the few dozen so-called *verba philonica* (Runia's term to denote words coined by Philo in early Christian writers dependent on him), but in none of these cases is he the first one to do so.⁴⁰ The interpretation of the name Israel as

37 Runia (*Church Fathers*, 164) is probably right in saying that this is a reference to *QG* 2.62, where Philo asks, "Why does (Scripture) say, as if (speaking) of another God (ὡς περὶ ἑτέρου θεοῦ), 'in the image of God He made the human being' and not 'in His own image'?" Philo's answer runs, in part, that "nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the most high One and Father of the universe but (only) in that of the 'second God,' who is His Logos." (Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Philo's texts are from the Loeb Classical Library edition, trans. Colson, Whitaker, and Marcus.) Pace Runia (among others), I would hesitate to declare that Philo here "explicitly describes the Logos as τὸν δεῦτερον θεόν." (ibid.) He nowhere else does that, and, in my view, it is more likely that despite the variation of terminology he is referring to the expression "another god" in his own question.

38 For the text, translation and commentary of this and four other letters of Isidore, see Runia, *Church Fathers*, 155–81.

39 Cyril, *Exp. Ps.* 69.841.19, cf. 881.24; Philo, *Leg.* 1.105–8; Pseudo-Origen, *Fr. Ps.* 1–150, comment on Ps 22:4 LXX (the work is marked as "Dub." in the Origenian corpus of *TLG*); Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* 23.217.40–46, cf. 23.929.1–10.

40 For Runia's list of seventeen words, see his *Christian Literature*, 108–9. Of these, I would exclude πρωτόπλαστος, which occurs in Wisdom of Solomon and *Jubilees*, and add νεκροφορέω, αἰθεροβατέω, συνδιαινιζώ and μοναστήριον. In addition, the words ἀπεικόνισμα, βελτίω, ἐπελαφρίζω

“the one who sees God,” first attested in Philo and then used by numerous Christian authors, is found several times in Cyril too.⁴¹

Cyril explicitly expresses his respect of previous exegetical tradition in, for example, his prefaces to the commentaries on the twelve minor prophets (*Comm. min. pr.* 1.1.7–13) and Isaiah (*Isa.* 70.9.23–12.4). Yet he mostly refrains from naming the exegetical sources he so values. According to Milner, “Cyril is unlikely to have much desire to associate himself explicitly” with many of his predecessors, whereas “by preserving their anonymity, Cyril is able to present himself as heir to the tradition of biblical commentary as a whole.”⁴² Cyril refers to, for example, Eusebius (whom he used a lot) only two times in total, whereas the names of Origen and Didymus do not occur at all.⁴³ And yet Cyril does testify to the fact that “many of Origen’s exegetical opinions were still held in honour at Alexandria [even though] Cyril does not copy him in slavish fashion.”⁴⁴ Cyril does not mention Jerome, the most important previous commentator on whom he frequently and directly, but also selectively, depends.⁴⁵ Philo fits this general pattern very well.

It is thus no wonder that, regardless of usage, the name Philo meets us nowhere in Cyril. It may be illuminating to compare him to Ambrose (c.347–397), the Bishop of Milan. Ambrose only mentions Philo one single time, criticizing him for giving, as a Jew, a moral (and not a spiritual) interpretation of Gen 2:15 (*Parad.* 4.25). Yet it is Ambrose who made more extensive first-hand use of Philo’s works (about 600 instances) than any other

and κοσμοπολίτης, with some cognates, occur just once or a few times before Philo and exhibit a trajectory of usage so similar to the *verba* that he is likely to have been the source of their spreading. For example, ἐπελαφρίζω (“make easy to bear”) occurs once in a fragment from Aristotle, then seventeen times in the Philonic corpus followed by five occurrences in total in Origen, Oribasius, Eusebius and Pseudo-John Chrysostom, and six in Cyril’s Easter letters.

41 For example, *Comm. in min. pr.* 2.28.22, 2.142.12, *Comm. Matt. (in catenis)* 11.6; Philo, *Leg.* 3.186, *Somn.* 1.171, *Praem.* 44, etc.

42 Milner, “Treatment,” 87–88, 93. She mentions Origen, Didymus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Apollonarius – and even Jerome, who had been in good terms with Bishop Theophilus and a student of Didymus but was not an entirely uncontroversial figure. On the often anonymous use of sources in Christian biblical commentaries more generally, see Rogers, *Didymus*, 49–58.

43 For the references to Eusebius, see Cyril’s *Exp. Ps.* 69.1017.42, 1032.18. Kerrigan’s index of names contains close to 400 references to Jerome. On Cyril’s use of sources more generally, see Grant, “Greek Literature”; Milner, “Treatment”; Riedweg, “Citations profanes.” For comparison, the words θεός, Χριστός and Παύλος appear almost 25,000, more than 10,600, and roughly 2,200 times, respectively, in Cyril. Somewhat amazingly, Cyril mentions Plato almost 90 times. But it has to be noted that with only two exceptions (*Jo.* 2.309.5 and *Trin. dial.* 524.33), these references occur in the *Contra Julianum* where Cyril specifically delves into Greek thought.

44 Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, 427.

45 *Ibid.*, 435–39.

Christian writer, making, in five exegetical treatises, the Philonic material the very framework of his own contribution.⁴⁶ Like Athanasius and Cyril, Ambrose also had a markedly negative attitude towards the Jews, and he never disclosed his abundant use of Philo.

Cyril's Conscious Use of Philo

Cyril's use of Philo has not been subject to much research.⁴⁷ As already mentioned, beginning the task the easy way, looking up the instances of the name of Philo in Cyril's vast corpus (more than 2.3 million words in *TLG*), is barred by there being none. The question thus becomes whether such observations can be made for which direct usage of Philo is the most feasible explanation. My investigation is based on *TLG* searches, and thus much depends on the search terms and parameters used. The results must be considered preliminary.

To start with the basics: is it safe to assume that, given Philo's position in the Alexandrian tradition and the explicit references to him by Clement, Origen, Eusebius, Didymus, Jerome and Isidore, Cyril must have been aware of Philo? I think it is, but it is not necessary to merely assume this. At *C. Jul.* 7.19, Cyril explicitly refers to Clement ("an eminent man fond of learning") and paraphrases *Strom.* 1.23.153.4.⁴⁸ Just before this, in the previous sentence, Clement refers to Philo and his *De vita Mosis*. The reference in *Stromateis* to the biography of Moses would have told Cyril that Philo was a Jew. Moreover, as discussed, Philo's Jewish descent was reported by authors Cyril knew and used.⁴⁹

Admittedly, however, the *Contra Julianum* is a late work, composed probably in 439–41.⁵⁰ Might not Cyril have been ignorant of Philo, and

46 Runia, *Christian Literature*, 292, 295, citing Lucchesi, *L'usage de Philon*, 127–28 (*non vidi*). Ambrose can even be used in text-critical study of the Philonic text; see examples concerning Philo's *Fug.* in the apparatus of the critical edition of Philo (*Philonis Alexandrini Opera*, ed. Cohn, Wendland, and Reiter) and an application in Yli-Karjanmaa, "Call Him Earth," 281.

47 Kerrigan juxtaposes some of Cyril's biblical interpretations with Philo's; see e.g. *Interpreter*, 155–66. At a general level, he notes (*ibid.*, 417) that Cyril's "exclusively Christian" interpretations clearly differentiate him from the exegesis of "Philo, Josephus and writers dependent on them." Wilken, *Mind*, and Russell, *Cyril*, do not discuss the possible use of Philo by Cyril.

48 A similar appreciative characterization appears in the tenth book (10.21) together with a quotation from Clement's *Protr.* 3.44.4.

49 Of Eusebius's mentions of "Philo the Hebrew," *Praep. ev.* 1.9.20 is closest to a citation by Cyril, who quotes from sec. 29 of the same chapter in *C. Jul.* 6.30.

50 Russell, *Cyril*, 190.

even of Clement, until he began to compose his massive refutation (*Contra Julianum*) of the apostate emperor's *Contra Galileos*, which is the only work where he mentions Clement? This is possible. Perhaps Cyril's awareness of (having used) Philo grew over time. Nevertheless, in his notes to Cyril's Easter letters for the years 414 and 417 O'Keefe refers to the influence of either Clement or Eusebius, and of Philo, "probably mediated through Clement," in the context of certain exegetical solutions.⁵¹

In what follows, I discuss three examples where Cyril seems to use Philo consciously, either directly or through a mediating source: Hebrew etymologies, the exegeses of the two accounts of the creation of the first human being, and the allegorical understanding of circumcision. The purpose of the discussion is to build the case that Cyril utilized Philo knowing him to be a Jew. What this means in terms of tolerance will be discussed in the concluding section.

Etymology

The etymologies of at least the names Eliezer, Damascus and Hagar do not occur in the same or a similar form in any Greek author between Philo and Cyril. To begin with the first two, the meanings of the names of Moses and Sepphora's two sons are discussed in Exod 18:3–4. The name of Eliezer (אֱלִיעֶזֶר, literally "my God is help") is justified with Moses's statement, "for the God of my father was my help, and he delivered me from the hand of Pharaoh."⁵² What makes his case even more intriguing is that both Philo and Cyril invoke the etymology in the context of Gen 15:2 where Abraham deplores that in the absence of an heir "the son of Masek, [his] female homebred, this Damascus Eliezer" will inherit him. The meanings Philo gives these names are "from a kiss" for Masek (*Her.* 40), "blood of a sack" for Damascus (*Her.* 54), and "God is my helper" for Eliezer (*Her.* 58). Cyril only gives two, "kiss of blood" for Damascus and "help and aid coming from God" for Eliezer (*Glaphyra in Pentateuchum* 69.117.6–8).⁵³

51 O'Keefe, "Introduction," 39 (*Ep. pasch.* 1.2), 87 (*Ep.* 5.3).

52 All the translations from the LXX are from Pietersma and Wright (eds.), *New English Translation of the Septuagint*, with occasional small modifications. Surprisingly, what also connects Philo and Cyril, besides the etymology itself, is explicitly quoting Exod. 18:4 in Greek. No one else does that except Philo in *Her.* 59 and Cyril in *Ador.* 68.280.22–23 (which is not, however, the work where he discusses the etymology in its own right). Rajak's characterization of the etymology of Eliezer as a "well-known case" must apply to some other language and/or time period (although her subject is the Philonic etymologies); Rajak, "Knowledge," 178.

53 Cyril does not quote Exod 18:4 here; the Greek expression is ἀντίληψις καὶ ἐπικουρία ἡ παρὰ Θεοῦ.

The interpretation of Damascus is a little awkward in the light of Philo. A search of *TLG* brings up no instances of these etymologies that could plausibly be considered links between the two authors. The probable solution is found in Jerome's Latin *De nominibus hebraicis*, which records the meanings "drink of blood or kiss of blood or blood of sacks" for Damascus.⁵⁴ Even if Cyril is dependent on Jerome's work, here he was very probably aware of using Philo. This is because Jerome begins the whole work with the statement that

Philo, a most eloquent Jew, is also by Origen's testimony confirmed to have put forth a book containing Hebrew names and their etymologies, coupled side by side in alphabetical order.⁵⁵

The book contains many etymologies used by Philo, but Jerome's information regarding its provenance is probably inaccurate, as this would have required greater skills in Hebrew than what scholars usually think Philo had.⁵⁶ The Philonic connection, if real, was probably some other, such as that he was reputed to have used it.

The case of Hagar is similar but not identical. Philo's interpretation of the name is "sojourning" (παροικησις; *Leg.* 3.244, *Sacr.* 43, *Congr.* 20), which Cyril repeats in *Glaphyra in Pentateuchum* 69.116.35. Again, Jerome also records the meaning "foreigner" (*aduenā*; *Nom. hebr.* 23.819A). This time, there is a single intervening source in Greek as well, Clement in *Strom.* 1.5.31.1, but it so happens that this is one of the four places where Clement explicitly refers to Philo. It is thus quite unlikely for Cyril to have arrived at this etymology without thinking it derives from Philo.⁵⁷

The Creation of the Human Being in Genesis 1 and 2

The relationship between the two descriptions of the creation of the first human being in Genesis 1 and 2 has given rise to much exegesis. Philo treats

54 My trans. for "sanguinis potus siue sanguinis osculum uel sanguis sacci"; *Nom. hebr.* 23.821D. For Eliezer, see 831E.

55 My trans. for "Philo, uir disertissimus Iudaeorum, Origenis quoque testimonio conprobatur edidisse librum hebraicorum nominum eorumque etymologias iuxta ordinem litterarum e latere copulasse." I thank Outi Kaltio for help with the Latin; the rendering is mine.

56 Rajak wishes to keep the door open for Philo's possible authorship and "a decent knowledge of the original language" while admitting that the definitive answer to this question may be unattainable (Rajak, "Knowledge," 187).

57 Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, 322, says Cyril bases his geographical etymologies in the *De adoratione* on Philo and Origen. I think there too Jerome is the probable mediator.

this material in several ways. He sometimes keeps the accounts separate, sometimes conflates them, and interprets them in either protological or universal terms.⁵⁸ Cyril's fusing the two accounts by speaking of receiving the image of the divine nature (Gen 1:27) and the breath of life (2:7) as, in effect, one and the same thing corresponds to Philo's conflated scheme (e.g. *Jo.* 1.182.25–31, 2.485.17–22, 3.135.15–20; *Ador.* 68.145.55–148.2; *Philo, Plant.* 18–19, *Her.* 56–58; cf. *Opif.* 139). Furthermore, Cyril is apparently fond of the terminology of sealing and stamping (σφράγις, χαρακτήρ, σημαίνω, etc.) in this context, so typical of Philo (*Opif.* 139; *Leg.* 1.31–38, 1.61, 3.95; *Det.* 83; *Plant.* 18, 44).⁵⁹ Cyril's language is so close to Philo's that it is difficult to find a better match for either of them than what they are to each other. A search of *TLG* for εἰκὼν (image) within fifteen words of both πνοή (breath) and ζωή (life) to locate passages where both Gen 1:27 and 2:7 are discussed, yields Philo and Cyril, and between them two authors (Eusebius and John Chrysostom) who do not use the language of sealing or stamping in the texts that come up.⁶⁰ Let us look at the pair of texts where Cyril is closest to Philo:

Our great Moses averred the rational (λογικῆς) class of soul to be a genuine coinage of that divine and invisible Spirit (τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀοράτου πνεύματος), signed and impressed by the seal of God (σημειωθέν καὶ τυπωθέν σφραγίδι θεοῦ), the stamp (χαρακτήρ) of which is the eternal Logos. For he says, "God inbreathed into his face a breath of life," so that it cannot but be that the one who receives is made in the likeness of the one who sends forth. Accordingly we also read that the human being is "in accordance with the Image of God.

(Philo, *Plant.* 18–19)

And indeed, he who compiled the first book for us – Moses, who above all men was known to God – says, "And God made man, in accordance with the image of God he made him." But that through the Spirit (διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος) he was sealed unto the divine image (εἰς εἰκόνα τὴν θεῖαν κατεσφραγίζετο), himself again taught us, saying, "And inbreathed into his face a breath of life." For the Spirit at once began both to put life into

58 For a summary with further references, see Yli-Karjanmaa, "Call Him Earth," 253–57. By a protological interpretation I mean one that maintains the protological orientation of the biblical text, whereas a universalizing one extracts general truths from a protological text.

59 For a discussion of many of the Philonic passages mentioned in this paragraph, see Yli-Karjanmaa, "Significance."

60 Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 7.10.9.9–10; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen. (homiliae 1–67)* 53.104.7, *Hom. Ps.* 101–7 (spurious) 55.641.29.

His formation and in a divine manner to impress (ἐνεσήμεινεν) His own stamps (χαρακτῆρας) thereon. Thus the most excellent artificer God, having formed the reasonable (λογικόν) living creature upon the earth, gave him the saving commandment.

(Cyril, *Jo.* 1.182.24–183.2)

In addition to the shared terminology, both Philo and Cyril appeal to Moses, and both speak of “spirit” in addition to the “breath.” Philo does not define the role of the spirit very exactly here, but in a later passage (*Plant.* 44) it is instrumental, just like in Cyril: the first human being was “stamped with the spirit (χαραχθεὶς πνεύματι) in accordance with the image of God.”

Earlier in the commentary Cyril uses similar vocabulary as above (ἐνσημαίνω, κατασφραγίζω, ἀρχέτυπος) in connection with Gen 1:27 at 1.133.12–19 and with Gen 2:7 at 1.138.24–139.7. The latter passage (exegesis of John 1:14a) is worth citing from as a possible witness to Cyril’s “dialogue” with Philo:

But when he was punished for his transgression, he rightly heard the words, “You are earth and to earth you shall return” and was stripped of the grace. The breath of life, that is, the Spirit who says “I am the life,” departed from the earthly flesh and the living being succumbed to death through the flesh alone, since the soul was preserved in its immortality, with the result that it was to the flesh alone that the words “You are earth and to earth you shall return” were addressed.⁶¹

This statement on Gen 3:19 reads like a retort to Philo, who in *QG* 1.51 asks,

What is the meaning of the words, “Until you return to the earth from which you were taken”? For the human being was moulded not only from the earth but also from the divine spirit.

Philo builds his allegory both here and in *Leg.* 3.252–53 assuming God’s words are addressed to Adam’s soul too, and from this he derives the notion which I have called the *corporealization of the mind*, that is, its (or the soul’s)

61 Trans. Russell, *Cyril*, 105. There is another, highly intriguing aspect in Cyril’s discussion that can only be mentioned here. He seems to give the “breath of life” of Gen 2:7 a *soteriological* interpretation in a way that is, to my knowledge, only paralleled by 1 Cor 15:45 and especially Philo’s *Leg.* 1.31–32 (on which see Yli-Karjanmaa, “Call Him Earth”).

vicious orientation towards the sense-perceptible realm and the body.⁶² In *Leg.* 3.252 Philo uses the biblical returning to earth as an opportunity to hint at reincarnation – a move that Cyril probably found most objectionable, if he was aware of it.⁶³

Circumcision

The comparison of Cyril's allegorical understanding of circumcision with Philo's begins along lines similar to what was done in the previous section, by looking at cases where the two exegetes stand closer to each other than to anyone else. Subsequently, one longer text by Cyril is discussed.

It was noted above that alongside Cyril's Pauline, Christologically oriented understanding of circumcision there is another, ethical, even ascetical interpretation: cutting away the foreskin symbolizes the excision of pleasures and passions. Cyril is once again picking up terminology that is more prominent in his Jewish predecessor than in the intervening Christian authors. In fact, even a combination as general as that of circumcision and pleasure brings up a link specifically between Cyril and Philo. Searching *TLG* for ἡδονή (pleasure) within fifteen words of either περιτομή (circumcision) or περιτέμνω (to circumcise) produces, first, Philo (*Migr.* 92, *Spec.* 1.8–9, *QE* 2.2), then two cases that are not relevant, and then Cyril (*Jo.* 1.631.24, 1.642.28, 1.643.15, 2.550.2; *Glaphyra in Pentateuchum* 69.485.1).⁶⁴ Only some aspects of these can be discussed.

Philo directly deals with the allegorical significance (σύμβολον, αἰνίσσομαι, etc.) of circumcision, whereas Cyril is often less explicit. But, for example, when discussing Joshua's "circumcis[ing] the sons of Israel with flint knives" (*Josh* 5:1) Cyril says that this

indicat[es] to us through an enigma (αἰνιγματωδῶς ἡμῖν σημαίνων) the circumcision in Christ which is "not made by hand" (*Col* 2:11) and by

62 For corporealization as a driving force of reincarnation in Philo's thought, see Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo*, 70–79.

63 See Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo*, 76–77. I have not been able to locate any references to reincarnation in Cyril's *oeuvre*.

64 The intervening cases are Clement, *Paed.* 2.10.95.2 and John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* (*homiliae* 1–15) 62.257.8. In both, the word referring to circumcision is part of a biblical quotation (*Ezek* 34:9 and *Phil* 3:3, respectively), and in neither is any kind of non-literal interpretation of the rite offered. Such interpretations do occur in Clement, who, e.g. in *Strom.* 5.4.19.4, speaks of "those devoted to God" who had "circumcised the desires of the passions (τοῖς περιτετμημένοις τὰς τῶν παθῶν ἐπιθυμίας)."

which death is defeated. This is the noetic circumcision of evil and the making away with badness and pleasure.

(*Glaphyra in Pentateuchum* 69.484.55–485.2)⁶⁵

There are some closely linked expressions, such as Philo's "the excision of pleasure and all passions (ἡδονῆς καὶ παθῶν πάντων ἐκτομήν)" (*Migr.* 92) and Cyril's "cutting away pleasure (τὰς [...] ἡδονὰς ἀποτέμνειν)" and "the cutting away of our passions (τὴν τῶν παθῶν ἀποτομήν)" (*Jo.* 1.642.28–29, 643.21, 644.5).⁶⁶ Before Cyril, only Philo speaks of "the cutting away of passions" (παθῶν ἐκ-/ἀποτομή) in the context of circumcision.

A further pair of passages exemplifies yet another feature not found so clearly in any author between Philo and Cyril: the combination of discussing pleasure and the wordplay on περιτομή and περιττός ("excessive").⁶⁷ Philo writes:

For since among the love-lures of pleasure the palm is held by the mating of man and woman, the legislators thought good to dock the organ which ministers to such intercourse, thus making circumcision the figure of the excision of excessive and superfluous pleasure (αἰνιττομένοις περιτομήν περιττῆς ἐκτομήν καὶ πλεοναζούσης ἡδονῆς), not only of one pleasure but of all the other pleasures signified by one, and that the most imperious. (*Spec.* 1.9)

Cyril's point is the connection he sees between the Sabbath rest and circumcision:

Since then the rest on the seventh day signifies freedom and rest from all wickedness, and cessation from sin, and circumcision in spirit means (σημαίνουσας) [...] being freed from superfluous lusts, and overmuch pleasure (τῶν περιττῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ἀπαλλάττεσθαι καὶ ἡδονῆς τῆς πλείονος)

65 My trans. for τὴν ἀχειροποίητον ἐν Χριστῷ διὰ περιτομήν αἰνιγματωδῶς ἡμῖν σημαίνων, ὅφ' ἦν καὶ ἡττάται θάνατος, ἥπερ ἐστὶν ἡ νοητὴ τῆς κακίας περιτομή, φαυλότητός τε καὶ ἡδονῶν ἀπόθεσις.

66 Cyril's commentary on John contains an exceptionally rich dose of the ethical interpretation of circumcision: e.g. "shaking off (ἀποσείσασθαι) one's passions" (*Jo.* 1.643.10), "cutting off (ἀποτομή) of our passions" (1.643.21, 1.644.5) and "be[ing] released (ἀπαλλάττεσθαι) from our passions" (1.643.24–25). Other examples are taken up in the text.

67 A TLG search for περισός and ἡδονή within twenty words of περιτομή only brings up the two passages I discuss and a few later ones. περισός and περιτομή do occur in Rom 3:1 (but the former in the sense of "advantage") and its commentaries but this has no direct bearing on the idea in Philo and Cyril, getting rid of immoderate pleasure.

[which] clearly results in rest from evil, we shall find not only that circumcision in no way breaks the law respecting the Sabbath.

(*Jo.* 1.641.26–642.4)

Once again, despite a partly different focus, there is significant terminological overlap specifically between Cyril and Philo.

There is a longer exposition of circumcision in Cyril's Easter letter 6 (for the year 418) which in my view can plausibly be read as evidence for his familiarity, and again even for some kind of dialogue with, Philo's ideas about the rite.⁶⁸ In what follows, I summarize Cyril's argument and present parallels from Philo. The bishop takes circumcision to be one example of the things which the Jews "take pride in" and in which they have "the description of a good reputation (εὐδοκίμησης)" (*Ep. pasch.* 6.7.8–9). While this was perhaps generally true, it is worth noting that in Philo's famous text against the "pure allegorists" who neglect, inter alia, circumcision and concentrate exclusively on the allegorical interpretation of the Mosaic legislation, his main concern seems to be the damage done to the reputation of allegorists (*Migr.* 86–94).⁶⁹ He emphasizes "fair fame (εὐφημίας) as a great matter and one of much advantage (πολλὰ [...] ὠφελοῦντος)" (88) and exhorts the pure allegorists "to have thought for good repute (χρηστῆς ὑπολήψεως)" (90). His criticism is mild and exhibits, to cite Collins, a "tolerant tone."⁷⁰ He was clearly willing to extend a degree of recognition to the pure allegorists – he, for example, in no way questioned their Jewishness – although he could not agree with their policy of non-compliance with the literal observation of the commandments.

Cyril wants to clarify "what benefit may come from being circumcised, or what advantage (τὸ ὠφελοῦν) the Legislator offers us from it" (*Ep. pasch.* 6.7.17–19), since in the absence of benefits the practice is ridiculous (γελοῖότητος οὐκ ἀμοιρεῖ). The benefits from versus ridicule of circumcision seems to have been an issue four centuries earlier as well, for Philo reports that circumcision is "an object of ridicule (γελωμένου) among many people" (*Spec.* 1.1–2). To counter this, he enumerates four traditional reasons for and two symbolical meanings of the practice (1.4–11), tacitly agreeing with Cyril that circumcision needs justifying reasons to avoid ridicule. As if

68 The letter is found in *TLG* under number 4090.177. Below, I use Amidon's translation.

69 The whole discussion stems from the allegorization of God's gift of a *great name* to Abraham in Gen 12:2. But see e.g. Barclay, "Paul and Philo," for a more social understanding of Philo's concern. I do agree with Barclay (*ibid.*, 540), that it is better to call these allegorists "pure" rather than "extreme." Their allegories are the same as Philo's.

70 Collins, "Symbol of Otherness," 172.

aware of this, Cyril remarks, “But I suppose that the Jews themselves will agree that if nothing good is signified by the circumcision of the flesh, it will prove to be ridiculous in itself” (*Ep. pasch.* 6.7.42–44). Cyril continues that if circumcision were necessary, God would be burdening the body with “some vain excrescences (περιττώμασι).” Again, Philo had indeed argued that the foreskin is “superfluous in procreation” (*QG* 3.48).⁷¹

Cyril continues by calling the human mind (νοῦς) “by nature the most fertile (γονιμώτατον) of all things” (*Ep. pasch.* 6.8.1–2). This juxtaposition of the mind and the male sexual organ that “nature uses (ὕπηρετεῖται) for procreation (πρὸς γένεσιν)” (6.7.20–21) corresponds to Philo’s view that circumcision

assimilates the circumcised member to the heart. For both are framed to serve for generation (πρὸς γένεσιν παρσκευάζεται), thought (νοημάτων) being generated by the spirit force in the heart, living creatures by the reproductive (γόνιμον) organ.

(*Spec.* 1.6)⁷²

Philo is not ascribing cognitive faculties to the heart but using Stoic phraseology and alluding to it as the possible place of residence of the mind. He immediately returns to the more typical, Platonizing language when he elaborates,

the unseen and superior element to which the concepts of the mind (τὰ νοητά) owe their existence should have assimilated to it the visible and apparent.

In Philo’s thought, this element is none other than the mind (νοῦς).

In his letter, Cyril does not connect circumcision with abolishing passions or pleasure.⁷³ Instead, the thing to be removed is *forgetfulness* which “spreads

71 *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin* belongs to that part of the Philonic corpus which survives apart from Greek fragments as a sixth-century Armenian translation only. Based on the equivalents the translators are known to have used, the Armenian word for “superfluous,” աւելորդ, is likely to translate the Greek περιττός; see Avetikyan, Surmelyan, and Avgeryan, *New Dictionary of the Armenian Language*, vol. 1, 395.

72 In *QG* 3.48 too Philo speaks of “two generative (organs).” The idea does also occur in Didymus who compares “remov[ing] something from the organ serving generation (ὕπηρετοῦντος γένεσει)” to the circumcision of the *heart* as “throw[ing] away the whole reasoning power, friend of the generation of thought (γενέσει τῆς νοήσεως)” (*Fr. Ps. [e commentario altero]* 31. 8–10).

73 Morgan has argued that “[t]hrough [Cyril] interprets [circumcision] in a variety of ways, he always does so within a soteriological framework” (Morgan, “Circumcision and Soteriology,” 202).

over [the mind] like a veil [... and] produces in us an earthly mentality instead of a spiritual one, and thus displays the human being as full of every impurity" whereby "that which by nature engenders (τίχτειν) what is fairest of all is troubled by the ignorance (ἀμαθία) thence arising" (*Ep. pasch.* 6.8.5–19). For Philo the problem is *pleasure*, but that too leads to impurity (*QG* 3.46, 52), and he associates the hard-heartedness, which must, according to Deut 10:16, be circumcised, with ignorance (ἀμαθία, *Spec.* 1.306).⁷⁴

Cyril reiterates (*Ep. pasch.* 6.8. 23–27):

But when we have shaken off the forgetfulness concerning what is better, and cut off (ἀποτέμνοντες) the errors resulting from it like some superfluous excrescences (περιττωμάτων ἐκδρομάς), we will maintain within ourselves our male and completely fertile (γονιμώτατον) mind free from all wickedness and naked (γυμνόν) of the evils arising from vice (τῶν ἐκ πονηρίας κακῶν).

Philo would have raised no objection. Compare his *QG* 3.46:

For that which is, one might say, naturally male in us is the mind, whose superfluous growths (ὑπερτιττὰς βλάστας) it is necessary to cut off (ἡμυνῶμεν) and throw away in order that it may become pure and naked (ἄνῃ) of every evil (ὑποκαταλείμεν) and passion (ἡμυνῶμεν).⁷⁵

It is Cyril's conviction that the literal command of circumcision covers the "theoretical" like a veil (*Ep. pasch.* 6.9.21–22); it needs to be removed, not the foreskin. Although Philo in *Migr.* 94 implies that the allegorical

I agree about the variety, but the link to salvation is quite indirect in some, ethically oriented texts (as above). Morgan does note (*ibid.*, 212) the ethical dimensions, besides the eschatological one.

⁷⁴ Niehoff calls Deut 10:16 "the only Pentateuchal reference to circumcision as a metaphor" (Niehoff, "Circumcision as a Marker," 96.). But there is another one in the Septuagint in Lev 26:41, and MT has further cases, at least Exod 6:12, 30, concerning the lips (referred to by Niehoff, *ibid.*, 112) and Deut 30:6, the heart.

⁷⁵ No Greek fragment survives for *QG* 3.46. Based on the known cases of equivalents, "superfluous growths" probably translates περιττὰς βλάστας *vel sim.*, whereas the verb ἡμυνῶμεν may render at least τέμνω, ἀποτέμνω, ἐκκόπτω and ἀποκόπτω (Avetikyan, Surmelyan, and Avgeryan, *New Dictionary of the Armenian Language*, vol. 1, 395, 513, vol. 2, 57). The words for "evil" and "passion" also have several options (*ibid.*, vol. 1, 571, 17) but, based e.g. on the Armenian translation of Philo's *Leg.* (2.46), the probable Greek words were κακία and πάθος, a combination that occurs many times in Philo. For ἄνῃ, the *New Dictionary of the Armenian Language* only mentions γυμνός (vol. 2, 254).

understanding is “great” and the literal “small,” he does not advocate abandoning the latter.

As a final point, I want to mention that both Philo and Cyril warn against the human delusional belief in one's own powers in the context of circumcision, although the issues at stake vary. For Philo the point is “the impious conceit, under which the mind supposed that it was capable of begetting (γεννᾶν) by its own power” (*Migr.* 92; cf. *Spec.* 1.10–11, *QG* 3.45, 3.48). Cyril says that having banished evil “we will stand confidently before God,” but “by no means, however, will we present ourselves, any more than the newborn baby brings itself to God” – that is the work of Christ (*Ep. pasch.* 6.8.29–34). Likewise,

to be released from our passions (πάθους) is surely not in our own power, but is verily the fitting work of Christ who suffered (παθόντι) for us.

(*Jo.* 1.643.24–26)

Did Cyril get from Philo the inspiration to bring up this theme? The judgment will depend, in part, on how strong the cumulative evidence for Cyril's general awareness of Philo's works is assessed to be. One further indication in favor of Cyril's directly consulting Philo on circumcision is that in a fragment from book 11 of the *Contra Julianum* Cyril quotes the definition of self-conceit (οἴησις as in *Spec.* 1.10 and the Greek fragment of *QG* 3.48) as “excision of progress” (προκοπῆς ἐκκοπή) and calls this “a widely spread saying” (76.1057.45–48). While the definition occurs in Isidore of Pelusium as well (*Ep.* 1647.4), the more likely source is Philo who also records it as “an old saying” at *QG* 3.48.⁷⁶

In his letter, Cyril is far from copying Philo's exegesis or following his train of thought as such. For example, he fully ignores the traditional reasons for circumcision Philo gives in *Spec.* 1. This is, however, to be expected, for commenting on them individually would have been unnecessary given Cyril's stance that any valid reason for circumcision would imply a mistake by the Creator. In any case, Cyril is cultivating notions and terminology that he would have found in Philo, if he had read his works. The assumption that he had is, in my view, the most plausible explanation for the terminological connections noted in this essay that link the two thinkers more closely with each other than with anyone else.

⁷⁶ Isidore's letter is found in 2741.002 in *TLG*.

Conclusions and Further Research

I would like to put forward the following hypothesis for explaining the observations made above regarding Cyril and Philo. Philo was a problematic figure for Cyril because he fell between stools. He was not an ancient authority like Plato who could be cited rather freely if need be, nor was he a Josephus that could be mined for historical information, and openly as a Jew at that. Nor was Philo someone whom Cyril could accuse of denying Christ *because of* literal, “Jewish” exegesis. Cyril also did not want to grant him the epithet “Hebrew” that could have made it possible to name and cite him just like the Hebrew traditions he sometimes advocates. Yet Cyril had to face the fact Philo had secured a place in the Alexandrian traditional exegesis and become a sort of semi-Christian. Cyril, however, knew no such category.

Cyril was, then, in a situation where he could neither simply dismiss or condemn Philo wholesale as a Jew nor stop using his theology. But he also did not want to acknowledge the debt the Alexandrian tradition owed to Philo, nor get caught citing or using him in an evident manner. If this picture is correct, it can be asked how else Cyril *could have* used Philo except by utilizing the useful bits of exegesis and his allegorical interpretations and notions and never quoting directly, but sometimes correcting and always adapting what he adopted?⁷⁷

The observations presented in this essay only scratch the surface of the matter. Further research is needed to confirm, and establish the extent of, Cyril's direct use of Philo – ideally by scholars who are thoroughly acquainted with the works and thought of both authors and their sources. Only thus will it be possible to trace the chain of mediation of old ideas and identify the emergence of new ones. Kerrigan has already made a useful contribution by describing and juxtaposing numerous exegetical solutions used by Cyril and other exegetes.⁷⁸ This work should be continued and elaborated.

Further research into Cyril's direct use of Philo is likely to be a laborious but rewarding task. Cyril, for all his theological problems with Judaism, found in the writings of the Jewish allegorist things that he did not want to leave unused. But he did not extend any recognition to Philo. Was Cyril afraid that doing so would have undermined the hostility towards his Jewish contemporaries that was such a constitutive element in his theology? This possibility raises questions about the *Jewish* reception of Philo: had he not

77 Much of this seems to apply to Cyril's relation to Origen as well.

78 Kerrigan, *Interpreter*, *passim*; e.g. 389–434.

already been abandoned to the Christians several centuries earlier?⁷⁹ It is not at all obvious that the Jews in Alexandria would have identified with Philo or given much weight to his views in a dispute where he was appealed to by the Christian party.⁸⁰

But if the fear of such “leaking” of recognition through Philo to the Jews of Cyril’s own time was not the issue, what was? I can only speculate, but perhaps Cyril was held captive by his rigid view of Judaism as erroneous and let *it* – and not the Philonic ideas he used – define his attitude towards Philo the man. In this way he also upheld and even fortified the border between Judaism and Christianity, a border that passed right *through* Philo in a manner with which Cyril must have felt most uncomfortable. Had Cyril been able to appreciate the Philonic heritage as a Jewish component in his own thinking, he might have been open to other things as well that could have served to bridge Jews and Christians instead of separating them.

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79 We have no clear evidence of explicit Jewish awareness of Philo between Josephus (late first century) and Azariah de’ Rossi (sixteenth century); see Runia, *Christian Literature*, 12–16, 32–33.

80 It can be speculated that such appeals, used by Isidore, simply did not work and Cyril was aware of that.

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7. Rabbinic Reflections on Divine–Human Interactions

Speaking in Parables on the Miracle of Pregnancy and Birth

Galit Hasan-Rokem and Israel J. Yuval

Abstract

This article approaches the question of tolerance by focusing on the topic of miraculous births, shared by both Jews and Christians. An analysis of chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, dated to the first half of the fifth century, reveals contacts between the rabbinic text and Origen's homilies on Leviticus, which elaborate on the same biblical texts. Jews and Christians shared the idea of God's unquestionable power to perform miracles, but whereas the Christian discourse on miraculous birth in general addressed the birth of Jesus, the rabbis diverted the discourse to all human births.

Keywords: miraculous births; tolerance; Leviticus; Origen; theology

Discursive Spaces of Jews and Christians: Sharing Leviticus

The theme of miraculous birth has since ancient time intrigued human imagination and sparked tales of wonder. In the eastern part of the Mediterranean of Late Antiquity this theme occupied an especially central position in learned as well as popular discourses. The life history of Jesus as told in two of the Synoptic Gospels – Matthew and Luke – begins with a miraculous birth, possibly reminding audiences acquainted with the Hebrew Bible of the tale of the birth of Moses.¹ The details of the story remain veiled enough

¹ Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*; Vermes, *Nativity*.

to promote discussions around where, how and by whom the holy seed was introduced into the womb of Mary.

The dogma of the Virgin Mother of God, *theotokos*, was declared only in 431 CE at the Church Council of Ephesus. Prior to that, popular imagination, as well as literary creativity, elaborated around the theme in works such as the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* also known as the *Infancy Gospel of James*. Demonstrably also Jews were acquainted with the theme of the virgin birth and some of the texts of their sages, known as the rabbis, echo their involvement with this topic.

We suggest that the idea of miraculous birth was a shared theme of discourse that fostered dialogue as well as polemics among Jews and Christians in the early Byzantine period in Palestine and its environs. An analysis of a text expressing Jewish deliberations on this topic in chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, pertaining to Lev 12:2 (dated to the first half of the fifth century CE) is hereby proposed.² *Leviticus Rabbah* belongs to the genre of aggadic midrash literature that elaborates on the books of the Pentateuch and the Five Scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther) in a mélange of genres including historical legends, proverbs, parables, riddles, philosophical contemplations – all addressing hermeneutical and exegetical questions dynamically related to historical and moral matters. Scholars consider *Leviticus Rabbah* the most accomplished literary achievement of the aggadic midrashim.³

We have in the past addressed three of the nine paragraphs of the fourteenth chapter of *Leviticus Rabbah*, pars. 1, 5 and 9, in an article titled “Myth, History and Eschatology in a Rabbinic Treatise on Birth.”⁴ The three paragraphs discussed in the earlier work are respectively devoted to the creation of humans as an archetypal model of birth (par. 1); the birth of David, hailed by Jews and Christians alike as the progenitor of the Messianic lineage (par. 5); and the changes occurring in pregnancy and labor in the eschatological future (par. 9). Unlike the three paragraphs focusing on

2 Lerner, “Works.”

3 Heinemann, “Compositional Art,” 820, describes chapter 14 as one of those characterized by a “harmonious integration of homogeneous materials,” while he also holds its originality in this corpus inconclusive (n. 47 *ad loc.*). See also Heinemann, “Profile of a Midrash,” an earlier, much less detailed version of this article.

4 Hasan-Rokem and Yuval, “Myth, History and Eschatology.” Some parts of the introductory sections of both our articles refer to the same basic bibliography and methodological suggestions underlying our work, shared with the readers of the present article, partial repetition notwithstanding, as we cannot assume that the reader of either article will necessarily read the other one.

historical, mythical and eschatological themes, the other six paragraphs, grouped three and three around par. 5 and creating a symmetrical composition based on the number three, approach pregnancy and birth from variegated perspectives, involving God, man, woman and the unborn. These paragraphs are replete with ethnographic and medical knowledge of the human, especially the female, body, and exhibit instances of exquisite poetical prose. To demonstrate how the interreligious contacts between Jews and Christians are reflected in chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, we here analyze two of its paragraphs, 2 and 3, in which the genre of parable is a central means of literary and conceptual expression.

The wider cultural context of this particular chapter of *Leviticus Rabbah* evokes especially another, largely contemporaneous major exegete of scripture – Origen. We have taken note of the counsel of Maren Niehoff who has written, “Origen is an excellent point of reference for the study of *Genesis Rabbah* because he is an important agent of Greek culture who also comments on the same canonical text as the rabbis.”⁵ Niehoff focused on *Genesis Rabbah*, and thus studied the fragments of Origen’s commentary on Genesis, while we study Origen’s (185–254 CE) *Homilies on Leviticus*.⁶ Both “our” texts – *Leviticus Rabbah* and Origen’s *Homilies* – reflect in many ways public performances in religious contexts, sermons, and discuss the same verses of Leviticus.⁷ Origen’s Genesis homilies are also of some relevance here, echoing *Leviticus Rabbah*’s parallels/borrowings of *Genesis Rabbah*.⁸ Our reading is also inspired by Philip Alexander’s insightful notion of “the powerful intertextuality between the two traditions [Jewish and Christian],”⁹ complemented by his clarification “that the project on ‘The Exegetical

5 Niehoff, “Origen’s Commentary,” 131; for Origen’s contacts with Alexandrian Jewish scholarship, see Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 12–18, 32–33, 36; Clements, “Origen’s *Hexapla*,” 305–6. Clements provides references to formal disputes in Origen’s work, *ibid.*, 312–14, and rabbinic parallels, *ibid.*, 315–16.

6 We cannot develop here the question whether *Leviticus Rabbah* reflects, at least partly, actual performed sermons as Joseph Heinemann suggested, or rather a manual for prospective preachers. In Origen’s case, the situation seems less ambiguous although whether he wrote down his sermon texts before delivering them or summed up what he had orally performed has as far as we have seen remained undecided.

7 Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 1–16 (trans. Barkley); *Homélie sur le Lévitique* (trans. Borret); Margulies, ed., *Wayyikra Rabbah* (referred to as Margalioth whenever quoted). The translation, unless otherwise indicated, is ours; Heinemann, “Profile of a Midrash.”

8 Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (trans. Heine), esp. Homily 1.47–71; *Homélie sur la Genèse* (ed. Baehrens), 24–75.

9 Alexander, “In the Beginning,” 1.

Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity' will have more significance for the understanding of rabbinic midrash than of Christian Bible interpretation."¹⁰

Analyzing the midrashic text with Origen's homilies in mind takes into account the "original" context in synagogues and churches in late Roman Palestine.¹¹ Our projection of parallel performative situations is not oblivious of its limitations due to the fact that Origen's Leviticus homilies have reached us through a Latin translation (and possibly also a reworking) of Rufinus (340/45–410),¹² and the text of *Leviticus Rabbah* through multiple unrecoverable rewritings expressed in its many manuscript variants.¹³ It is noteworthy, however, that whereas both Origen and the rabbis have produced texts on Genesis leaning more towards linear commentary, their texts relating to Leviticus refer more clearly to oral presentation and have undergone a more carefully literary editing.¹⁴

10 Ibid., 5.

11 De Lange, *Origen and the Jews*. On his involvement with Jewish sages in a debate over virgin birth, *ibid.*, 99. Especially relevant is Urbach, "Homiletical Interpretations," where the polemical option is understood as the dominant paradigm for communication. Urbach proposes however that "they had a common basis, namely that they agreed that the Scroll must be interpreted allegorically" (*ibid.*, 275). Urbach, like Baer before him, suggested that Origen was the one who adopted or polemicized the exegesis of the rabbis. Baer, "Israel," esp. 15, published before most of the scholarship referred to in this article, paints a large canvas from Justin Martyr until Lactantius, calling Origen the greatest Christian theologian of the era. Baer, however, focuses on his *Contra Celsus* and *Song of Songs* exegesis, and does not mention either Origen's or the rabbis' works on Leviticus. Considering influence in the opposite direction has become possible due to, among other things, changes in dating, both relative and absolute, of the various actors and texts. Goshen-Gottstein, "Polemomania," a detailed critical review of much of the scholarship and an analysis of one text to substantiate his argument, proposes to begin with a total revision of the field, then concludes with a position close to Urbach's.

12 Heine in Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 36, quotes Rufinus's account of his employing "the form of explanation in translation" in his work on the *Homilies on Leviticus*.

13 We do not conduct a systematic comparison of variants, but will mention cases of significant variation, according to the notes of Margalioth and the online synopsis of *Leviticus Rabbah* manuscripts prepared by Professor Chaim Milikowsky and the late Professor Margarete Schlüter; Milikowsky and Schlüter, "Online Synopsis."

14 Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*. Scholars disagree on Origen's attitude towards contemporary Jews. Sebastian P. Brock suggests that "he was only concerned with finding out what was the text of the Old Testament as used by Jews of his own day"; Brock, "Origen's Aim," 344 (emphasis in the original). Unlike Brock, who refers to Hellenized Jews, Roger Brooks argues that Origen had absolutely no interest in the contemporary rabbinic interpretations of the Hebrew Bible, claiming that his ignorance of their Leviticus interpretations is reflected in the *Homilies on Leviticus*. Brooks, "Straw Dogs," 92–4. In the same volume, Blowers, "Origen, the Rabbis, and the Bible," 110, presents the contrary view that Origen was well versed in teachings of rabbis whether by hearsay or systematic consultation, and refers in particular to *halakhic* matters.

Marc Hirshman has systematically compared Origen's Seventh Homily on Leviticus based on his preaching cycle in Caesarea, to *Leviticus Rabbah* 13.¹⁵ We have discerned some general thematic links between Origen's Eighth Homily on Leviticus¹⁶ and *Leviticus Rabbah* chapter 14.¹⁷ Our work has confirmed Hirshman's important notion of the dominance of the allegorical interpretation in Origen's text paired with a relative scarcity of narrative genres such as parables and tales (and we add proverbs) in comparison with the rabbinic text. We concur with Hirshman's observation regarding the entangled picture of the Jewish lineage of Origen's work, inherited from Paul who received it from Gamliel (who received it from Hillel).¹⁸ Our modest hope is to at least partly meet Hirshman's desideratum of "a disciplined exhaustive study of the *midrash's* use of forms and genres," accepting his methodological caveat "not to determine the temporal relation of the arguments but to assert that they seem to reveal a knowledge of the other's position."¹⁹ Hirshman suggests that Origen's polemic is explicit, that of *Leviticus Rabbah* tacit;²⁰ our formulation of this issue in agreement with him suggests that the position of the midrash in *Leviticus Rabbah* is more dialogical than polemical. This difference may mostly be one of tone, also reflecting a different poetics.²¹

Another major Christian author and thinker to whose work the text on birth in *Leviticus Rabbah* seems to be akin is Jerome, known for his

15 Hirshman, "Origen and the Rabbis." See also Wilken, "Origen's Homilies"; Kimelman, "Rabbi Yohanan and Origen," esp. 567–74. Kimelman's discussion focuses on the first six verses of the Song of Songs and he suggests that the rabbis and Rabbi Yohanan in particular retorted Origen's Christological interpretations. Neither *Leviticus Rabbah* nor Origen's homilies on Leviticus enter into his discussion.

16 Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 153–75; *Homélies sur le Lévitique*, vol. 2, 9–69.

17 Margulies, ed., *Wayyikra Rabbah*, vol. 1, 295–318.

18 Hirshman, "Origen and the Rabbis," 95–96. Hirshman has also studied Origen's homilies on Genesis with special reference to the philosopher's ambiguous, indeed negative attitude towards the "tales" of the Jews especially in their interpretations of Genesis: Hirshman, "Origen's View." We thank the anonymous reader who suggested that this description of Paul's intellectual lineage is "a claim made in Acts but not confirmed by Paul's own letters."

19 Hirshman, "Origen and the Rabbis," 100.

20 Clements, "Origen's *Hexapla*," 310, notes that Origen's homilies are more polemical than his commentaries.

21 See also the following insight from Hirshman: "the most carefully edited of all rabbinic anthologies – *Leviticus Rabbah* – has none of the dramatic movement suffusing Origen's work. At least two stylistic elements used by Origen are absent: the direct address to the audience, and the connecting links between the various homilies." Hirshman, *Rivalry of Genius*, 75. We slightly disagree with Hirshman on the connection between homilies in *Leviticus Rabbah*.

interaction with Jewish sages from whom he reports having heard their interpretations of scripture.²²

The cultural contacts between Origen and *Leviticus Rabbah* are more discernible in the three paragraphs discussed by us in our earlier article, because of the stronger doctrinal investment in the issues of creation, the messiah and eschatology addressed in them than in the presently discussed paragraphs addressing more human, everyday life and corporeal issues. It is however noteworthy that the poetical quality of these passages does not lack in comparison to the more “theological” issues, and they will serve us to point out the growth of theological concepts out of everyday life, continuing the poetics prevailing, for example, in the Synoptic Gospels rather than in the later Christian discourse.²³

The Poetics of Procreation: Echoes of Psalms and Job

Origen's Eighth Homily on Leviticus opens with an allegorical reference to Christ the Physician motivating the combination of two topics from Lev 12 in one sermon, that is, the laws concerning the isolation and the purification of a woman who has delivered (a son) and the laws concerning the isolation and purification of the leper. The first topic of Origen's homily, birth, is central to the chapter in *Leviticus Rabbah* that we analyze. Origen's homily on birth addresses the same verse as chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, namely Leviticus 12:2 (JPS): “When a woman at childbirth bears a male, she shall be unclean seven days; she shall be unclean as at the time of her menstrual infirmity.”²⁴ The topic of the leper's ritual and social status included by Origen in the same homily is discussed in later chapters of *Leviticus Rabbah*. *Leviticus Rabbah* 14 initially sets out from Lev 12:2 and branches out, as texts of *aggadic* midrash usually do, into multiple scriptural references and quotes.

Following rabbinic style and rhetoric, references are interwoven throughout the textual fabric of *Leviticus Rabbah* 14 to Ps 139 – a sublime hymn hailing divine providence as a personal and intimate relationship between the divinity and the individual, beginning already at the latter's gestation and birth.²⁵

22 Williams, “Lessons.”

23 This is a central theme in Hasan-Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood*.

24 דבר אל-בני ישראל, לאמר, אשה כי תזריע, וילדה זכר--וְטִמְאָהָ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, כִּימֵי נִדַּת דּוֹתָהּ תִּטְמָא.

25 This central subtext of the chapter, like many other themes and details, is common to the paragraphs that we have treated in separate articles.

This marks an important parallel to the exegetical rhetoric of Origen, whose privileging of the verses of Psalms for enabling the dynamics between the three levels of the text that he addresses in his hermeneutic model encompassing the literal, historical/moral, and the spiritual/Christological is well known.²⁶ Origen provides relevant exegeses of several verses from Ps 139. Paragraphs 1 and 8 of *Leviticus Rabbah* 14 – neither of them discussed in the present essay – build on Ps 139:16. This verse, “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect” (*KJV*),²⁷ is elaborated by Origen with regard to the relationship between the concrete physical aspects of humans and their spiritual aspects, which, being created, are still radically separated from the spirituality of all three components of the Trinity.²⁸

Leviticus Rabbah belongs to the genre of aggadic midrash elaborating on the scriptural Leviticus that was mostly created and edited around Lake Kinneret/Lake of Tiberias or the Lake of Galilee, although some contributions of the rabbis of Caesarea, where Origen (184/5–253/4) famously was active (232–35), also appear. The Jewish narrators and thinkers whose production was included in this literary work, with its high artistic quality,²⁹ lived in an environment full of Jewish sacred memories,³⁰ but also with Christian memories of the sacred acts, words and miracles of Jesus in the Galilee and the activity of sages of the emerging church in Caesarea.

In his Eighth Homily on Leviticus Origen elaborates on the belief in virgin birth and correlated ideas about the purity and impurity of the body and the heart. Tracing such traditions reflected in the rabbinic text, we maintain that “[t]he fact that we are not able to establish unambiguously the direction of the movement of the narratives from one culture to another is regrettable but should not diminish the importance of the connection itself.”³¹ Ishay Rosen-Zvi adds an important dimension in maintaining that

26 Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, devotes an entire chapter to the analysis of Psalm 37 in laying out the hermeneutic paradigm that she reveals in Origen's works; Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, 89–90, 96–97, 100, 198, also refer to Origen's preferential treatment of the Psalms, especially in the construction of the *Hexapla*; see also Clements, “Origen's *Hexapla*,” 319, whose work Grafton and Williams often quote.

27 וְעֵינֶיךָ רָאוּ אֶמְעוּמִי. Vulgate: Imperfectum meum viderunt oculi tui. Greek: τὸ ἀκατέργαστόν μου εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου.

28 Origen, *Princ.* 4.34 (35).

29 Heinemann, “Compositional Art.”

30 Reiner, “From Joshua to Jesus.”

31 Hasan-Rokem, “Narratives in Dialogue,” 126. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal creatively elaborates: Siegal, “Ethics and Identity,” esp. 58–59. Referring to Lawrence Hoffman, Boustán, “Rabbi Ishmael's Miraculous Conception,” 310, recommends “locat[ing] the precise strategies by which the elements of a common idiom are fashioned into an exclusionary practice.” Boustán also

the shared discursive space between early Jews and Christians cannot be reduced to either influence or permeable borders.³² However, as Kimelman has noted: “both Christian and Jewish positions were modified in content, or in expression, by exposure to the other,”³³ and as Baer already much earlier argued, Jews, Christians and polytheists were much closer to each other than they would admit.³⁴

There is a strong emphasis on gender in chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, focusing on the female body’s probably most valued function in patriarchal societies – giving birth. It may not be a mere coincidence that this emphasis correlates with a dearth of national elements from the entire chapter, including the eschatological ending, that is unusual in rabbinic literature and *Leviticus Rabbah* itself. This situates the chapter in an unusually balanced position in the tension between universality and particularity that is usually most relevant to the rabbis’ texts and colored much of the cultural exchange between representatives of rabbinic Judaism and emerging Christianity.³⁵ The leaning of the text of chapter 14 towards the universal, rather than the particularly Jewish, shapes a dialogical rather than polemical approach in questions contended between the two religions – and in this chapter especially, virgin birth. In *Leviticus Rabbah* in general, feminine figures are shown to present a more porous communication between different identities.³⁶

This text also shows that rabbinic texts stem from diverse groups of Jews: learned men (and women) or lay women (and men) who excelled in sharing their experiences in narratives. Texts addressing prominent biblical fetuses, such as Jacob and Esau,³⁷ or Jewish fetuses associated with collective events, such as those present in their mother’s wombs at the crossing of the sea at the exodus or the revelation at Sinai, may

addresses questions of conception as a theme leading to his main theme, the martyrdom of Rabbi Ishmael.

32 Rosen-Zvi, “Yetser Ha-Ra and Daimones,” 453.

33 Kimelman, “Rabbi Yohanan and Origen,” 581, n. 62, credits Morton Smith with this insight.

34 Baer, “Israel,” 31.

35 Playoust and Aitken, “Leaping Child,” 161, formulate this beautifully: “the unborn is a potent symbol [...] As a result, imagining the unborn does not remain a narrowly focused act, but becomes a useful and productive site for exploring other issues [...] Therefore the whole divine and human world through the whole course of history can be imagined, using any hint available from the unborn’s existence and the sensations in the womb.” Islamic traditions also imagine the fetus, interweaving cosmological and ethnographical aspects; e.g. Peterson, “Prophet Emerging.”

36 A similar message regarding women neighbors emerges from Hasan-Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood*.

37 Yuval, *Two Nations*.

underline the particularity of Israel.³⁸ The experience and ethnographic knowledge derived from real, everyday-life pregnancies and real women highlight the universality of the common source of all humanity: the womb.

Much of the first paragraph of chapter 14, which we shall not discuss here, draws on another aggadic midrash text, *Genesis Rabbah* 8,1 in which the creation of humans in Genesis 1 and 2 is elaborated. The second paragraph with which we begin our present reading links to the first paragraph by its ending, which serves as a closing leitmotif of the first six of the nine paragraphs of the chapter. Vitally connected to the central theme of the chapter – human birth – these endings quote the verse “When a woman at childbirth” (Lev 12:2), whereas the *Genesis Rabbah* passage ends with “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26a). The *Genesis Rabbah* passage’s focus on creation by God is in the *Leviticus Rabbah* chapter transposed onto a creative and cooperative relationship between God, woman and man (in that order of importance) in the production of human lives.

The second section of chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah* opens the main body of the chapter with the rhetorical form of the *petiḥta* (“opening”)³⁹ also employed in the first section.⁴⁰ This rhetorical form works by connecting the Pentateuchal verse of the lectionary, here Lev 12:2, to a verse from either the historical books, the prophets or the hagiographa, reinforcing by this rhetorical practice the unity of the canon of the Hebrew Bible. To the biblical substratum of the Psalms that was revealed in the first section, taking off from Ps 139:5, another central substratum, the book of Job, is now added,⁴¹ offering the verse “I will fetch my knowledge from afar,⁴² I will justify my Maker” (Job 36:3). A careful reading reveals a strong connection between this Job verse and Ps 139:2b, “You discern my thoughts from afar,” in the

38 Kessler, “Famous Fetuses,” 188: “the fetus becomes a unique vehicle for conceiving Jewishness itself.”

39 Heinemann, “Profile of a Midrash”; see also Sarason “Petihtot”; Schäfer, “Die Petichta”; Shinan, “On the Nature of the Petichta.”

40 Hasan-Rokem and Yuval, “Myth, History and Eschatology.”

41 On the nature of Job quotes in rabbinic literature, focusing on the literal message without reference to the general ideological or emotional input of the specific speaker: Hasan-Rokem, “To Be or Not to Be.”

42 Unless otherwise stated we have used the *Jewish Study Bible*. We prefer the King James translation for the first half of this verse rather than the JPS version, “I will make my opinions widely known: I will justify my Maker,” rendering “widely” rather than “afar,” which is the key to the rabbinical interpretations in this text.

Hebrew.⁴³ Thus, in a way the Psalm chapter continues to resound in sec. 2 of chapter 14, and it will do so later in the chapter.⁴⁴

Said Rabbi Meir: “This verse brings together the language of hymns (*šira*) and the language of laments (*zemer*). The language of hymns on the tranquility of the righteous and the language of laments on the downfall of the evil.” And he said on the distant ones who have come close, “I will justify my Maker – my Maker I shall justify.”

The Job verse is interpreted by Rabbi Meir to encompass two rhetorical-musical expressive genres, hymn (*šira*) and song (*zemer*), respectively addressing the peace of the righteous and the fall of the evil. Rabbi Meir specifically correlates the end of the Job verse to “the distant ones who have come close, I will justify my Maker – my Maker I shall justify.” The chiastic presentation of the second half of the Job verse turns into a leading figure of speech of the whole section, symbolically allotting the primary position in the sentence to the Maker rather than to the speaker (who in the book of Job here is actually Elihu).⁴⁵ This rhetorical gesture foreshadows the ensuing privileging of the role of the Maker in the creation of human progeny, an act that otherwise may intuitively be deemed as human. The Hebrew verb used to designate Rabbi Meir’s creative exegesis, “brings together,” משמיש (*mašmiš*), is conspicuously similar to the rabbinic term for copulation, תשמיש (*tašmiš*), that will soon become of prime interest in this section.

Rabbi Nathan provides the ultimate example for someone who has come from afar and become close, Abraham, who not only wandered from Mesopotamia to Canaan, but who in rabbinic historiography, following Genesis, also performed the giant leap from a polytheistic world into monotheism:

43 Job 36:3: וְלִפְעָלֵי, אֶת־צֶדֶק; Ps 139:2: מְרַחוֹק; אֲשָׁא דְעֵי, לְמִרְחוֹק; Ps 139:2: בְּנֶתֶה לְרַעִי, שְׂבָתִי וְקוֹמִי; שְׂבָתִי וְקוֹמִי; בְּנֶתֶה לְרַעִי, מְרַחוֹק; Ps 139:2: אֶתֶּה יְדַעְתָּ. These are the masoretic versions; *BHS* shows that for Ps 139:2 some manuscripts do not retain לְרַעִי but rather לְדַעִי as in LXX and Syriac. LXX has different words for this in Job (*episteme*) and the Psalm (*dialogismous*). The two LXX verses share similar words for “afar,” also almost identical in Hebrew – Job, *makran*; Psalm, *makrothen*.

44 For the discussion of the genre of praise, שִׁבּוּחַ below, it may be interesting to point out that the genre marker at the opening of Ps 139 in the Aramaic translation known as Pseudo-Jonathan is exactly praise (*tishbehata*, תִּשְׁבַּחְתָּא). The medieval Spanish poet and exegete Avraham Ibn-Ezra praises the psalm as the loftiest and most powerful in the entire book of Psalms.

45 Visotzky, *Golden Bells and Pomegranates*, 143, suggests that “[t]his text alludes to the debate among the rabbis about the authority of the book of Job and Job’s place in history.”

Said Rabbi Nathan: we reckon this to the name of Abraham our father who came from afar. As it is written: “On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar” (Gen 22:4).

Rabbinic exegesis will not establish the correlation between the Job verse and Abraham on mere historical knowledge, and thus a verse is pointed out to anchor the reference, “On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from *afar*” (Gen 22:4). Thus the most famous claim of Israel to inherited merit based on loyalty to God is appealed to, the patriarch’s compliance with the sacrifice, Isaac. The unusual word choice in Rabbi Nathan’s saying reveals an implied intertext, namely Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 4:1–12. There the apostle forcefully argues that Abraham became the father of Israel (including the new Israel of the church) not by fulfilling commands such as circumcision but rather thanks to his unbounded faith, which the reader or listener knows to have enabled him to obey the demand to sacrifice Isaac. The mode of the intertextual reference is not merely polemical, because Rabbi Nathan’s view actually harmonizes with Paul’s in valuing Abraham’s strength of belief as his claim to righteousness rather than any fulfillment of commands in practice.⁴⁶

In *Leviticus Rabbah* 14, 2, the words of Rabbi Ḥinnena (or Ḥanina) bar Papa now follow that may however be understood as a polemic answer to Paul (and to Rabbi Nathan) in pointing out the exclusive relationship between “us” and the one God as an act of intimate reconciliation of two partners:⁴⁷

We reckon this to the name of the Holy One Blessed be He, from whom we have been distant and to whom we have come close.

Rabbi Ḥaggai moves the discourse still a bit closer to its obvious goal, the theme of childbirth:

Said Rabbi Haggai: Matters that are at the distance of five hundred years, such as when the human creatures sleep in their beds and the Holy One Blessed be He blows the winds and raises the clouds and pours down

46 See also Gal 3:1–19, for Abraham as an exemplar and progenitor of faith rather than ritual practice.

47 The marital relationship between God and Israel as described in the rabbinic allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs may be tacitly implied.

the rains and grows the plants and dries them and sets a table in front of each and every one.

Rabbi Ḥaggai paints in animated language the cosmic perspective of God's acts in the world while humans lie in bed, modestly hinting at the conventionally assumed site of conception. Hence, the scene for the act itself is prepared.⁴⁸ The language here clearly carries an erotic tinge: in addition to the bed and the setting of the table, the almost fragrant description of the fertility of the earth enhanced by God's pouring of the rain come close in language to the romance of Ba'al and the earth in Canaanite epic tradition. But before entering the actual bedchamber, the midrashic text raises the question of textual authority, the peculiarity of which in Job was already hinted at earlier:

Rabbi Samuel bar Onya in the name of Rabbi Aḥa: "This verse, if said by Elihu himself is praise, if said by him inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the praise of praises."

The formula – clearly borrowed from the structure of the title of the Song of Songs – may be alluded to in Rabbi Ḥinnena bar Papa's words above, associating the relationship of God and Israel to a romantic reconciliation. The phrase structure further alludes to Rabbi Aqiva's famous argument for the inclusion of the Song of Songs in the scriptural canon: "All the 'Writings' are Holy and Song of Songs is Holy of Holies."⁴⁹ This slight allusion may be the strongest presence of the allegorical interpretation of scripture in the two paragraphs of *Leviticus Rabbah* that we analyze here, as the rabbis did lean on an allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs when they *ex post facto* justified its inclusion in the canon.⁵⁰

The theme of birth echoes above all Job's woeful reflections on his own birth (Job 3; 10:8–12). Another perhaps more complex relationship between Job and birth may be the loss of all his children (1:18–19) seemingly restored by the birth of seven unnamed sons and, in an unusual manner for the Hebrew Bible, three named daughters who also inherit him (42:13–15). In the context of our reading of the text in an interreligious context, the adoption of Job as a prefiguration of Christ's passion and suffering should also be remembered.⁵¹

48 Cf. "set the table" as a sexual act *b. Ned.* 20b.

49 *M. Yad.* 3, 5.

50 *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan A*, ch. 1, p. 2, in the Schechter edition.

51 E.g. Jas 5:7–11; Ambrose as discussed in Baskin, "Job as Moral Exemplar."

Parables, Secrets and Hymns of Praise

The introduction to what constitutes the core and kernel of the chapter – namely conception, gestation, pregnancy and birth as human–divine cooperation – moves through divine activity in matters of fertility and growth, as well as genres and their correlation to ideas and experiences. The genre term “praise” prepares the readers for the ensuing passages that like hymns of praise are marked by repeated refrains – verses from the book Job – although they are also encoded in the genre of parable, a very popular, characteristic and frequent narrative genre of rabbinic literature,⁵² richly and successfully represented in the Synoptic Gospels.⁵³ It is however important to emphasize, that whereas we consider parables a shared Jewish and Christian genre, with numerous stylistic and thematic similarities, we, unlike many scholars of the parables of Jesus in the gospels, do not study their Jewish background, but rather how they, together with both earlier and later Jewish and Christian parables, resound in the text of *Leviticus Rabbah*.⁵⁴

Rabbi Levi said three [things].⁵⁵ Rabbi Levi said: “The way of the world is that if a human secretly deposits an ounce of silver with someone and publicly returns to him a pound of gold, does he not feel grateful? Thus the human creatures secretly⁵⁶ deposit with the Holy One Blessed be He a

52 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*.

53 The literature on the topic is too copious to cite *in extenso*, but see e.g. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*; Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables*; Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*. The seminal work connecting the parables of Jesus and rabbinic literature remains Flusser, e.g. *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 150–68, esp. 151–53; and in Hebrew at greater length and detail: Flusser, “Parables of Jesus.” Continuing his work, based on the unpublished work of his untimely deceased disciple Chana Safrai, see Notely and Safrai, eds., *Parables of the Sages*. The works from which the selection has been made do not include *Leviticus Rabbah* or other classical Amoraic Midrash compilations. On the intimate connection between parables and the tales of miracles: Ruben Zimmermann in his methodological introduction to *Die Wunder Jesu*: Zimmermann, “Frühchristliche Wundererzählungen – eine Hinführung,” 11.

54 In this, our method – and its conceptualization – is akin to the balanced approach to the relationship between the parables of Jesus and rabbinic parables outlined by Snodgrass in his monumental *Stories with Intent*, 54–55. A fine example of a study of a parable from a historical-Jesus perspective: Merz, “Importunate Widow.”

55 On the arrangement of three parables in one narrative chain: Böttrich, “Feindliche Übernahme,” 604; see also Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 468–72, on the three parables in Luke 15.

56 The explanation of Jesus to his disciples for using parables as hidden language, in Matt 13, proceeds with a number of parables about hiding seeds that will grow, and further on with the parable of the Baking Woman in the Vulgate, Matt 13:33, using the term *absconditus*, Jerome’s

drop of white,⁵⁷ and the Holy One Blessed be He returns to them publicly complete and praiseworthy souls. Is that not praise? That is: 'I will justify my Maker – my Maker I shall justify.'⁵⁸

The short parable turns the act of procreation into a pecuniary relationship between males and eliminates at this stage the presence of women in the process. The white seed transforms into a full person, someone who has an accomplished soul. The chiasmic elaboration of the Job verse into the refrain, "Is that not praise? I will justify my Maker – my Maker I shall justify," marks the text as the first of a chain of hymns of praise of the Maker who actively participates in the act of conception.

This parable relays the first textual link of *Leviticus Rabbah* chapter 14 to the birth narrative of Jesus as told in Matthew and Luke, and as developed by later early Christian texts, encoded in the description of the process of impregnation occurring "secretly" (*be-ḥasai*).⁵⁹ This is a key term in Jerome's discussion of the proof-text for the miracle of the virgin birth in Matt 1:23 that is Isa 7:14;⁶⁰ "Look, the young woman⁶¹ is with child and about to give birth to a son."⁶² The early Christian sources at least from Justin Martyr

term for the description of the virgin birth: *aliam parabolam locutus est eis simile est regnum caelorum fermento quod acceptum mulier abscondit in farinae satis tribus donec fermentatum est totum*. Following the Greek: Ἀλλήν παραβολὴν ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ζύμη, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἐνέκρυψεν εἰς ἀλεύρου σάτα τρία, ἕως οὗ ἐξυμώθη ὅλον; cf. Luke 13:20–21; Kamesar, "Virgin of Isaiah 7:14; Hasan-Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood*, 24.

57 The textual variants for this expression complicate the translation although the whiteness of semen seems to be the dominant motif.

58 Rabbi Levi's first parable has an interesting parallel in *Genesis Rabbah* 17,7, in the context of the creation of Eve, staged as a dialogue between Rabbi Yosi and the "matrona." While this parallel occurrence reinforces the links between the two texts, as was the case in the parallels between *Leviticus Rabbah* 14,1, and *Genesis Rabbah* 8,1, as discussed in our earlier article on this chapter, see above, note 4, p. 196, in this case the *Genesis Rabbah* version is both less poetically developed and lacks the same contextual adequacy as here.

59 The *Genesis Rabbah* 17,7, version has *be-matmoniyot*; cf. John Chrysostom's invective *Adv. Jud.* 1.6.2.

60 Jerome, *Perpetual Virginity*, par. 4. Kamesar, "Virgin of Isaiah 7:14," and in another context: Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 37–72.

61 The commentary of the JPS Bible, 4: "Young woman (Heb 'almah'). The Septuagint translates as 'virgin,' παρθένος, leading ancient and medieval Christians to connect this verse with the New Testament figure of Mary. All modern scholars, however, agree that the Hebrew merely denotes a young woman of marriageable age, whether married or unmarried, whether a virgin or not."

62 This discussion reflects a strong involvement of the Christian interlocutors amongst themselves with the Hebrew text, although as Kamesar, "Virgin of Isaiah 7:14," competently demonstrated, often without first-hand knowledge of the Hebrew text itself.

onwards, involve the Jews as imagined discussion partners on the question of whether the *almah* of Isaiah was a virgin or not, reflecting on the stormy debates in early Christian circles about Mary's virginity, its whether, how and whereabouts, and the status of the prophetic verse as a sign of Christ. Rabbinic texts reveal minimal investment in the question although it is not clear how much is due to censorship or self-censorship. However, the few mentions that do exist are of interest, especially the following Talmudic passage (b. Sotah 12b) that associates the word *ha-'almah* with the first Miriam, sister of Moses:

Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you? (Exod 2:7) – What is special about the Hebrew women? [We] learn [from this] that Moses was given to all the Egyptian women and did not nurse, saying: should the mouth that will speak with the divine presence (*shekkinah*) nurse from an impure thing [*sic!*]. As it is written: "To whom would he give instruction? To whom expound a message? To those newly weaned from milk, Just taken away from the breast?" (Isa 28:9)⁶³ "And Pharaoh's daughter said: Go [And the girl went and got the baby's mother]." Said Rabbi El'azar: [We] learn [from this that] she walked quickly like a girl (*almah*). Rabbi Shmuel Bar-Nahmani said: The girl (*ha-almah*) because she was hiding (*he'elimah*) her words. "Pharaoh's daughter said to her: Take this baby [and nurse him for me]." Said Rabbi Hama Bar-Hanina: The righteous – not only is their loss restored to them but they are also compensated. "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister [took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing]" (Exod 15:20).

The passage emphatically reminds us that the word *almah* is associated with the birth of Jesus not only by the Christian interpretation of Isaiah's messianic prophecy but also through the name of Moses' sister. Kamesar, and much before him Jerome, have made the same connection between the word *almah* and the hiding, but neither seems to have raised the possibility of linking it with Miriam singing the praise of God, in some rabbinic sources characterized as the virgin prophetess, as Mary's prefiguration.⁶⁴ Jerome reinforces his claim that the word *almah* in Isaiah portends Mary

63 NB Isa 28:11: "Truly, as one who speaks to that people in a stammering jargon and an alien tongue."

64 Rabbinic traditions include diverse views about Miriam's marital and parental status.

by showing that the word refers in the Hebrew Bible only to virgins,⁶⁵ and explains that it encompasses in addition to physical virginity also the cloistered social status of the woman, encapsulated in the term *abscondita* – hidden, secret.⁶⁶

The term “secretly” in the first parable of Rabbi Levi puts in motion the powerful counterpoint to the Christian myth of the virgin birth that emerges from chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah* as a whole. Quintessentially the line of argument is that not just the virgin birth of Jesus is a miracle, but rather every human birth is a miracle in which God is actively involved, in person so to say. The endings of the *petihta’ot* of *Leviticus Rabbah* proclaiming the sexist, “All the more if it is a male child,” echo the gender selection of the Christian divine child.

A review of the occurrences of the word *hašai* and *behašai* in rabbinic literature reinforces its strong connection with the themes of the parable, both the pecuniary⁶⁷ and the sexual, especially with reference to female sexual parts.⁶⁸ The term *behašai*, one of the possible rabbinic counterparts for *absconditus/abscondita*, turns up in further texts that carry out a tense dialogue with the theme of virgin birth, focusing on denying the exceptionality of the Christian *theotokos* by among other devices producing other remarkable women with the same name.⁶⁹ In a *Pesikta Rabbati* text Miriam the sister of Moses rebukes her father (and the other Israelite males) for not having intercourse with her mother (or their wives) from fear of Pharaoh’s

65 Rebecca, Gen 24:43; Miriam, Exod 2:8; and the anonymous woman in Prov 30:19, “How a man has his way with a maiden,” whose status remains moot.

66 Jerome also translates Job 28:11 in the Vulgate as “et abscondita produxit in lucem,” where “abscondita” represent the Hebrew word from the same root as *almah*, namely *’lm*.

67 *M. Šeqal.* 5, 6; *t. Šeqal.* (Lieberman) 2, 16.

68 Palestinian Talmud *Šeqal.* 5, 4 (48c); *b. Ber.* 15b; *b. Sanh.* 92a; *Megillat Ta’anith* (Scholion in the Oxford MS) 17 Elul, p. 229, in Vered Noam’s edition and her illuminating notes on pp. 229–31, referring to the need to have the first intercourse of newly married couples “secretly” *behašai* – due to the decree of *jus primae noctis* revealed in this source. In a later source the story evolves into a heroic tale of the sister of the Maccabees who protested against the decree motivating her brothers to revolt against the Greek ruler; her name is – Miriam. Ilan, “Notes on the Distribution of Women’s Names.”

69 While sharing Visotzky’s insight that par. 5 in this chapter, that we dealt with in our earlier article, indeed refers to the conception of Jesus, “Anti-Christian Polemic,” we reject his characterization of that passage as a “reduction ad absurdum” or “vulgar parody,” *ibid.*, 104–5. The same is true about the tone of the passages discussed here. The rhetorical manipulation of the rabbis exposed here is of a much gentler and more sophisticated character.

decree to kill all male newborns,⁷⁰ the return of the Israelite men to their wives is *be-hašai*.⁷¹

70 *Pesikta Rabbati*, Ish Shalom's edition, § 43, pp. 180a–b. An *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* passage addresses, using the word *be-hašai*, two issues debated by Jews and Christians, also dealt with in chapter 14 of Leviticus: the miracle of every birth and the miracle of resurrection of the body. This passage merits a longer discussion, here only quoted *in extenso*: “A Cuti (Samaritan) asked Rabbi Meir, said: Are the dead alive (i.e. do they resurrect)? He said: Yes. He said: Secretly (*be-hashai*) or publicly (*be-parrhesia*). He said: Publicly. He said: From where do you show me that? He said: Not from the Bible and not from the Mishna, but from the way of the world (everyday life, sex life) will I answer you. He said: There is a trustworthy person in our town and everyone deposits with him secretly and he returns to them publicly. A person came and deposited with him publicly, how should he return, secretly or publicly, not publicly? He said: Yes. He said: Don't your ears hear what your mouth speaks, men deposit with their women a drop of white and the Holy One Blessed Be he returns the same drop to them a fine creature publicly. The dead who leaves publicly, all the more should he return publicly. And as he leaves accompanied by loud tones he also arrives accompanied by loud tones. Rabbi Jonathan in the name of Rabbi Jonathan of Bet Govrin said: It is written: [There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, 'Enough!':] the grave (*She'ol*), the barren womb, [land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, 'Enough!'] (Prov 30:15b–16). How are the two (grave and barren womb) related to each other? As the barren womb is loud so is the grave loud. He said: How do they arrive, naked or dressed? He said: Dressed. He said: From where do you show me that? He said: Not from the Bible and not from the Mishna, but from the way of the world (everyday life and/or sex life) will I answer you. He said: have you ever sown peas? He said: Yes. He said: How did you sow them, naked or dressed? He said: Naked. He said: How do they arrive, dressed or naked? He said: Dressed. Said he: Don't your ears hear what your mouth speaks, what if peas that one sows naked they rise for him dressed, the dead who leaves dressed all the more should he return dressed. Rabbi Aibo, and it was taught in the name of Rabbi Nathan: It is written: ‘The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment’ (Job 38:14), a garment that goes down to the grave with a person in this world follows him up. He said: If thus they return alive and dressed who cares for their food? He said: Did you ever in your lifetime go to Hamat Gerar? He said: Yes. He said: In the season or out of season? He said: In the season and out of season. And was there plenty of food there? He said: Plenty of food. In the season and out of season? In the season and out of season? Because of the soldiers merchandise is brought again and again. He said: So whoever brings the soldiers will bring their food. As it is written about (by?) Salomon: As goods increase, so do those who consume them. [And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them] (Eccl 5:10). As the consumers of goods increase the goods will increase. He said: Since they arrive alive and dressed and fed why do you weep for them? He said: May the spirit of that man leave him! Is there anyone who loses his delight and does not weep? As he arrives loudly, he leaves loudly” (*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* [Vilna edition] 5, 10).

71 The text on Miriam Moses' sister in the *Pesikta Rabbati* is followed by the powerful text about Miriam Bat-Tanhum and her seven sons who all are martyred by the Romans. One message of this most popular martyrs' legend in Jewish popular culture through the ages is that the seven sons of Miriam balance or even outweigh the one son of Mary; cf. Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 114–19.

After this excursus into rabbinic texts on the secrecy of procreation, correspondingly addressing the secrecy of the virginity of Mary the mother of Jesus, we turn to the second parable of Rabbi Levi:

Rabbi Levi said another one: The way of the world is that if a human is locked in a prison and no creature watches over him and someone comes and lights a candle for him there, does he not feel grateful? Thus the unborn⁷² dwells in his mother's insides and the Holy One Blessed be He lights a candle for him there. That is what Job said: "When his lamp shone over my head, when I walked in the dark by its light" (Job 29:3ab). Is that not praise? That is: "I will justify my Maker – my Maker I shall justify."

Here the mother enters the picture still only as the receptacle of the unborn, but as we shall see below, this potential elaborated in great detail eventually turns into an element of female empowerment.⁷³ The Job quote here originates in Job's own words that famously mention his unborn state more than once and with a tone of nostalgia – like here – compared with his present state.⁷⁴ The quote thus enhances the view of the situation of the unborn as a blissful state deserving a hymn of praise. The description of the womb as a prison may be understood as a transformation of the more standard imagery of a house applied to the female body and especially its sexual parts;⁷⁵ however, it also points to the perspective of the unborn itself longing to leave its confinement, rather than to the adult looking back in nostalgia. The third and final parable in the series returns to this perspective:

Rabbi Levi said another one: The way of the world is that if a human is locked in a prison and no creature watches over him and someone comes and unfetters him and sets him free from there, does he not feel grateful? Thus the unborn dwells in his mother's insides and the Holy One Blessed be He unfettered him and set him free from there. And all the more if it is a male. "When a woman at childbirth (literally 'brings forth seed') bears a male" (Lev 12:2).

72 *Walad* denotes neither embryo nor baby, but newborn. "Unborn," from Shirley Kaufman, "Unborn Leviticus Rabbah 14, 8," in Kaufman et al., eds., *Defiant Muse*, 56–57.

73 Kessler, *Conceiving Israel*, 92–96, reads the parables in pars. 2 and 3 as reflecting total erasure of the role of the woman in procreation.

74 Job 3:3–12 and esp. 10:8–18.

75 e.g. *m. Nid.* 2:5; cf. Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 49–60.

The third stanza of the “hymn” fulfills the longing of the unborn to leave its prison and completes the threefold assertion of God’s active participation in every conception, gestation, pregnancy and birth. The prison image of the womb conspicuously reflects male anxiety of the female body and its cavities.⁷⁶ Likewise, the sense of the lack of a benevolent guard of the unborn except for God indicates a grave denial of the role of the pregnant women. The text privileges the role of God as an active participant in all the stages of conception and birth. Explicitly formulated, the intercultural associations conveyed by these functions of the divinity are that God is both the Holy Spirit implanting the seed and guarding its well-being, and the midwife goddess known from ancient Egypt as Hekat and alive among a host of birth gods in Roman religion contemporaneous with early rabbinic literature. Tertullian has described this pantheon of procreation critically and mockingly: “There is a god Consevius, to preside over concubital generation; and Fluviona, to preserve the (growth of the) infant in the womb; after these come Vitumnus and Sentinus, through whom the babe begins to have life and its earliest sensation; then Diespiter, by whose office the child accomplishes its birth. *But when women begin their parturition, Candelifera also comes in aid, since childbearing requires the light of the candle.*”⁷⁷ If one reads Tertullian’s list of pagan gods who were responsible for producing one successful human birth, the rabbis’ appointing of God as solely responsible for the entire process becomes a clear anti-polytheistic gesture. However, this may also be a response to the cooperation of two thirds of the Trinity in bringing into the world baby Jesus. Most of all, the reinforced message is: every human birth is a miracle that demands the direct, active intervention of God, thus the parables thrice seek to dim the claim for the uniqueness of the miraculous birth of the Christian Savior baby.

The compositional poetics of chapter 14 prescribe a change by the end of the last parable. The refrain marking the series of parables as a hymn of praise is replaced by a compositional element that does not at all relate to the contents of the three parables however concludes the *petiḥta* according to the model and links it to the higher structural level of the chapter. This is the verse of the weekly lectionary from Leviticus: “And all the more if it is a male. ‘When a woman at childbirth [lit. ‘brings forth seed’] bears a male’ (Leviticus 12:2).”

76 Cf. also the comparison of the womb to a tomb Babylonian Talmud tractate *Šabb.* 129a.

77 Tertullian, *Nat.* 2.11. Our emphasis. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, 254. Pardes, *Biography of Ancient Israel*, 29–31, highlights God as a midwife of Israel.

Leviticus Rabbah 14, 3, follows the pattern formed towards the end of sec. 2. Again a verse from Job, “You bestowed on me life and grace,⁷⁸ Your providence watched over my spirit” (Job 1:12), is applied as a refrainlike repetitive element ending the parables, here attributed to Rabbi Abba bar Kahana. The parables of Rabbi Abba bar Kahana further reinforce the image of human pregnancy and birth as a miracle. Whereas Rabbi Levi’s parables focused more or less on the perspective of the fetus, Rabbi Abba bar Kahana’s mostly address the perspective of the mother:

“You bestowed on me life and grace, Your providence watched over my spirit” (Job 10:12). Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said three [parables]: Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: The way of the world is that if a man takes a pouch with coins and turns it upside down, do not the coins spread around? Hence, when the unborn dwells in its mother’s insides and the Holy One Blessed be He keeps it so that it will not fall and die, is it not life and grace?

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana’s parables open with the same formula as Rabbi Levi’s that relates the parables’ image to the “way of the world,” familiarizing it to everybody. The images here are even more concrete and quotidian and more striking. Like the first parable in Rabbi Levi’s triad, Rabbi Abba bar Kahana’s first parable also brings in figurative speech on money, possibly communicating the association of progeny as concrete and symbolical capital. The language of miracle becomes even more emphatic than in the earlier series, engaging the awareness of gravity and the seeming transcending of it in each successfully terminated pregnancy. The simplicity of the example of the money pouch based on gravity underscores the miracle of human pregnancy that seems to contradict this law of nature. The pecuniary imagery relates to a much wider application of economic language with regard to the relationship between God and humans, widely extant in Jewish and Christian texts in Late Antiquity.

The purse turned upside down also reminds us of older gynecological beliefs, such as “the woman’s uterus is likened to an upside-down jar” found “throughout the Hippocratic corpus and the works of the later, more sophisticated anatomists.”⁷⁹ The somewhat miraculous approach to

78 We have replaced the JPS choice “care” (*KJV*: “favour”) for *hesed* with “grace,” based on the LXX for *hayim ve- hesed*: ζωήν δέ και έλεος.

79 Zeitlin, *Playing the Other*, 65; Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 61; Levinson, “Cultural Androgyny,” 124, n. 30. For the established association between women and jars, see the parable of the woman and a jar in the *Gos. Thom.* 97, quoted by Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 443–44, from *NHL*, 129.

surviving pregnancies may have arisen in ancient societies where miscarriages, stillbirths and death in infancy were frequent.

The concreteness of imagery and the connection of pregnancy with material goods increase in the next parable:

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said another [thing]. Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: The way of the world is that the beast walks around reclining, and the unborn lies in its womb like in a covered cart.⁸⁰ And the woman walks around upright and the baby lies in her womb and the Holy One Blessed be He watches over it so that it does not fall and die, is that not life and grace?

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana's second parable intensifies the sense of miracle by singling out the exceptional nature of human pregnancy in defying gravity and by comparing it to the pregnancy of domesticated beasts. The Greek loan word inserted to provide a concrete image for the womb, *skopesti* from the Greek σκεπαστή (*skepaste*), may refer to a bowl-formed container, σκάφης.⁸¹ If the discourse on miraculous birth shared with contemporary Christian traditions is taken into account, the association with the *theotokos*, the container for divine grace, may be included in the intertextual readings of this passage.⁸²

However, the second parable is not really a parable in the strict sense of the term. Rather than suggesting an idiomatic or metaphorical example it refers to human experience of the difference of the pregnancies of four-footed beasts and upright humans.

Similarly, Rabbi Abba bar Kahana's third "parable" expresses almost amazement for the fact that a woman's breasts are in a clean and decent place in her body unlike the beast's nipples that are close to its unclean body parts:

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said another [thing]. Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: The way of the world is that the beast's nipples are close to its womb and the newborn suckles from the place of its shame; the woman's nipples are in a decent place and the newborn suckles from her place of honor, is that not life and grace?

80 The original has a Greek loan word *skopesti*, σκεπαστή; cf. Liddell and Scott's *Greek–English Lexicon*, s.v. σκέπτομαι and σκάφη.

81 Cf. also Margalioth's reference to Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter*, 410 (and one should add also p. 96 with the variant orthography *eskapesti*, for a litter; see also in Sperber, *Material Culture*, 48.

82 Norris, *Christological Controversy*, 131; Loofs, *Nestorius*, 31–32; Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, 55.

All three parabolic texts of Rabbi Abba bar Kahana conclude with the Job quote, “life and grace,” the Hebrew *ḥayim va-ḥesed* associating it with the Septuagint’s Job 10:12, ζῶν δὲ καὶ ἔλεος (*zōen de kai eleos*). The verse is situated in the midst of the passage describing God’s active participation in the formation of Job in his mother’s womb, that also associates with the probably most ancient of Christian liturgical formulae, based on both biblical, New Testament and Roman imperial supplication wordings: Κύριε ἐλέησον (*Kyrie eleison*).⁸³ We suggest that this formulaic element may reveal another intertextual challenge to Christian tradition, turning each human birth into a miracle and thereby toning down the uniqueness of the virgin birth. The term ἔλεος (*eleos*) appears twice in a New Testament text glorifying pregnancy – again in Mary’s thanksgiving praise to God after the unborn leaped in the womb of Elizabeth upon Mary’s greeting her, in the so-called “Magnificat” (Luke 1). The verses “His mercy (καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ) extends to those who fear him” (1:50) and “He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful” (μνησθῆναι ἐλέους) (1:54) are succeeded by a third use of the word in the same chapter, referring to the neighbors’ reaction to Elizabeth’s delivery of John: “Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy (τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ), and they shared her joy” (1:58).⁸⁴

In addition to the echo in the refrainlike ending of each of Rabbi Abba bar Kahana’s three parables, the reference to Luke emphasizes the association with the genre of hymns of praise that we suggested for the three parables of Rabbi Levi. The refrain continues to link the somewhat less structured parables that follow Rabbi Abba bar Kahana’s:

Rabbi El’azar said: If a human stays inside an oven one hour, will he not die? The insides of a woman are heated and the unborn dwells in her

83 LXX Job 10:12: ζῶν δὲ καὶ ἔλεος ἔθου παρ’ ἐμοί, ἡ δὲ ἐπισκοπή σου ἐφύλαξέν μου τὸ πνεῦμα. Alikin states that the use of the phrase κύριε ἐλέησον (Lord, have mercy) is pre-Christian, however not documented in the Graeco-Roman emperor cult, as has been suggested, but rather as a prayer in pagan Greek outside the emperor cult. More importantly, it occurs in such psalms as 40 (41):4, 10; cf. 9:13; 29 (30):10; 85 (86):3; 122 (123):3. Thus, most probably Christians adopted κύριε ἐλέησον from the Jewish prayer tradition, “as a short supplication at the end of the eucharistic prayer. The existence of this formulaic prayer is clear in the liturgies of the fourth century. Although the earliest evidence comes from the fourth century, it is probable that κύριε ἐλέησον was used as a liturgical formula in Christian assemblies as early as the third century.” Alikin, *Earliest History*, 280–81. We may also add the following Hebrew Bible sources: Ps 4:2, 6:3, 9:14, 25:11, 121:3; Isa 33:2; and Tob 8:10 (in the Septuagint), where it functions as a kind of liturgical exclamation. New Testament sources for the formula include Matt. 9:27, 20:30, 15:22; Mark 10:47; Luke 16:24, 17:13 – in different declensions.

84 Cf. Ruth 4:17.

insides and the Holy One Blessed be He guards him so that he will not become a *šafir*, so that he does not become a *šilya*, so that he does not become a *sandal*, is that not life and grace?⁸⁵

The comparison of the womb to a heated life-threatening oven continues the expression of male anxiety with regard to the insides of the female body, in two of Rabbi Levi's parables characterized as a prison. Rabbi El'azar's parable articulates the fear of miscarriage in the concrete terms designating different stages in the development of the embryo used in Talmudic medical discourse. The newborn emerges as a lucky survivor and the concluding formula of the *petiḥta* – the Leviticus verse of the lectionary – states that mainly the male child's survival is at the focus of the text.

The following and last parable of this section strikes an almost humorous tone:

Rabbi Taḥlifa Caesarea said: If a human ate one piece after another does not the second one push forth the first one; and this woman, how much food does she eat and how much beverage does she drink and they do not push forth the unborn, is that not life and grace?

After the parables of the third section follow less structured materials, drawn from folklore and ethnographic observation:

Rabbi Simon said: The insides of a woman are made nests, nests; knurls, knurls; bundles, bundles. When she sits on the birth stool, she does not let go all at once, as said in the proverb: "One rope is undone, two ropes are undone." Rabbi Meir said: All nine months when the woman does not see blood she ought to see [blood]. What does the Holy One Blessed be He do? Moves it away above her breasts and turns it into milk so that when the newborn comes out it will have food to eat. "And all the more if it is a male. 'When a woman at childbirth (lit. 'brings forth seed') bears a male' (Leviticus 12:2)."

The anxiety of the female body takes here a less severe form relating to an enigmatic and disorienting mess rather than to a dangerous or imprisoning space. The gradual evolvement of the birth attracts a

85 *Šafir*, *šilya*, *sandal* are various stages in the development of the embryo in which miscarriage may occur; see *m. Nid.* 3, 3–4; *m. Karetot* 1, 3.

quotidian proverb, employing concrete materials from everyday life.⁸⁶ The causal, deep structure of the proverb genre serves as a reassuring element for the proceeding of labor: if stage 1 occurs then certainly stage 2 will arrive soon.⁸⁷ Rabbi Meir's tracing of the menstrual blood's upward mobility and transformation into mother's milk demonstrates a piece of ethnomedicine.⁸⁸ Finally, again, the Leviticus verse from the lectionary expresses the preference for good care for the newborn male child's nourishment.

In the fourth section a major change in perspective occurs. If Rabbi Levi's and Rabbi Abba bar Kahana's parables that occupied most of the two preceding paragraphs zoomed in to the fetus's dwelling in the womb, par. 4 widens the scope to nothing less than cosmic, with Job 38:8 as reference. Paragraph 5 consists of a skillful performance of another exegetical technique, turning a poetic verse from the Psalms into a biographical narrative of the assumed poet King David. We have analyzed this paragraph with its critical approach to the messianic lineage as the apex of the cosmological component of chapter 14 at some length in our earlier work.⁸⁹ The minimal par. 6 of chapter 14 realigns with Ps 139 that served as the first extra-Pentateuchal reference in par. 1. There follows the even shorter par. 7. From here on, the chapter changes format. The *gufa* portion, the main body of the chapter so to say, follows the *petihtaot* considered opening passages.⁹⁰ Our ear may perceive the association of the word *gufa*, body, with the detailed physical descriptions of intercourse and the embryo included in passage 8. Section 8 realigns with references to the psalm that has accompanied the reader through chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*. Psalm 139 spreads its light from the very heart of the poem about

86 On parables as a genre connecting everyday life to wonder: Leonhardt-Balzer, "Warum nicht gleich so?," 447.

87 Hasan-Rokem, *Proverbs in Israeli Folk Narratives*. Visotzky, *Golden Bells and Pomegranates*, 45–46, states that *Leviticus Rabbah* abounds in Aramaic folk sayings but warns against generalizing about Aramaic as identified with folk genres.

88 This belief has been documented already in ancient Mesopotamia; see Steinert, "Fluids, Rivers and Vessels," 22; cf. Augustine of Hippo, *Oct. quaest. Vet. Test.*, cap. 8: "For the breasts of women are said to accumulate milk from the day of conception" – extensively discussed in Kiperwasser "Three Partners in a Person." Kiperwasser in general points to Iranian and Indian sources but refrains from discussing any connection with Christianity.

89 Hasan-Rokem and Yuval, "Myth, History and Eschatology." The opening verse of par. 5, Ps 41:7, may connect to the ending of par. 4 through the word *sin awon*, עון, linking to the transformation *gaon to awon* of the Job verse in par. 4 as shown above.

90 Goldberg, "The Term *gufa*."

the unborn in the womb in par. 8: “Your eyes saw my unformed limbs/ they were all recorded in Your book/ in due time they were formed/ to the very last one of them” (Ps 139:16).

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the rabbis were capable of expressing themselves in polemical modes. In this case and for their audience, they may have found polemic a less effective path than the dialogical discourse that we have explicated. The idea of the virgin birth and of God lending his Being to a human body is a fascinating one. The choice of a newborn God strikes as especially ingenious – who does not adore newborns? They also would have had little success in convincing their believing audiences that God was not capable of a miracle, any miracle, such as human birth.

Our work has confirmed and complemented Hirshman’s important notion on the dominance of the allegorical interpretation in Origen’s text paired with a relative scarcity of narrative genres such as parables, tales and proverbs in comparison with the rabbinic text.⁹¹ Whereas the narrators/authors/editors of *Leviticus Rabbah* were well aware of the allegorical mode of interpretation, as their oblique reference to the Song of Songs reveals, they systematically avoided that mode when appearing to address the idea of the virgin birth. Instead, they enlisted a genre of which they were masters, the parable, and demonstrated its rhetorical power to link everyday life and human experience to theological questions well known from Jesus’s conduct in the New Testament. As earlier scholars have shown, the genre of midrash in general and its favorite genre of parable (*mashal*) does not contrast with allegory per se,⁹² it rather opens allegorical modes of expression to negotiations with other texts,⁹³ and as we have shown in the discussion above, to texts relating to everyday life and physical, emotional and spiritual experience. In chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, this choice of genre, different from Origen’s, accounts for the creation of a tacit dialogue that avoided stark confrontation and did not undermine the idea that they shared with Christians, namely God’s unquestionable power to perform miracles, such as birth.

91 Hirshman, “Origen and the Rabbis.”

92 Kugel, “Two Introductions to Midrash.”

93 Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 80–129; Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, esp. 152–84.

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8. Were the Early Christians Really Persecuted?

Paul Middleton

Abstract

The long-held image of early Christ-believers persecuted by an intolerant state has been called into question by a “minimalist” view, which, in contrast, understands Christian obstinacy as intolerance of a largely tolerant Roman state. This article seeks to balance these two extremes by offering a new model of “modified minimalism,” which accounts for both Christian and Roman viewpoints.

Keywords: tolerance; persecution; Roman Empire; early Christianity

Introduction

Until quite recent times, it could be held with confidence that the one thing people knew, or at least thought they knew, about the early Christians was that they were persecuted. Children would gather round pictures of Christians in the arena about to be eaten by lions, and Sunday-school teachers would encourage them to admire the bravery of the martyrs. Films such as *Quo Vadis?* (1951) and *The Robe* (1953) reinforced the popular view that from the outset, Christians were both hated and hunted by the Romans, and lived in constant fear of being sentenced to death in the arena. From the early persecutions of Paul (1 Cor 15:9–10; Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:6; cf. Acts 9:1) to the pogrom in Nero’s Rome (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44), Christians experienced what they perceived to be persecution. Indeed, in their writings, they presented themselves as a suffering community, facing intolerance and misunderstanding from Jew and Gentile alike, to the extent that in Acts the Jewish community in Rome is made to declare

of early Christianity, “we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect” (Acts 28:22).

However, while this sketch may still represent popular views of early Christianity, historians generally recognise that while members of the early church undoubtedly did face some harassment, there was no empire-wide policy against Christianity until well into the third century, and even then, these were short lived. Where Christians experienced persecution, it tended to be localised, sporadic, and random,¹ and resulted from pockets of prejudice rather than any official imperial interest in the church.

If we see those who take at face value the deuteropauline claim that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12) as representing a “maximalist” view of persecution,² then, in direct contrast, what might be termed a “minimalist” account is gaining popularity among scholars. Minimalists go beyond the view that Christians faced “periodic persecution,” and conclude that in all significant respects, the Christian narrative of persecution is a constructed myth.³ Moreover, they tend to turn Christian charges against their pagan neighbour of intolerance back onto the early church, arguing that in a Roman environment of general imperial tolerance towards varieties of beliefs and practices, it was Christian intolerance and intransigence that led to their appearances before magistrates. However, this was not persecution in any meaningful sense, but prosecution. Both maximalist and minimalist accounts of early Christian experiences of suffering construct a context in which a generally tolerant group encounter an intolerant “other.” Depending on which approach is adopted, either Christians or Romans were the “victims” of intolerance.

In light of this apparent scholarly paradigm shift,⁴ I return to the basic question: Were the early Christians persecuted? First I outline the formerly dominant “persecution paradigm,” arguing that this way of presenting Christian experience is already promoted in New Testament texts. Next, I evaluate recent revisionist “minimalist” accounts, noting that the idea that Christians invented – or at least exaggerated – the extent

1 Two influential proponents of this new perspective on persecution are Barnes, “Legislation,” and de Ste Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?”

2 While this view is now rare among scholars, a relatively recent restatement can be found in Frend, “Persecutions: Genesis and Legacy.”

3 Proponents of this view include Hopkins, “Christian Number,” and esp. Moss, *Myth of Persecution*.

4 This paradigm shift is analysed in an important essay by Corke-Webster, “Roman Persecutions.”

of the persecution can be found as far back as the eighteenth century. These re-evaluations offer an important and valuable corrective to the maximalist approach. However, minimalists, I argue, tend to simply replace a one-sided Christian reading of history with an equally skewed Roman perspective.

Instead, I offer a reading which might be categorised as “modified minimalism,” in which I sidestep the persecution/prosecution dichotomy, and conclude that while it is certainly the case that Romans would have understood their (albeit limited) actions against Christians as prosecutions designed to protect the integrity of the state, Christians experienced those actions, not without reason, as persecution. I argue that Christians and Romans were indeed “tolerant” of each other – just not where it mattered!

The Persecution Paradigm

This idea that Christians faced constant persecution has a long pedigree. John Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments* notes that after Christians had faced persecution from the Jews, they suffered under

the heathen Emperors of Rome, who having the whole power of the world in their hands, did what the world could do, to extinguish the name and Church of Christ. Whose violence continued the space of three hundred years. All which while the true Church of Christ was not greatly in sight of the world, but rather abhorred everywhere.⁵

In this first 300 years of violence, Foxe identifies ten emperors who were particularly responsible for persecuting the church: Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Severus, Maximus, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and Diocletian. In 313, Constantine, inspired by God, put an end to the persecution and established the peace of the church that would last until John Wycliffe (c.1320–1384).⁶ In dividing the history of the earliest church into periods of persecution, Foxe was following the template created by the fourth-century historian, Eusebius. Unlike Foxe, Eusebius mentions periods of relative peace,

5 Foxe, *Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (1570 edition). Spelling updated.

6 Foxe does identify occasional periods of persecution from the fourth to eleventh centuries under the Persians, Arians, Julian the Apostate, and the Goths and Vandals, before turning to the persecutions carried out by papal authorities from the twelfth century to his present.

such as under Vespasian (*Hist. eccl.* 3.17.1) and Gallienus (4.12.1–13.7), but has a similar list of persecuting emperors to that of Foxe: Nero (*Hist. eccl.* 2.25.1–8), Domitian (3.17), Trajan (3.32.1–33.4), Marcus Aurelius (4.14.10–17.14), Severus (6.1.1–5.7), Maximus (6.28), Decius (6.39.1–42.6), Gallus (7.1), Valerian (7.10.1–12.1), Galerius (8.17.1–2), and Diocletian (8 App. 3).⁷

Earlier Christian writers reinforce the impression that the church lived in the midst of hostility. Justin complains to the emperor Antoninus Pius that Christians are condemned for merely being Christians, rather than for any specific crime.

If any of the accused deny the name, and say that he is not a Christian, you acquit him, as having no evidence against him as a wrongdoer; but if anyone acknowledge that he is a Christian, you punish him on account of this acknowledgment.⁸

This, Justin contends, is clearly unjust. Tertullian in his famous quip, paints a picture in which at the slightest misfortune, the Romans were ready to turn on the Christians:

[Pagans] suppose that the Christians are the cause of every public disaster, every misfortune that happens to the people. If the Tiber overflows or the Nile does not, if there is a drought or an earthquake, a famine or a pestilence, at once the cry goes up, "The Christians to the lions."⁹

The *Martyr Acts* also narrate persecutions of such ferocity that a devilish origin is ascribed to them:

The Adversary [Satan] swooped down with full force, in this way anticipating his final coming which is sure to come. He went to all lengths to train and prepare his minions against God's servants; the result was that we were not only shut out of our houses, the baths, and the public square, but they forbade any of us to be seen in any place whatsoever. Arrayed against him was God's grace, which protected the weak, and raised up sturdy pillars that could by their endurance take on themselves all the attacks of the evil One. These then charged into battle, holding up under

7 The first edition of Eusebius was completed before the Diocletian persecution. For discussion, see Tabbernee, "Eusebius' 'Theology of Persecution.'"

8 Justin, *1 Apol.* 4. This is also the thrust of Tertullian's complaint in *Apol.* 2.4–5.

9 Tertullian, *Apol.* 40.

every sort of abuse and torment; indeed, they made light of their great burden as they sped on to Christ.¹⁰

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is also situated in the midst of persecution, culminating in Polycarp being forced to choose between loyalty to Caesar or to Christ.

The governor tried to persuade him to recant, saying [...] “Swear by the Genius of the emperor. Recant. [...] Swear and I will let you go. Curse Christ!”

But Polycarp answered, “For eighty-six years I have been his servant and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme against my king and saviour?”

(*Mart. Pol.* 9.2–3)¹¹

Of course, the arch-villain of the earliest church was Nero.

According to Tacitus, after fire broke in Rome, Nero sought to deflect suspicion that he was responsible by blaming the conflagration on the Christians. He subjected them to such torture in the arena, including crucifixion, burning, and being torn by dogs, that Tacitus suspected they were being killed “not for the public good, but to glut one man’s cruelty.”¹² Suetonius also mentions Nero’s punishment of the Christians, but does not make any link between this treatment and the charge of arson.¹³ While neither Tacitus nor Suetonius believe the Christians were responsible for the fire, they do both express disdain for them. Suetonius dismisses Christians as “a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition (*genus hominum superstitionis novae ac maleficae*),” while Tacitus argues they deserved punishment “not so much for the crime of arson as for their hatred of the human race (*odium humani generis*).” Tacitus’s comments, which almost certainly reflect the attitude to Christians in his own day, appear to lend weight to the complaint of Justin and Tertullian that Christians were not punished for any particular wrongdoing, but only for *being* Christian. This evidence of apparent hostility throughout the first three centuries led Frend to conclude,

¹⁰ *Mart. Lyons* 1.4–6. For the role of the Devil in Christian martyr texts, see Middleton, “Overcoming the Devil.”

¹¹ Trans. Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

¹² Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.

¹³ Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2.

In the 250 years that separate the Neronian persecution in 64 CE from the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, c.312, Christianity was an illegal and suspect religion whose members were subject to arrest, condemnation, and in many cases, death.¹⁴

Of course, for Christians, the expectation that they would suffer persecution and martyrdom goes back to Jesus, who, in Mark, warned that disciples would have to choose between being a faithful disciple and the avoidance of suffering or death: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). Though Luke's addition of "daily" (9:27) gives the saying a metaphorical meaning, in Mark the syntax of the logion suggests that denial of self and taking up the cross come *before* following Jesus. In other words, taking up the cross is not a potential consequence of discipleship; it is a condition.¹⁵ The Q version of the saying (Luke 14:27; cf. Matt 10:38) reinforces this interpretation: "The one who does not take one's cross and follow after me cannot be my disciple." There is a similar martyrological force behind Jesus's warning that disciples should not fear those who can kill only the body, rather they should fear God who can destroy both the body and soul in Gehenna (Matt 10:28; Luke 12:4–5). That is to say, there is an expectation behind these words that Christians will face a choice between saving and losing their lives, but that it is better to be killed by humans than judged by God (cf. Mark 8:35–38). Such a scenario may arise in the judicial setting imaged by Mark 13:9–13:

But take heed for yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake [...]. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand what to say, but say whatever is given to you in that hour [...]. And brother will deliver up his brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them out to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one enduring to the end will be saved.

Rather than a genuine prediction of Jesus, it is more likely these words reflect the experience of Mark's readers.¹⁶ Given Matthew's added emphasis

14 Frend, "Persecutions: Genesis and Legacy," 503.

15 Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 148.

16 Among those who propose a setting of persecution (although in different locations) are Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 23–24; Van Iersel, "Gospel according to St. Mark"; Donahue, "Windows and

on suffering in his adaptation of this paragraph, a persecution background for Matthew's community has also been advanced.¹⁷

Persecution and suffering permeate Paul's letters. Not only does Paul himself suffer, he acknowledges that the church in Thessalonica received the word with much affliction (1 Thess 1:6), and that they suffer in the same way as Christians had in other places (2:14). Paul warns his readers that they will face persecution, which must be endured for the gospel. He himself models the suffering Christian, urging his churches to imitate his example (2 Cor 1:3–8). For the sake of the gospel, Paul claims, he has been imprisoned, beaten, lashed, and stoned,¹⁸ but he can still boast in that suffering.¹⁹ As Paul suffers, so must his converts; it is a sign of faithfulness,²⁰ which demonstrates the legitimacy of the church.²¹ Therefore, in the face of suffering believers should be joyful.²²

Similarly, 1 Peter appears to have been written with a backdrop of persecution. The church suffers for righteousness (3:13), sharing in the suffering of the wider church (5:9). This suffering, the author claims, will test the genuineness of their faith (1:6–7), but he reassures his readers that glory will follow (1:10–11). As in Paul's writings, even those who experience maltreatment (2:18–25) should accept suffering with joy (1:6, 4:13–14).²³

The language of suffering and martyrdom is found throughout the book of Revelation: Christians are called to be faithful unto death (2:10); there are already martyrs under the altar (6:9); there is a vast crowd of martyrs (7:9–17, 14:1–5); two witnesses will be slain (11:1–14); the saints conquered the dragon by not loving their lives to death (12:10–11); the Beast slays faithful Christians (13:15); so all who die in the Lord are blessed (14:13); those who have slain Christians are punished (16:4–6); the harlot is drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus (17:6); and those beheaded for Jesus will reign for a thousand years (20:4). The author of the Apocalypse

Mirrors." I have recently argued the gospel makes embracing suffering the key factor in creating true Christian identity (Middleton, "Suffering").

17 Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 2, 182. They note the missionary discourse into which Mark's words are inserted "is full of references to suffering and persecution" (Matt 10:14–23, 25, 26, 28, 31, 35–36).

18 Paul lists his sufferings in Rom 8:35–36; 1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:8–9, 6:4–5, 11:23–29, 12:10. See Pobe, *Persecution and Martyrdom*; Lim, *Sufferings of Christ*.

19 2 Cor 11:21–30, 12:10; Phil 1:19–26.

20 Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29–30; 1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 6:4–10.

21 Gal 4:12–15; Phil 1:3–7, 4:14–15; 1 Thess 1:6, 3:1–5; cf. 2 Tim 1:8.

22 Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 6:10, 8:2, 13:9; Phil 2:17, 4:4–6; cf. Col 1:11, 24.

23 See also Matt 5:11–12; Jas 1:2–4.

creates a narrative that appears to expect the deaths of all its readers.²⁴ Martyrdom is a major theme in the Apocalypse, with John presenting a picture of violent persecution and the near certainty of martyrdom for the faithful.²⁵

While John depicts many anonymous martyrs in his Apocalypse, when it comes to naming those he knows who have been killed for their faith, he can offer only a single name, Antipas, “who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (2:13). In a book so infused with martyrdom, this lack of “real” martyrs is striking. Indeed, this absence of martyrdom is not restricted to the Apocalypse. Paul, who repeatedly speaks of the dangers Christians will face, is unable to cite a single martyr. While Prisca and Aquila “risked their necks” for the gospel (Rom 16:3–4), and Epaphroditus “nearly died in the service of Christ” (Phil 2:30), the closest Paul comes to writing about a martyr is in the anticipation of his own death.²⁶ Similarly, in Hebrews 11 the author lists a number of martyrs as exemplars of the Faith, and enjoins his readers go and suffer like Jesus (13:12–13), but acknowledges no-one from the community to which he is writing has yet been martyred: “In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (12:4). In fact, aside from Antipas in Revelation, there are only two named martyrs in the rest of the New Testament, and then only in Acts: Stephen is killed by a Jewish mob (7:54–8:1), and James is executed by Herod (12:1–5). Therefore, although the New Testament appears to reflect a persistent level of persecution, claiming that that Christians are hated by all, and are spoken against everywhere (Acts 28:22), there are very few actual instances of martyrdom. Despite the strong backdrop of persecution throughout the New Testament, the body count appears somewhat low, suggesting that despite the strong persecution rhetoric, the reality on the ground for the early Christians may have been somewhat less hostile.

24 So Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 620, concludes, “In effect, Revelation warns, in the coming crisis the only good Christian will likely be a dead Christian!”

25 See, for example, Van Henten, “Concept of Martyrdom”; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 158–70; Pattemore, *People of God*, 68–116; Lee, “Call to Martyrdom”; Reddish, “Martyr Christology”; Feuillet, “Les martyrs.”

26 Both Donfried (“Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence”) and Bruce (*Acts of the Apostles*, 327–28) argue that those who have fallen asleep in 1 Thess 4:13 have died as a result of persecution, since the verb κοιμάω is also used of Stephen’s death in Acts 7.60. However, as Barclay, “Conflict in Thessalonica,” rightly argues, had Paul known about actual martyrs, he would almost certainly have deployed them in his letters.

The Myth of Persecution

In the 1960s, the view of the persecuted church was decisively challenged by Geoffrey de Ste Croix, Timothy Barnes, and Adrian Sherwin-White. This trio argued, in influential pieces, that the supposed legal basis for the persecution of Christians was problematic; there was in fact no proscription of the name Christian, and there was little in the way of state-sponsored persecution.²⁷ To be sure, sometimes Christians were caught up in more general returns to traditional religious practices, such as under Decius, but the enforcement of these rituals was not aimed specifically at Christians. Other so-called imperial persecutions were often nothing more organised than local mob violence. Barnes, in particular, complained that tainted with hagiography and presupposition, the literature on the subject of the juridical basis of the persecutions of Christians was “to a large degree worthless!”²⁸ Others have also offered revisionary histories, with Keith Hopkins going so far as to suggest that Christians “manufactured” the persecutions.

Christians needed Roman persecutions, or at least stories of persecutions rather more than Romans saw the need to persecute [them ...] The Christians nurtured a sense of danger and victimisation.²⁹

While it is only in the last few decades that the revisionist position has become the scholarly consensus, this general view is found as far back as the eighteenth century in Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.³⁰ In his monumental work, Gibbon argues that the early Christians exaggerated both the number of martyrs and the varieties of torture inflicted upon the church. The main targets of Gibbon's invective are the “monks of succeeding generations” who in their solitude “invented torments of a much more refined and ingenious nature.”³¹ The number of Christian martyrs and the intensity of persecution were exaggerated, Gibbon quips, “by the pencil of an artful orator.”³² So Gibbon concludes

27 Barnes, “Legislation”; de Ste Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?”; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*.

28 Barnes, “Legislation,” 32.

29 Hopkins, “Christian Number,” 198.

30 Gibbon's original work was published from 1776–88. References are to Lentin and Norman's edition.

31 Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 335.

32 *Ibid.*, 372.

that these monks displayed a “total disregard of truth and probability in the representation of these primitive martyrdoms.”³³

Gibbon does not dispute there was violence inflicted on the Christians, but in the main, Romans “frequently declined the odious task of persecution”;³⁴ they were reluctant persecutors.³⁵ It was, Gibbon suggests, the Christians’ obstinacy and provocation that forced the Romans to act against them.³⁶ The generally tolerant Romans were later depicted by the Christians through the lens of their own later intolerance of difference:

The ecclesiastical writers of the fourth or fifth centuries ascribed to the magistrates of Rome the same degree of implacable and unrelenting zeal which filled their own breasts against the heretics or the idolaters of their own time.³⁷

For Gibbon, Christianity was more violent and more intolerant than any of their Roman adversaries.

We shall conclude this chapter by a melancholy truth which obtrudes itself on the reluctant mind; that, even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged that the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels.³⁸

For Gibbon, Christian texts that spoke of intense violence and persecution affecting the church were not reliable witnesses.

The revisionist position is put in its most acute form by Candida Moss, who in the subtitle of her *Myth of Persecution* suggests that Christians “invented the story of martyrdom.”³⁹ Challenging the older estimation that Christians experienced persecution for a little over half of the years from Nero to Domitian,⁴⁰ Moss argues that, even counting for Roman “persecutions” that

33 Ibid., 336.

34 Ibid., 336.

35 However, see the critique of Gibbon by Drake, “Lambs into Lions.”

36 Chapter 15 is concerned with the five causes for the growth of Christianity, the first of which, Gibbon suggests, was their “inflexible” and “intolerant zeal” (*Decline and Fall*, 250).

37 Ibid., 336.

38 Ibid., 373. For discussion of Christians martyring one another, see Middleton, “Enemies.”

39 Moss, *Myth of Persecution*.

40 For example, Hassett, “Martyr.”

were not specifically directed at Christians, there were “fewer than ten years out of nearly three hundred during which Christians were executed as the result of imperial initiatives.”⁴¹ Moss does not doubt Christians experienced prejudice, some mistreatment, or even torture and execution. However, for much of the time, persecution was perceived rather than actual: “There’s no doubt that Christians thought they were persecuted; they ruminate on it, theologize about it, bewail, lament, protest, and complain.”⁴² While Moss stops short of naming early Christian authors’ persecution complex as hysteria, she concludes that “their experiences do not line up with either the mythology of Christian persecution or modern definitions of persecution in which persecution is centralized and state-led.”⁴³

Indeed, even the Christian martyr texts appear to support the view first expressed by Gibbon that the Romans were sometimes reluctant persecutors. On a number of occasions Roman prosecutors attempt to persuade Polycarp to save himself: “Now what harm is there for you to say ‘Caesar is Lord’ (κύριος καίσαρ), to perform the sacrifices [...] and thus save your life?”⁴⁴ Two further attempts are made to dissuade Polycarp from bringing destruction on himself. In the amphitheatre, the governor asks him to “swear by the fortune of Caesar, and repent (μετανόησον),” and later he explicitly promises to let Polycarp go free if he will swear and curse Christ (λοιδορήσον τὸν Χριστόν).⁴⁵ The officials appear to be concerned about executing such an old man, and clearly do not want to see him die. But Polycarp makes his famous response: “For eighty-six years I have been his servant and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme against my king and saviour?”⁴⁶

If the prosecutor is concerned for Polycarp’s age, in the *Passion of Perpetua*, the governor is concerned that a young mother might be killed, and tries to persuade Perpetua to remain alive for the sake of her infant son:

“Have pity on your father’s grey head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors.”

“I will not,” I retorted.

“Are you a Christian?” said Hilarianus.

And I said, “I am a Christian (*Christiana sum*).”

(6.3–4)

41 Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 129.

42 Ibid., 160.

43 Ibid., 160–61.

44 *Mart. Pol.* 8.2.

45 Ibid. 8–9.

46 Ibid. 9.3.

In other stories, Roman officials are found to rebuff direct action by Christians trying to get themselves executed. Tertullian describes an incident where the Christians of Asia presented themselves to the bemused proconsul Arrius Antonius demanding to be martyred. "On ordering a few persons to be led forth to execution, he said to the rest, 'O miserable men, if you wish to die, you have cliffs and nooses!'"⁴⁷ While Tertullian clearly approved of the actions of these Christians, and indeed threatens the proconsul to whom he is writing with the same behaviour, it is noteworthy that the proconsul simply allows some of the Christians to go free – although he does execute some.

However, while these incidents are advanced as evidence of Roman toleration that is thwarted only by Christian intransigence, it is worth reflecting that even these confrontations – in which the Romans appear to be attempting to save the Christians' lives – have a theological function in the context of the martyr narrative. Clearly the main point of a martyr story is a martyrdom! The fulcrum of each martyrology is precisely the confrontation between the would-be martyr and the authority figure when the Christian can choose to save or lose their life (Mark 8:34–38). This confrontation – in which the believer can choose to fear either the one who can kill only the body, or the one who can destroy the soul – is overlaid with cosmic significance. Crucially, the devil, who is often the source of persecution, does not seek to kill Christians, but to save them through apostasy; "the Devil is anti-martyrdom."⁴⁸ What appears to be an act of judicial kindness or compassion becomes the fulcrum of the martyrological battle where Christian identity is at stake. Clearly, anyone who ends a martyrology still alive has obviously failed in some way, or as I have expressed it elsewhere, once a martyr act has begun "to fail to be martyred is to fail to be Christian."⁴⁹

Therefore, the idea of the reluctant persecutor is perhaps not as secure as might be supposed, even from the evidence of the Christians' own writings. A martyrology loses its drama if there is no opportunity for the martyr to save their life, and so the "compassionate" or "reluctant" prosecutor is a necessary element in the narrative drama, and probably a literary construct. This is not to say a timely denial would not save a former-Christian's life. But this can hardly be put down to acts of unusual charity as Gibbon appears to suggest. Clearly, the role of a magistrate is to ascertain guilt. If there is no crime, there is no special merit in a governor freeing the accused. However,

47 Tertullian, *Scap.* 5.1.

48 Middleton, "Overcoming the Devil," 370.

49 Middleton, "Suffering," 175.

in the *Martyrs of Lyons* those who deny are not in fact freed, but executed as common criminals, and so doubly cursed.

At the first arrest those who had denied their faith were locked up with the others and shared their privations; at this point they gained nothing by their denial. On the other hand, those who admitted what they were were detained as Christians, but no other charge was preferred against them. The others, however, were held on the charge of being murders and criminals and were punished twice as much as the rest. For they were comforted by the joy of martyrdom, their hope in the promises, their love for Christ, and the Spirit of the Father; whereas the others were greatly tormented by their conscience so that as they passed by they were easily distinguished by their looks from all the others.

(1.33–34)

In this text at least there is no sign of the reluctant persecutor who is anxious to save the lives of errant Christians. Of course, the greatest threat to the confidence and integrity of Christian identity was not so much persecutors as Christians who denied, and so a clear theological purpose is served by presenting the deniers as having no advantage, and suffering even the pagan crowd's taunts that they were "ignoble cowards."⁵⁰

Therefore, that Christian texts portray Roman governors as reluctant persecutors concerned for the lives of the Christians, even displaying compassion for the age or maternal status of the accused, should not be too readily accepted as evidence that this was the case. Such "mercy" serves a theological and narrative function in emphasising the bravery and piety of the martyr in following Jesus's command to deny self, take up the cross, and follow him through embracing death. It may also be noted that although there are instances where the crowd appears to have compassion on the Christians, even calling for their release,⁵¹ this does not appear to have any effect on their fate.⁵² This is, of course, not to deny that those accused of being Christian could save their lives by denial, but it is going beyond the evidence to attribute compassion to the Romans who freed an accused found not guilty of a crime. The portrait painted by Gibbon and others that what passes for "persecution" of the early Christians should be viewed as confrontation between "reluctant persecutors" and "intransigent Christians"

⁵⁰ *Mart. Lyons* 1.35.

⁵¹ *Pass. Perpetuae* 20.2; *Mart. Fructuosus* 3.1.

⁵² Coleman, "Fatal Charades," 58.

determined to die is not persuasive. So how might we best account for the evidence?

Were Christians Really Persecuted?

Despite de Ste Croix's dismissal of emperor worship as "a factor of almost no independent importance in the persecution of the Christians,"⁵³ it enjoys near ubiquity throughout the Christian *Martyr Acts*. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* sets up a confrontation between the Christian community and the imperial power of Rome. Polycarp is given a choice between execution and freedom. To escape with his life, all he has to do is to confess Caesar is Lord, perform a sacrifice, and curse Christ. Polycarp declares himself to be unwilling to do any of those things. After the interrogation and efforts to make him repent, the governor sends a herald to announce "Three times, Polycarp has declared himself to be a Christian."⁵⁴ The narrative clearly sets Christian identity in opposition to the obligations to Caesar. Similarly, sacrificial offering to the gods is also declared to be something Christians must not do. The crowd declares, in "uncontrollable rage," that Polycarp is the "father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, and the one that teaches many not to sacrifice or worship [them]."⁵⁵ This confrontation is repeated in many of the martyr acts, where a demand is explicitly made to sacrifice to the image of the emperor, or for the health of the emperor, or a demand to sacrifice to the gods is made on the command or authority of the emperor.

Even where it appears central, as in the Decian *libelli* controversies, it is not evidence that the emperor cult was enforced, even less that Christians were specifically targeted. Romans would simply fail to understand why any right-minded person would refuse to offer sacrifice for the well-being of the emperor or make appropriate reverence to local or national cults to maintain the *pax deorum*. For Christians to refuse to participate in reasonable cultic activity was interpreted as wishing harm on the emperor or empire, and was as seditious as it was irrational.

The *pax romana* depended on the *pax deorum*, explaining why a governor appears to be upset that he has let Carpus "babble on so long, I've led you

53 De Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," 10.

54 *Mart. Pol.* 12.1.

55 *Ibid.* 12.2.

to blaspheme the gods and the emperor.”⁵⁶ Atheism was a serious concern. Since eschewing cultic worship risked bringing misfortune on a town or even the empire, Christians gained the reputation of *odium humani generis*, haters of the human race, which made them the targets of suspicion. If a group was suspected of hatred of humanity and of disloyalty to the emperor, there was an easy way to allay such fears: sacrifice to the gods and to the image of the emperor. Romans allowed the people of the empire freedom to follow their own customs and gods. All they asked in return was a modicum of civic loyalty. To refuse to engage in the imperial cult when asked to do so would be interpreted as an extraordinary act of disloyalty.

This is not to say Christians were hostile to the state. Injunctions to “be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution” (1 Pet 2:13) or to pray for (1 Tim 2:1–2) or honour (1 Pet 2:17) the emperor are found in the New Testament. Tertullian argues that by praying to the true God for the safety of the emperor, Christians are doing far more for the emperor than those who offer sacrifice to gods that do not exist.⁵⁷ Similarly, Justin and Irenaeus maintained that Christians obeyed or prayed for the emperor.⁵⁸ Even Polycarp insists that in refusing to sacrifice to the emperor he was not dishonouring him: “We have been taught to pay respect to the authorities and powers that God has assigned us.”⁵⁹ Unfortunately for the Christians, although they took on what they thought to be an accommodating stand towards Rome, when measured against Jesus’s conditions for discipleship in the gospels (Mark 8:34–38), they could not be good Christians and good Romans at the same time. While Romans could tolerate Christian worship of their god on the same terms as other groups, who could worship their deities so long as they also took on cultic obligations towards Roman gods, Christians could not make such an accommodation to Rome’s, leading Benko to conclude, “by and large the Roman state and its citizens showed tolerance towards Christianity which the church failed to reciprocate.”⁶⁰

However, Benko’s charge of Christian intolerance is unfair; Christians were monotheists. Christians offered what they thought was reasonable accommodation to Rome by praying for its rulers. Nonetheless, however much they might have tried, Christians could not satisfy Roman expectations; “the standard for even the most nominal display of good citizenship

⁵⁶ *Mart. Carpus* 21.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, *Apol.* 29–33.

⁵⁸ Justin, *1 Apol.* 17; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 24.

⁵⁹ *Mart. Pol.* 10.2.

⁶⁰ Benko, “Pagan Criticism,” 1110. See also his book length treatment: Benko, *Pagan Rome*.

was set far in excess of what the Christians could meet.”⁶¹ The demands of the empire were incompatible with the claim that God and Christ had on the Christian. Therefore, in the arena, when forced to declare for Christ or emperor, the confession, Χριστιανὸς εἰμι (“I am a Christian”) signalled the Christian’s allegiance to Christ and resistance to the demands of empire. In return, Christians lived with low-level hostility that occasionally spilled over into mob violence. To be sure, this was not persecution in the sense that it was a premeditated, centralised, and sustained attack on Christianity and Christians. As far as the Romans were concerned, any action against the Christians was correction for antisocial un-Roman misdemeanour that threatened the state through the rejection of the gods. Therefore, it was indeed, so far as the Romans were concerned prosecution rather than persecution.

It is at this persecution/prosecution crossroads that scholarship reaches an impasse. As Moss writes of the Decian persecution:

That Christians experienced and interpreted Decius’s actions as persecution does not mean that Decius himself intended to persecute them. If we are going to condemn the Romans for persecuting the Christians, then surely they need to have done it deliberately or at least have been *aware* they were doing it.⁶²

In other words, the perception of persecution does not equate to actual persecution. For “persecution” to be persecution, Romans would have to be setting out to deliberately persecute the Christians or to be reasonably sure their actions would be interpreted in that way.

While most of our evidence for persecution comes from Christian sources, there are a number of pagan writings which appear to suggest significant actions took place against the Christians. While Tacitus and Suetonius describe events long since passed, Pliny’s famous letter to Trajan is a first-hand account of a governor dealing with Christians.

Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to ages, or no distinction is to be observed

⁶¹ Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 40.

⁶² Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 150.

between the young and the adult; whether repentance entitles them to a pardon; or if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist from his error; whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession are punishable; on all these points I am in great doubt.

At the point of writing, Pliny is clearly aware that Christians have been tried before, but as he has never been present, he is unclear as to what the basis of any charge should be. Crucially, he does not know if simply being a Christian is reason enough to merit conviction, or if their membership of a Christian group has to be accompanied by more specific criminal action. Although Pliny appears uncertain on these most basic of legal principles, he had already dealt with a number of cases, which he outlines for Trajan's approval.

In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished: for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction. There were others also brought before me possessed with the same infatuation, but being Roman citizens, I directed them to be sent to Rome.

No-one could accuse Pliny of unreasonable, hot-headed persecution. Therefore, this episode offers a good case to test a persecution/prosecution dichotomy. Some scholars see in Pliny's approach evidence that Christians were normally charged simply for *being* Christian.⁶³ However, the uncertainty which causes Pliny to write to the emperor, and that he is sure some undisclosed crimes lie behind the name renders this conclusion insecure.⁶⁴ Moreover, Pliny appears to be more offended by the inflexible obstinacy of the Christians than their identification.⁶⁵

63 De Ste Croix judges the case to be "certain." De Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," 9. See also Keresztes, *Imperial Rome*, 122.

64 Sherwin-White, *Letters of Pliny*, 780–81.

65 Whether *contumacia* was a formal charge against the Christians is a point of dispute between de Ste Croix and Sherwin-White. See Sherwin-White, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? – An Amendment," and de Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted – A Rejoinder."

It can be deduced from Pliny's letter that the number of Christians he has encountered is relatively large. Those accused of being Christians vary in age and current adherence, and the number of Roman citizens seems to comprise only a minority of the total number, but significant enough to mention. Moreover, once Christians started appearing before him, more were then accused by anonymous pamphlets. From a Christian perspective, Pliny's prosecutions may have developed into a relatively major persecution. Although Pliny asks Trajan for his ruling on whether or not having been a Christian was actionable, he reports that he had decided not to proceed against those who had given up Christianity. Having satisfied himself that these former Christians were telling the truth, by making them offer prayers to the gods, offer incense before Trajan's statue, and curse Christ, he let them go.

Clearly Pliny would not have understood his actions against the Christians as persecution. He was simply upholding law and order, and secondarily perhaps, the honour of local and state gods. But how would this "local prosecution" look to a Christian living in Bythnia who had been denounced by an anonymous pamphleteer, and who found herself before Pliny? She would be given the choice between sacrificing to the emperor or torture, and then between cursing Christ and death. While the actions of magistrates such as Pliny may fall into the category of "local prosecution" rather than "imperial persecution," the Christians would not have made any distinction; members of the church were being brought before Roman officials with the threat of execution if they did not offer sacrifice to the emperor or curse Christ.⁶⁶ This may not constitute the empire-wide, sustained persecution to which those of an earlier age thought the early Christians were subjected; however, given Pliny employs imperial apparatus in his prosecution procedure, Christians, not unreasonably, imperialised these local initiatives.⁶⁷

So, were the early Christians really persecuted? Certainly not to the extent that still may be found in the popular imagination. But to ask the question the other way round, what is at stake in insisting they were not, and that what has been spun over the centuries is a "myth of persecution"? It is not obvious to me why Roman self-understanding should be decisive in this prosecution/persecution debate, or that only that which conforms to modern expectations of persecution should be accepted as such. Romans did not consciously persecute anyone, but their prosecution was experienced

66 Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96) explains to Trajan that he has freed those accused of being Christian who subsequently offer worship to the emperor's image or curse Christ.

67 On this point, see Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 40–70.

as persecution by the Christians. Despite Gibbon's protestations of Roman tolerance, Christians who found themselves before a magistrate could not follow their monotheistic belief and practice without consequence, and as Pliny's testimony indicates, this could result in fairly large scale executions, which would in turn add to the feeling of persecution Christians undoubtedly experienced.

Conclusion

Despite protestations that they honoured and prayed for the emperor, Christians could not be good citizens of the empire. To begin with, the claims Christians made for Christ that belonged to the emperor went largely unnoticed, which explains the relative "tolerance" of the state. In contrast, for the Christians, that honours due to God alone were being given to a man – who also demanded worship of idols – was unacceptable blasphemy. Christians could not accommodate the claims of God and the claims of Caesar.

While there was no state-sponsored persecution of Christians, their rejection of local cults resulted in sporadic bouts of pressure or violence. However, Christians then imperialised these experiences of suffering, that is, they read them as originating from a single imperial source, and interpreted them as persecution. Any resultant execution they declared to be martyrdom. It seems that local magistrates or governors exacerbated this imperialisation by employing the sacrificial test, not because they wanted to promote the emperor cult, but as a simple test of loyalty in which any reasonable person would be happy to participate. Pliny did not know very much about the Christians, but he did know that they had been tried before, and he had heard they would not curse Christ or offer sacrifice to the gods or emperor. Importantly for Pliny, this test served a dual purpose; not only did it flush out Christians, it confirmed they were disloyal, seditious, and impious, thus deserving of punishment.⁶⁸

68 Pliny does not appear to be inventing the "sacrifice test." Although he has never been present at trials of Christians, he appears to have heard about them before, including that they will not sacrifice, or curse Christ. This test to find out whether or not a defendant was a Christian would have been interpreted by Christians as a setting in which they were invited to confess or deny Christ, resulting in saving or losing their lives. For the view that a test of identification is the test of loyalty that would provide a context for the sayings in Mark 8:34–38, 13:9–13, Peter's denial (Mark 14:66–72), Q 12:4–5, as well as 2 Tim 2:11–13, Heb 6:4–6, and possibly 1 John 2:22–24, see Middleton, *Violence of the Lamb*, 39–64.

What we witness in the confrontations between Romans and Christians is a clash of realities that were both mutually exclusive, but ironically, mutually supportive. Each trial of a Christian satisfied the Romans that justice was being dispensed and suborn anti-Roman malefactors were being prosecuted. Christians, on the other hand, interpreted the same event as the persecution of which Jesus had warned, and which gave them an opportunity to testify before governors and kings, and ultimately, follow Christ's example of suffering and death through their own martyrdom.

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9. “No Male and Female”

Women and the Rhetoric of Recognition in Early Christianity

Outi Lehtipuu

Abstract

While tolerance is essentially based on disagreement, in recognition theories recognition of others means granting them a positive status despite disagreement or different values. Noting that the slogan of “no male and female” in Galatians 3:28 is often interpreted as reflecting universal recognition of human beings despite their gender, this article analyzes how ancient authors used Paul’s statement. It criticizes recognition theories for downplaying the power structures inherent in acts of recognition: the one who recognizes defines the criteria for recognition and, thus, creates the identity that is recognized.

Keywords: recognition; Paul’s Letter to the Galatians; gender; tolerance

We’re not simply tolerating each other – you tolerate a toothache, I don’t want to be tolerated. We respect, we embrace, and we celebrate, which is fantastic.

Sadiq Khan, mayor of London, *The Guardian* (May 2016)¹

Tolerating diversity and fostering tolerance of others have both become key values and constant challenges in contemporary multicultural and multireligious societies. Recently, however, critical voices – such as that of Sadiq Khan, the first Muslim mayor in a Western metropolis – have

¹ Quote from Ben Quinn’s article, “Sadiq Khan plans US visit before election ‘in case Trump wins’”, published in the *Guardian* 9 May 2016. www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/09/sadiq-khan-us-visit-before-election-in-case-donald-trump-wins (accessed 17 Nov. 2020).

challenged the policy of tolerance as being insufficient. Tolerance is essentially based on disagreement – and we need more than just to accept what we dislike or disagree with. We need to recognize one another's right to live and prosper – we need to respect, embrace, and celebrate diversity.

The distinction between tolerance and recognition can be illustrated by women's experiences in different political, economic, religious, and intellectual contexts, including the academic world. Undoubtedly, women have long been tolerated in academia, but in a world of “manels” (all-male panels), “mansplaining” (patronizing or condescending comments by a man to a [younger] woman), and “Festicles” (Festschriften in honor of men with contributions by other men) it may be asked whether women are truly recognized. If they are, *as what* are they recognized – and by whom?

In recent decades, recognition has become an important analytical concept in critical social theory, closely connected with social justice and the identity politics of minority groups. The basic question deals with how different people who identify themselves by categories such as ethnicity, gender, economic status, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation can live together in the same society while enjoying ever greater self-determination and political autonomy. Different forms of human-rights movement, including women's rights, can be analyzed as struggles for recognition. For many first-wave feminists, the struggle for women's suffrage, among other legal issues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was religiously inspired.² Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leading figure in the American suffrage movement and the editor of the *Woman's Bible* (1895), for example, writes that

if the majority of people really believed in the teachings of Jesus, we should be in a continual revolution until we secured equal rights for all. “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”³

Indeed, the statement of the apostle Paul – which Stanton takes to cohere with “the teachings of Jesus” – that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28)⁴ has become a key biblical reference for many

2 Vuola. “Religion, Intersectionality.”

3 Elizabeth Cady Stanton in *Arena* 17 (June 1897), repr. in Gordon, ed., *Awful Hush*, 146.

4 My quotations of biblical texts usually follow the NRSV. Here, however, I have modified the translation to better reflect the original Greek: οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἑλλήν, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Christian advocacy movements, "the *Magna Carta* of humanity,"⁵ and has been especially important for women seeking recognition in Christian communities, particularly in relation to the question of women's ordination into ministry.⁶

Other present-day commentators, however, conclude that Paul was not challenging contemporary social hierarchies but rather intended to emphasize unity in Christ as fostering a new (ideal) spiritual reality.⁷ These opposite interpretations betray the hermeneutical potential inherent in Paul's statement. The historical, societal, and cultural context and the overall theological viewpoint of commentators seem clearly to shape how they understand "neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, no male and female."

In this essay, I focus on the last binary pair and ask how early commentators of Paul used "no male and female" in their discourses on gender. In a world with fixed gender roles, where rigid social dividers were often impossible to surmount,⁸ were there different ways to recognize women and, if there were, how were women recognized?

According to scholarly consensus, Gal 3:28 is an early baptismal formula, which Paul appears to be quoting. Numerous studies tackle the question of what Paul had in mind when he quoted the words "no male and female" (οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ).⁹ It is not my intention to explore the background of the saying or to speculate over Paul's own intention – the latter of which, in my view, remains unresolvable. Instead, I examine how later writers have understood these words and, particularly, how, in different ways, they used these words to promote the recognition of women. There is no need to evaluate these later interpretations in terms of who understood Paul "correctly."¹⁰ Even though it is possible to analyze whether a certain verse is taken out of its immediate literary context and used in ways that do not seem to correspond to the wider literary context, categories such as "original meaning" and "original context" are highly problematic, to say the least.¹¹

5 Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 142.

6 Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 7–12; Uzukwu, "Church Fathers' Interpretations," 126–30.

7 For example, according to Lone Fatum, Paul regarded man to be the only true image of God. Fatum, "Image of God," 69–70.

8 Brown, *Late Antiquity*, 3–16; Milnor, "Women in Roman Society," 610–11; Kartzow, "Question," 364–68.

9 See the groundbreaking article, Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne"; cf. Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, 21–46.

10 White, *Remembering Paul*, 11–12.

11 Breed, *Nomadic Text*, 204–5.

The starting point for my discussion is Clement of Alexandria, who seems to be the earliest author to treat Gal 3:28 extensively.¹² I limit my investigation to the rhetorical level of the text. As intriguing as it would be to investigate how women were treated in early Christian communities and whether they felt that they received recognition, the available sources are silent on women's experiences. Instead, I will analyze how the call for the abolition of gender differences in Gal 3:28 was received in early Christian rhetoric. What kinds of views on women – and on gender in broader terms – emerge? How are these views made use of in the overall argumentation of early Christian authors and negotiated within their cultural contexts? What does this reveal about the status and roles recognized for women? Before proceeding to the ancient texts, I will briefly outline what I mean by the concept “recognition” and how it may shed light on the texts studied.

Recognition, Power, and Domination

When New Testament scholars talk about “recognition,” they often have in mind different recognition scenes in the New Testament, such as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who finally recognize that the stranger traveling with them is Christ (Luke 24:13–35).¹³ Recognizing Jesus as the Savior is a recurrent literary feature especially in the Gospel of John.¹⁴ While such identification is certainly one aspect of recognition, I take the word here to denote a mode of social interaction, as defined and used in recent political theory and philosophy, based on the work by Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, and others.¹⁵

While toleration generally refers to a conditional acceptance of something that one essentially disagrees with,¹⁶ recognition promises to offer something more; to recognize other people means to grant them a positive, normative status that does not have to be based on agreement or shared values.¹⁷ Recognition has several dimensions. Honneth speaks of “respect” on the

12 Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, 13.

13 The verb Luke uses here is ἐπιγινώσκω, which is rendered in Latin as *cognosco*. Risto Saarinen takes these as the lexical basis for his historical study of recognition in ancient sources. Saarinen, *Recognition*, 26–27, 44–54.

14 Cf. Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*.

15 See the seminal works of Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung*, and Taylor, “Politics of Recognition,” both of which appeared in 1992.

16 Cf. Forst, *Toleration in Conflict*, 18–19.

17 See Kahlos, Koskinen, and Palmén, “Introduction,” 1–6.

universal level, "esteem" on the social level, and "love" on the intimate level. Taylor, on the other hand, distinguishes between the "politics of universalism," which emphasizes equality among all humans, and the "politics of difference," which underlines the uniqueness of particular cultural features.¹⁸ According to both theorists, recognition is a fundamental component of human life, as self-esteem and self-identity only develop and are maintained in relation to other people and depend on their feedback.¹⁹

Recognition theory is, admittedly, developed with modern society in mind. Recognition theorists typically trace the history of recognition back to the early nineteenth century, to Hegel's magnum opus, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, claiming that recognition, which is based on equal dignity and values, is only possible after the Enlightenment and the advent of modernity, since, in antiquity, relations were based on honor and rank. Such a clear-cut dichotomy between premodern and modern society has also been criticized, and, in recent years, the rudiments of recognition have been sought in the more remote past and insights of recognition theory applied to ancient sources.²⁰ Indeed, if recognition is understood as an essential constituent of human relations, there is no reason why it must have been otherwise in antiquity, even if equality and tolerance in the modern sense were unknown and the specific terminology is lacking in the sources.²¹ Paul's slogan that people of different ethnicity, status, and gender are one in Christ (Gal 3:28) reflects the ideal of universal acceptance, irrespective of one's origins. In other words, as Hartmut Leppin puts it, "anybody could be recognized as a member with equal dignity (in the Taylorian sense)."²²

The fundamental conviction that recognition is a human good and is essential for a just society has also drawn a fair amount of criticism. Nancy Fraser, for example, objects that recognition theory does not pay adequate attention to socio-economic factors.²³ She points out that cultural

18 Cf. Iser, "Recognition."

19 Both Honneth and Taylor take recognition to be mutual and interpersonal. In more recent theorizing, the sphere of recognition has been widened to include non-human agents, too. For example, Arto Laitinen speaks of "adequate regard" for something (including animals, nature, etc.) as a form of recognition, regardless of whether this something realizes it or not. See Laitinen, "Scope of 'Recognition'"; cf. Laitinen and Kortetmäki, "Natural Basis."

20 Risto Saarinen has traced the roots of recognition prior to Hegel, through antiquity and the middle ages. See Saarinen, *Recognition*, particularly pp. 42–109. For applications of recognition theories to ancient sources, see e.g. Tolonen, "Interactions"; Leppin, "Early Christians"; Kahlos, "Recognizing the Road."

21 Kahlos, Koskinen, and Palmén, "Introduction," 3; cf. Leppin, "Early Christians," 82.

22 Ibid., 74.

23 Fraser, "Social Justice," 50–54.

recognition is not enough for impoverished victims of exploitation. Several feminist and postcolonial scholars have emphasized the need to focus on power relations, which are always present in acts of recognition. Ignoring them may result in reinforcing a politics of exclusion. It is crucial thus to ask who has the power to recognize and who gets to decide the qualifications of recognition.²⁴ Feminist critics claim that recognition complies with hegemonic societal norms and values and renders those who are recognized dependent on these values, whether they themselves want it or not. They emphasize that recognition not only reacts to a certain identity but creates the identity that is to be recognized.²⁵ Thus, misrecognition does not only mean ignorance or failure to recognize, it can also mean that people are recognized as something they do not want to identify with. In sum, while recognition can empower individuals and identities, it can also limit them.

The aspect of power is also central when analyzing the recognition of women in early Christian texts. The ancient world did not differ from the present one in the complexity of its power structures. Gender was just one of the categories along which hierarchies and dominations were organized. Individuals were part of several intersecting power pyramids, with a diversity of relations, some of which might have been oppressive, others privileged.²⁶ This means that there are no simple answers to questions such as whether women were recognized or how they were recognized in early Christian communities. Despite the ideal of the unity of people of different ethnicity, social status, and gender declared in Gal 3:28, a free woman of high social rank was certainly recognized as something above a female slave or other exploited women. That is, while both free and slave women may have been equally recognized as members of the “body of Christ,” their status in other aspects must certainly have been different.

There is another important level of power to discuss when studying recognition of women in textual sources – namely, rhetorical power. While recognition is always relational, texts only provide us with one side of this relation. Eventually, it is the writer who is (intentionally or not) the agent of the recognition and the one who has the power to define the qualifications of recognition.²⁷ In this sense, those who are recognized are at the mercy of the text – they cannot choose to accept or resist the recognition afforded to

24 McNay, *Against Recognition*, 162–97; cf. Leeb, “Politics of Misrecognition,” 70–72.

25 Cf. Iser, “Recognition,” § 5.

26 Cf. Kartzow, “Question,” 367–70.

27 Cf. Tolonen, “Interactions,” 498.

them. Recognition can also serve the interests and aspirations for power of the one who grants it, and, as a rhetorical tool, it has the privilege of creating the identity it acknowledges.

In the following, I pay particular attention to how Clement of Alexandria and some other early Christian writers use the rhetorical power of recognition in their discussions on gender. What especially interests me is how the dynamics of recognition – or misrecognition – work and where the limits of recognition are set. *As what* does Clement and other ancient thinkers recognize women?

The Non-Use of "No Male and Female"

Before looking at the texts that make use of Paul's slogan "no longer male and female," it is instructive to set the broader context by looking at how it is not used. Present-day commentators of Gal 3:28 are likely to focus on the binary pair of gender – indeed, "slave" and "free" are not commonly used designations for one's social status in today's world, and "Greek" is a rather narrow ethnic specification, not something all non-Jews would identify themselves with. For all the criticisms today of binary gender systems, "male and female" continue to be comprehensible categories. In contrast, for many ancient Christian writers, the ethnic and social binaries seem to have made more sense, and their comments often overlook gender.

The lesser significance of gender is further apparent when Gal 3:28 is compared with other passages in the Pauline corpus that call for the abolition of social differences. While both "Greek and Jew" and "slave and free" appear in a similar list of social categories in Colossians, "male and female" is absent:

[You] have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

(Col 3:10–11)

If we take Colossians to be pseudo-Pauline, as I do, it might be tempting to think that the earliest commentator of Gal 3:28 has deliberately censored Paul's reference to the gender difference. This would be in line with the ethos of the Colossian household codes, where the place of wives is in subjugation to their husbands (Col 3:18–19). The situation is more complex, however, as Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians also leaves the male–female pair out:

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

(1 Cor 12:13)

In all three letters, baptism means a renewal of life that, in some sense, overcomes worldly binaries. This teaching seems to have circulated in several forms, some of which did not include the male–female dichotomy.²⁸ The variety continues in subsequent Christian texts, where different lists of such binaries are often conflated. For example, Ambrose writes:

Where there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

(Ambrose, *Fid.* 5.14.176)²⁹

Ambrose does not comment on the abolition of gender or other social differences in any way, as his point is elsewhere, namely in the Christological debate against Arians: Ambrose combines 1 Cor 15:28 (“that God may be all in all”) with Col 3:11 (“Christ is all and in all”) to argue for the unity of God and Christ. Another example of Gal 3:28 being combined with Col 3:11, this time without any reference to the gender binary, is at the beginning of Epiphanius’s *Panarion*. Epiphanius uses the words of the apostle as a reference to the antediluvian generations, when there was only one language and one (barbaric) opinion: “In Christ Jesus, there is neither barbarian, Scythian, Greek, or Jew” (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 1.1.9).

Both of these examples come from the fourth century and show that, in ancient Christianity, Gal 3:28 was not only about overcoming gender and other social differences but was useful in other kinds of discourses, too. Moreover, it was not a key biblical verse that those involved in gender discourses would quote. For example, Tertullian, the prolific Carthaginian, does not even once refer or allude to Gal 3:28 in his extant writings, which number over thirty, even though he refers to the preceding verse – “as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27) – a total of four times.³⁰ While he has much to

28 Some feminist scholars conclude that Paul has deliberately remained silent about the abolition of gender difference in 1 Corinthians, because he was caught in a struggle for authority with local female prophets. See e.g. Wire, “1 Corinthians,” 182. This, however, is impossible to prove.

29 Ambrose makes an explicit reference to Colossians, but he actually merges different binaries in Colossians and Galatians.

30 *Marc.* 3.12; *Fug.* 10; *Mon.* 7; *Pud.* 6.

say about baptism, he clearly did not feel the need to comment on the abolition of gender difference. In his view, baptism creates a spiritual change and restores the image and likeness of God of the first creation but this transformation will only consummate in heaven and has nothing to do with social relationships on earth. Not even in the resurrection do sexual differences disappear. As an ardent promoter of the resurrection of the flesh, Tertullian engages in long discussions on how the body in its entirety, including sexual organs, will remain at the time of the resurrection.³¹ An even more striking example is Ambrose, who quotes Gal 3:28 several times and has a great deal to say about women and their place in early Christian communities, making extensive use of scriptural passages, but who does not once use Gal 3:28 to discuss the roles of Christian women.³²

Males, Females, and Sexuality

Clement of Alexandria, writing in the late second or early third century, is the earliest Christian writer to quote Gal 3:28 extensively.³³ In the third book of his *Stromata*, Clement not only gives his own interpretation of the expression "no male and female" but also describes how other Christian teachers use the same slogan. In this part of his book, Clement is quite polemical, which makes it impossible to know how faithfully he is describing the views and practices he opposes. Clement's overall topic in this part of the book is marriage, and he positions himself as speaking for the golden mean between two extremes, sexual immorality and radical asceticism.³⁴ An example of the first is represented by the followers of Carpocrates. Clement claims to have access to the book written by Carpocrates's son Epiphanes, entitled *Concerning Righteousness* (Περὶ δικαιοσύνης).³⁵ He disapproves of their teaching that wives are to be shared in common (κοινὰς εἶναι τὰς γυναῖκας; *Strom.* 3.2.5), which they justify with their principle of the universalism of all created beings:

31 *Res.* 60–61.

32 See e.g. his discussions in *Enarrat. Ps.* and *Instit.*

33 Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, 13.

34 Buell, "Ambiguous Legacy," 45–47.

35 At the same time, he tells that Epiphanes died at the age of seventeen. Henry Chadwick, the translator of the third book of the *Stromateis*, takes both pieces of information as reliable and comments: "This work merely consists of the scribbles of an intelligent but nasty-minded adolescent of somewhat pornographic tendencies." Chadwick, "General Introduction," 25.

There is no distinction between rich and poor, people and governor, stupid and clever, female and male, free men and slaves (μὴ διακρίνει πλούσιον ἢ πένητα, δῆμον ἢ ἄρχοντα, ἄφρονάς τε καὶ τοὺς φρονούντας, θηλείας ἄρσενας, ἐλευθέρους δούλους). Even the irrational animals are not accorded any different treatment; but in just the same way God pours out from above sunlight equally upon all the animals.

(*Strom.* 3.2.6)

That is, humans do not differ essentially from animals, such that there is no distinction “between female and male, rational and irrational, nor between anything and anything else at all” (οὐ διακρίνας θήλειαν ἄρρενος, οὐ λογικὸν ἀλόγου, καὶ καθάπαξ οὐδενὸς οὐδέν; *Strom.* 3.2.7). From this line of thought, it follows that God

brought female to be with male and in the same way united all animals. He thus showed righteousness to be a universal fairness and equality. But those who have been born in this way have denied the universality which is the corollary of their birth and say, “Let him who has taken one woman keep her,” whereas all alike can have her, just as the other animals do.

(*Strom.* 3.2.8)

It goes without saying that Clement rejects the Carpocratian interpretation, which makes the equality of all Christians applicable to sexual relations.³⁶ While the text Clement quotes does not cite Gal 3:28 directly, the ethos is similar. Despite using words such as *ισότης* and *ἴσος*, the text does not speak of equality in any modern sense of the word. According to the description, men can have sex with other men’s wives, not vice versa. Women are recognized as common property, not active sexual agents.³⁷ Whether this corresponds to the thinking and practice of Carpocrates and his followers or whether what we have here is simply Clement’s (mis)representation of Carpocrates’s teaching remains debatable.³⁸

The other extreme Clement rejects is the total abstinence of sexuality, also within marriage. Clement attributes this opinion to Julius Cassianus,

36 Buell, “Ambiguous Legacy,” 46.

37 According to Epiphanes, “[God] has implanted in males a strong and ardent desire which [...] is God’s decree.” *Strom.* 3.2.8.

38 Löhr doubts the reliability of Clement’s description, arguing that, instead of libertine sexual morality, Carpocrates taught a platonized version of Christianity and rejected the idea of private property, which, in his view, violated the will of the creator. Löhr, “Karpokratianisches,” 37–38; Löhr, “Carpocratians,” 240–41.

an otherwise unknown early Christian teacher, citing his work *Concerning Continence and Celibacy* (Περὶ ἐγκρατείας ἢ περὶ εὐνουχίας). Cassianus justifies his encratite opinions with a quotation from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*:

When Salome asked when she would know the answer to her questions, the Lord said, "When you trample on the robe of shame, and when the two shall be one, and the male with the female, and there is neither male nor female (οὔτε ἄρρεν οὔτε θήλυ)."

(*Strom.* 3.13.92)³⁹

Clement dismisses Cassianus's reasoning, first, since his citation is not from one of the four trustworthy gospels. Second, Cassianus, he argues, has misunderstood the words "neither male nor female." In Clement's reading, the sentence speaks figuratively of passion (θυμός is a masculine word) and desire (ἐπιθυμία, a feminine word):

When one does not give in to passion (θυμός) or to desire (ἐπιθυμία) [...] but puts off the darkness they cause with penitence and shame, uniting spirit and soul in obedience to the Word, then, as Paul also says, "there is among you neither male nor female."

(*Strom.* 3.13.93)

Clement's spiritual interpretation of "no male and female" thus makes the abrogation of gender distinctions an allegory about resisting one's passion and desire and restoring the harmony of the soul, not a comment on women. Cassianus's rejection of all sexual relations, on the other hand, is certainly interesting from the point of view of recognition. This strict ascetic ideal seems to have been common in early Christian circles, taking on many forms, as can be seen in a dominical saying preserved in the *Gospel of Thomas* that closely resembles the words of the Lord in the *Gospel to the Egyptians*:

When you [plur.] make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female; and when you fashion eyes in

39 A similar saying is preserved in the *Gos. Thom.* 37: "His disciples said, 'When will you be shown forth to us and when shall we behold you?' Jesus said, 'When you strip naked without being ashamed, and take your garments and put them under your feet like little children and tread upon them, then [you] will see the child of the living. And you will not be afraid'" (trans. Layton).

place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot,
and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter [the kingdom].
(*Gos. Thom.* 22)⁴⁰

This kind of androgynous ideal is frequently linked with Gal 3:28 in several later sources, most notably in the writings of the two Cappadocians, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, who take it as an eschatological ideal that comprises the restoration of the primal androgyny of the original creation.⁴¹ Others, like Jerome, maintain that the abolition of gender distinctions that is accomplished in celibate life should take place even in marriage. Writing to a certain Lucinius about Lucinius's wife Theodora, Jerome comments that

You have with you one who was once your partner in the flesh but is now your partner in the spirit; once your wife but now your sister; once a woman but now a man; once an inferior but now an equal. Under the same yoke as you she hastens toward the same heavenly kingdom.
(Jerome, *Epist.* 71.3)⁴²

According to the letter, the spouses had made a vow of chastity and now lived in a "spiritual marriage," which Jerome wholeheartedly supports. Refraining from all sexual relations makes the husband and the wife equal partners, who strive together toward salvation. Soon after compiling this letter, Lucinius died, and Jerome wrote Theodora a letter of consolation. He repeats his praise for their asexual lifestyle, this time making explicit reference to there being "no male and female":

His love and affection towards you are still the same as when, disregarding his claim on you as a husband, he resolved to treat you even on earth as a sister, or indeed I may say as a brother, for difference of sex while essential to marriage is not so to a continent tie. And since even in the flesh, if we are born again in Christ, we are no longer Greek and Barbarian, bond and free, male and female, but are all one in Him.

(*Epist.* 75.2)⁴³

40 Translation by Lambdin in *NHL*.

41 See Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, 139–64.

42 All translations of Jerome are taken from *NPNF*.

43 Cf. Jerome's *Apology against Rufinus* 1.29: "And, indeed, when chastity is observed between man and woman, it begins to be true that there is neither male nor female; but, though living in the body, they are being changed into angels, among whom there is neither male nor female. The same is said by the same Apostle in another place: 'As many of you as were baptized into

Jerome recognizes women as being just as capable of adhering to asceticism as men, claiming that the ascetic lifestyle abolishes gender differences. Yet, women are not here recognized as women – they are recognized as men.⁴⁴ In other words, women need to overcome their sex by renouncing sexuality and not acting out their femaleness to be fully recognized. In this, she needs even the help of her husband, who must disregard "his claim as a husband."

Same Perfection, Different Manifestations of Virtue

In the fourth book of the *Stromata*, Clement engages in a discussion on martyrdom and spiritual perfection. He opens the section by declaring that "both bond and free must equally philosophize, whether male or female in sex" (*Strom.* 4.1.1). To "philosophize," in Clement's parlance, means living according to the highest intellectual and moral standards, and he defends Christian practice as the true philosophy.⁴⁵ Moreover, he claims that spiritually perfected Christians, both male and female, are as capable of "philosophizing" as the many pagan philosophers he quotes.

So the Church is full of those, as well chaste women as men, who all their life have contemplated the death which rouses up to Christ. For the individual whose life is framed as ours is, may philosophize without learning, whether barbarian, whether Greek, whether slave, whether an old man, or a boy, or a woman. For self-control is common to all human beings who have made choice of it. And we admit that the same nature exists in every race, and the same virtue. As far as respects human nature, the woman does not possess one nature, and the man exhibit another, but the same; so also with virtue. If, consequently, a self-restraint and righteousness, and whatever qualities are regarded as following them, is the virtue of the male, it belongs to the male alone to be virtuous, and to the woman to be licentious and unjust. But it is offensive even to say this. Accordingly woman is to practice self-restraint and righteousness, and every other virtue, as well as man, both bond and free; since it is a fit consequence that the same nature possesses one and the same virtue.

(*Strom.* 4.8.58–59)

Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

44 Cf. *Gos. Thom.* 114. For a recent analysis of the text, see Miroshnikov, "Not Worthy of Life."

45 Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, 93; Buell, "Ambiguous Legacy," 45–46.

Again, Clement does not explicitly quote Gal 3:28, but he echoes the ethos: there is no fundamental difference between those who are in Christ, barbarian and Greek, slave and free, or man and woman; all share in the same human nature and the same capacity for virtue. Self-control and righteousness do not belong to man only; women are as capable as men at obtaining spiritual perfection. While this suggests that Clement might recognize a universal humanity, despite gender and other social distinctions, which guarantees equal status for all, the broader context of the passage limits this reading. The overarching topic of the fourth book of the *Stromata* is martyrdom. It is only in the exceptional circumstance of facing martyrdom that Clement argues that women show themselves to be as heroic and self-mastered as men – to prove his point, Clement appeals to a series of examples of both classical and biblical heroines.⁴⁶ Under unexceptional circumstances, however, a woman's role is different from that of a man and her virtue manifests itself accordingly.⁴⁷ The above-quoted passage continues:

We do not say that woman's nature is the same as man's, as she is woman. For undoubtedly it stands to reason that some difference should exist between each of them, in virtue of which one is male and the other female. Pregnancy and parturition, accordingly, we say belong to woman, as she is woman, and not as she is a human being. But if there were no difference between man and woman, both would do and suffer the same things. As then there is sameness, as far as respects the soul, she will attain to the same virtue; but as there is difference as respects the peculiar construction of the body, she is destined for child-bearing and housekeeping.

(*Strom.* 4.8.59)

Clement then cites Paul's words in 1 Cor 11, how "the head of every woman is man," and the household codes of Ephesians and Colossians, putting women firmly into their place in the domestic sphere. In other words, while Clement recognizes woman as human being, ἄνθρωπος, ascribing to her the same capacity for virtue and exemplary behavior as men, he nevertheless recognized her as θήλυ, distinctively female, which determines

46 See Lehtipuu, "Widow Judith," 191–94.

47 In his treatment of the biblical and classical heroines, Clement's discussion on female bravery curiously changes into a moral lesson, emphasizing how women should always seek the consent of their husbands in everything they do (*Strom.* 4.19.118–23); cf. Lehtipuu, "Widow Judith," 192–93.

her for domestic, not public roles. Those virtues of a woman that exceeds the domestic are confined to martyrdom. This line of thought implies strict limits for publicly active women – there is nothing beyond their public role; only female martyrs are afforded this recognition. Put bluntly, it does not require much to recognize and esteem the dead. Those women who do not die as martyrs should thus find their proper role in the domestic setting and continue to lead a virtuous life (for which they, in Clement's rhetoric, are as capable as men).

Another example of an early commentator on Paul and Gal 3:28 who seems to recognize women as active agents is John Chrysostom. However, his recognition of women also has strict limits. In his *Homily on Romans*, Chrysostom praises Phoebe and Prisca, whom Paul greets in Romans chapter 16. Chrysostom says that Paul praises them for their hospitality, their help, their readiness for martyrdom, and their willingness to share their possessions. Another praiseworthy woman is Junia, whom Chrysostom explicitly takes as a female apostle.⁴⁸

You see these were noble women, hindered no way by their sex in the course of virtue. And this is as might be expected. "For in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female."

(John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 30.3)

These admirable women, however, are figures who belonged to the sacred past, not real women in Chrysostom's community. While Chrysostom shows respect to many women with whom he was in correspondence,⁴⁹ there are no indications in these letters that he would understand "no male and female" to mean an ideal that would have abolished social distinctions. Women were capable of being virtuous, but those women who are praised for their public activities belong safely in the distant past. Another way of making sense of Gal 3:28 without compromising the prevailing social order was to project the disappearing of gender differences to the distant future, claiming that Paul was referring to the eschatological consummation.⁵⁰

48 "Greet Andronicus and Junia [...] who are outstanding among the apostles' (Romans 16:7): To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among the apostles – just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! They were outstanding on the basis of their works and virtuous actions. Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle." *Hom. Rom.* 31.2. On the debate over Junia's sex, see Epp, *Junia*.

49 Mayer, "John Chrysostom," 216–23.

50 This is characteristic e.g. of Gregory of Nyssa and other Cappadocian theologians. See Harrison, "Male and Female"; Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, 150–60.

In texts that speak of women's public activities, these activities are treated with suspicion and the groups who allow them condemned as heretical. A well-known example is Epiphanius's description of how the followers of Priscilla and Quintilla invoked scriptural authority, Gal 3:28 included, for allowing women to act as bishops and presbyters.

They cite many texts which have no relevance, and give thanks to Eve because she was the first to eat from the tree of wisdom. And as scriptural support for their ordination of women as clergy, they say that Moses' sister was a prophetess. What is more, they say, Philip had four daughters who prophesied [...] They have women bishops, presbyters and the rest; they say that none of this makes any difference because "In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female."

(*Pan.* 49.2.1–2.5)

The reliability of this information is difficult to evaluate. Epiphanius, who wrote in the fourth century, is not describing a movement he would have known personally, as Priscilla belonged to the early days of the New Prophecy, in the late second century.⁵¹ It is also unclear whether the movement was inspired by the scriptural proofs (Eve, Philip's daughters, and the "no male and female" passage) from the beginning or whether scriptures were cited to justify practices that had, by then, become traditional. Be that as it may, Epiphanius strongly disapproves of such interpretations. While Priscilla, Quintilla, and other woman leaders of the movement must have been esteemed and their authority recognized by their followers, we do not have any primary sources that derive directly from them. All sources at our disposal are hostile against women who acted against the established gender expectations.

The Rhetorical Power of Recognition

I conclude my discussion with one last quotation from Clement of Alexandria. In the *Paedagogus*, Clement again emphasizes the common virtue of men and women:

the virtue of man and woman is the same. [...] Those whose life is common, have common graces and a common salvation; common to them are

⁵¹ Apart from Epiphanius, Quintilla is an otherwise unknown figure in ancient sources. See Marjanen, "Female Prophets," 131–34.

love and training. For in this world, he says, they marry, and are given in marriage, in which alone the female is distinguished from the male (ἐν ᾧ δὴ μόνῳ τὸ θῆλυ τοῦ ἄρρενος διακρίνεται); but in that world it is so no more. There the rewards of this social and holy life, which is based on conjugal union, are laid up, not for male and female, but for human (ἄνθρωπῳ), the sexual desire which divides humanity being removed. Common therefore, too, to men and women, is the name of human (Κοινὸν οὖν καὶ τοῦνομα ἀνδράσιν καὶ γυναιξὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος).

(*Paed.* 1.4)

This passage illustrates Clement's rhetoric of recognition. Men and women share a universal capacity of virtue based on their common humanity. For the same reason, men and women alike share in a common salvation. The nature of this salvation is asexual – in the world to come, sexual differences will be undone and human nature, which in this world has been divided into male and female, will be reunited. Until then – that is, in this world – humanity will manifest itself in the dichotomy of male and female. This dichotomy is needed for procreation, which, as we have seen, defines the proper role of a woman. Thus, for Clement, as for most ancient commentators, the abolition of gender distinctions has to do with the ideal world – either the sacred past or the world to come – not the real world of the present.⁵² In this way, he holds onto both the common, non-gendered and undivided nature of humanity ("all are one in Christ") and the conventional social distinction between male and female.⁵³

Clement's writings also offer glimpses into other ways of interpreting and using Gal 3:28. While Clement does not cite the verse in his discussion on marriage and sexuality, he claims that both extremes from which he wants to distance himself – the liberal sexual behavior of the Carpocratians and the radical asceticism promoted by Cassianus – are based on a false understanding of Paul's slogan. The hostile tone of Clement's descriptions complicates any interpretation; it is difficult to determine how reliable they are and, indeed, whether Clement is misrepresenting the views to which he objects. Be that as it may, from the point of view of recognition, either of these opposite interpretations offers little room for women. In the Carpocratian

52 Cf. Augustine, *Exp. Gal.* 28 "Difference [...] is indeed taken away by the unity of faith, but it remains embedded in our mortal interactions, and in the journey of this life the apostles themselves teach that it is to be respected. For we observe in the unity of faith that there are no such distinctions. Yet within the orders of this life they persist."

53 Cf. Børresen, "God's Image," 194–96.

model, sexual liberty is confined to men only, and women are recognized as their common property. In the Cassian model, the strict ascetic ideal means that women are not recognized as women but as asexual beings. While this ascetic ideal pertains to both women and men and abolishes the sexual hierarchy between them, there is no indication that it might have overturned the traditional social hierarchy.

In the ancient texts studied here, “no male and female” is often understood as a basis for a common humanity, one that is, however, a spiritual quality. This reading does not challenge the dominant social hierarchy or the conventional social roles of women. Moreover, the ideal humanity is envisioned as male – the contrasting pairs of Gal 3:28 do not consist of equal statuses; being male is preferred to being female, just as being free is preferred to being enslaved.⁵⁴ This monoculture differs starkly from the multicultural paradigm to “respect, embrace, and celebrate” that I started with. Thus, contemporary theories of recognition are not able to give direct answers to historical questions. However, they may offer analytical tools by which to more fully understand the rhetoric of ancient texts and by which to illuminate the similarities and the differences between ancient and modern interpretations.⁵⁵

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54 Cf. Eisenbaum, “Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?,” 511–14.

55 Cf. Kartzow, “Question,” 367; Tolonen, “Interactions,” 508.

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10. Learning from “Others”

Reading Two Samaritan Stories in the Gospel of Luke from an Ecological Perspective

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Abstract

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the story of the Healing of Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11-19) use the dynamic of division between Jews and Samaritans to create a category of the “other.” They invite their audience to think differently about these “others” who, at the narrative level, present a positive model for virtue. This dynamic challenges us to strive beyond mere tolerance, as they invite us to learn from such “others.”

Keywords: Good Samaritan; Gospel of Luke; ecology; Healing of Ten Lepers

While some debate whether to classify Samaritans as Jews or Gentiles,¹ it is clear that the Gospel of Luke makes a definite distinction between Samaritans and Jews. This article will concentrate on two stories, the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37) and the narrative of the Healing of Ten Lepers (17:11–19), in which the actions of Samaritans are contrasted with the actions of Jews. Moreover, the Samaritans in these stories become models of faith and compassionate response. These stories, therefore, reflect a dynamic of division between Jews and Samaritans but, at the same time, invite the hearer/reader to think differently about those whom they consider to be “other,” in fact, to see them as possible models to emulate.

An earlier reference to Samaritans in the Gospel of Luke occurs at the beginning of Jesus’s journey to Jerusalem (9:51–56). In this passage, Samaritan

¹ Examples of differing views can be seen in Stenschke, *Luke’s Portrait*, 112, and Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 206–7. For discussions of Samaritan history and the term “Jew,” see Knight and Levine, *Meaning*, 282–87.

villagers do not receive Jesus (9:52–53). This reaction and the response of James and John who seek retribution (9:54) reflect the mutual animosity between Samaritans and Jews. Nevertheless, Jesus stops James and John from carrying out their retributive suggestions (9:55). Jesus, in effect, calls James and John to tolerate the response of these Samaritan villagers. The two stories which will be the main foci of this study have, however, a further message. Depicting Samaritans as the “heroes,” these two stories challenge the audience to go beyond the limits of mere tolerance of “others.” Rather, they are invited to learn from them to show mercy, as did the Samaritan traveller (10:36–37), and to praise God as did the Samaritan leper (17:17–19).

While Samaritans are “other” to Jews, just as Jews are “other” to Samaritans, the reading of these stories from an ecological perspective opens up further understandings of “other” that include but are not restricted to human others. Within the parable, for instance, “others” that join with the Samaritan in providing mercy to the injured one include the innkeeper and the animal, as well as Earth itself, which is the source of the resources used. In the healing story, the lepers can also be considered “other.”² The regulations in Lev 13:45–46 describe a marginalized and stigmatized status for the one who has leprosy. Reading these two stories of Samaritans in light of the global context, we might consider those who are marginalized and stigmatized today, as well as those in desperate need of attention, compassion and response. How do these Samaritan stories speak to our global situation?

Hermeneutical Approach and the Global Context

An ecological approach to reading the biblical text is grounded in the interconnectedness of all the Earth community, including humans and Earth itself.³ Such an approach, therefore, critiques texts and interpretations which are anthropocentric and/or which marginalize groups within the human community. Involving a hermeneutic of suspicion, identification and retrieval, an ecological reading is concerned with justice for both human and other-than-human elements of the Earth community.

In this study, the chosen Lukan biblical texts will be read ecologically in light of two aspects of the global situation. The first aspect is the huge

2 As I have outlined, reasons for “otherness” can vary. Ethnic identity, disease or non-humanness can be sources of “otherness” in these stories.

3 For a detailed discussion of ecological hermeneutics, see Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics.”

number of displaced persons who in recent years have fled life-threatening situations and sought refuge and asylum in other lands.⁴ My own country, Australia, has a policy of offshore processing for asylum seekers attempting to travel to Australia by boat.⁵ Despite their right under international law to seek asylum in Australia, these boat travellers have been given pejorative labels, such as "illegal immigrants" or "queue jumpers" by some Australian politicians, media and voters.

Another element of the global context which is at the forefront of world attention is climate change. The attendance and discussions at COP21, the pivotal United Nations Conference on Climate Change held in Paris, 2015, reflected the far-reaching consequences of climate change, the disproportionate impact on the poorest peoples, and the diverse interests of various nations. The success of the conference ultimately lies in whether the global targets which emerged from it are met.⁶ The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted a few months prior to COP21, include goals to combat climate change and to conserve and use marine and land resources sustainably. The full suite of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals is concerned with the flourishing of Earth and the entire Earth community and it recognizes that the well-being of Earth and the well-being of Earth's human population are interrelated.⁷ Pope Francis makes a similar connection in his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*: "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature."⁸ Francis enjoins us to hear "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."⁹

This complex global crisis that affects Earth and Earth's community, most particularly its poorest members, will be brought into dialogue with the two Lukan texts at the center of this study (the parable of the Good Samaritan, 10:25–37; and the Healing of Ten Lepers, 17:11–19). The portrayal

4 While the Covid-19 pandemic is reshaping our global context in 2020, this essay was written prior to the emergence of the virus and so is not able to seriously dialogue with its effects. While the movement of refugees has decreased in the Covid-19 era, their vulnerability has heightened.

5 Australia's policy may have had a ripple effect with other countries adopting similar ideas. See, for instance, Magnay, "Angela Merkel Adopts Our Boat Policy," in *The Australian*, 12 Dec. 2016.

6 Discussion and decision-making relating to the Paris Agreement have continued at the annual United Nations conferences on climate change.

7 United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals."

8 See Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* 139.

9 *Ibid.* 49.

of “others” in these texts will be investigated in order to assess the level of openness to these “others,” and what the hearer/reader can learn from them. The potential of the texts to give insights into the current global situation will also be explored.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37)

While Luke 10:25–37 is commonly known as the parable of the “Good Samaritan,” it is the one who “fell into the hands of robbers” (10:30) who is at the core of the story.¹⁰ The parable describes his circumstances and varying responses to his plight. The parable’s dynamic presumes an atmosphere of underlying conflict. Mercy and compassion break across this conflict bringing transformation. The first sign of conflict in the accompanying narrative appears in 10:25, where we read that a lawyer is wanting to test (*ekpeirazō*) Jesus. The lawyer is an antagonist. Although he, like Jesus, is Jewish, his stance is as “other,” one in opposition to Jesus. The lawyer asks Jesus two questions (10:25, 29) and Jesus does not answer either question directly. Instead, he draws out the lawyer to answer his own questions (10:26, 36). Jesus’s parable (10:30–35) leads the lawyer to make the final response (10:37).

The parable relies on the long-standing mutual hatred and enmity between Jews and Samaritans for its effect. For the lawyer and the wider, presumed Jewish audience, the Samaritan in the parable is “other,” one from a despised enemy group of people. The dynamic of the parable also demands that the one who fell among the robbers (10:30) is presumed by Jesus’s audience to be Jewish, although this is not explicitly stated in the text. The Samaritan needs to be “other” to the injured person as well in order to trigger the shock effect of the parable. Moreover, the Samaritan is also “other” to the priest and Levite. This otherness is derived both from the Jewish–Samaritan distinction and the contrast in responses to the one in need.

The parable begins with the information that a person (*anthrōpos*) traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho is beset by bandits, stripped, beaten and left half dead (10:30).¹¹ Starting with the writings of Strabo (*Geogr.* 16.2.40), and

10 Rushton, “Heart Moved to Mercy,” 24, notes that the wounded one is in the center of the painting *The Good Samaritan* by Vincent Van Gogh (1890).

11 Trainor, *Earth’s Child*, 173, comments that the use of the term *anthrōpos* highlights “the person’s collective identity with the rest of the human household, not their gender.”

then using the later writings of both Ibn al-Tayyib (eleventh century) and William Thompson (nineteenth century), Kenneth Bailey argues that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho "has been dangerous all through history."¹² Furthermore, drawing on the stories of 2 Sam 15:23–16:14 and 2 Kgs 25:4, Amy-Jill Levine notes: "Even those who had never travelled the road, were they biblically knowledgeable, knew about its dangers and possibilities."¹³ This suggests that Jesus's audience would not be surprised by a scenario of bandits attacking a traveller on this road.

What may have raised questions, however, is the response of the priest and Levite after seeing the one in need. Each passes by on the other side without giving assistance (Luke 10:31–32). The priest is described as going down the road (*katabainō*; 10:32). Thus, he is heading away from Jerusalem and the temple.¹⁴ It would seem, therefore, that he has completed his temple duties. In Lev 21:1–3, the instruction to priests is to avoid defilement from a corpse unless it is one of his nearest kin. As Levine explains, however, the binding demand of the Torah is that life should be preserved: "in Jewish law saving a life trumps all other laws. The Mishnah (*Nazir* 7.1), the earliest compilation of rabbinic law, insists that even a high priest should attend a neglected corpse."¹⁵ Hence, the lack of response from the priest cannot be justified from the Torah. Neither can the Levite's failure to respond be justified by recourse to Jewish law.¹⁶

The appearance of the priest and the Levite in the parable sets up an expectation that the third person to come along, the hero, will be a Jewish layman.¹⁷ The challenge of the parable becomes evident when the next traveller to appear on the scene is one who is considered "other." Jesus's Jewish hearers would be shocked to learn that a Samaritan, an enemy, is the one to respond to the desperate need of the injured person rather than the two officials of temple worship. The conjunction *de* introduces the contrast between the response of the Samaritan and those of the priest and Levite (Luke 10:33). Like the previous two, the Samaritan sees the wounded person. The same participle *idōn* is used on each of the three occasions to highlight this (10:31–33). It is only the Samaritan, however, whose seeing leads to "compassion that touches the other."¹⁸ He is moved with compassion

12 See Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 41–42.

13 See Levine, *Short Stories*, 87.

14 Jericho is below sea-level so Jerusalem is geographically much higher.

15 Levine, "Good Samaritan," 24.

16 See Levine, *Short Stories*, 92–94.

17 So Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 47. See also Levine, "Good Samaritan," 24.

18 Elvey, *Matter*, 83.

(*esplanchnisthē*), moved to the very depth of his being (10:33). This verb is a cognate of *splanchna*, meaning inward parts or entrails,¹⁹ and this is an indication of the depth of the response which the Samaritan feels within his body.

The verb *splanchnizomai* also occurs in two other places in the Gospel of Luke. The first of these relates to the response by Jesus at the gate of Nain when he sees the widow whose only son has died (7:13). In his response and actions, Jesus embodies the mercy of God. The second occurs in a parable where a father sees his returning “lost” son (15:20). The father images God who rejoices when the lost are found (15:23–24; cf. 15:7, 10). The shocking implication of the parable of the Good Samaritan for Jesus’s audience is that the Samaritan’s response, the hated enemy’s response, rather than that of the priest or Levite, reflects the mercy and compassion of God.

The verb *splanchnizomai* is accompanied by action. The Samaritan is moved to respond and the extravagance of his response is surprising, if not breathtaking. In the bandaging of wounds, outpouring of oil and wine, transportation, initial care, provision for ongoing care, and financial arrangement, the Samaritan does all he can for the injured person (10:34–35). It is the Samaritan who demonstrates love of God and love of neighbour as himself (cf. 10:27). Jesus’s presumed Jewish audience is challenged to change the way they have stereotyped all Samaritans. Moreover, Jesus enjoins the lawyer to emulate the mercy of the Samaritan, one who is “other,” in his own actions (10:37). The Samaritan becomes a model of living faith.

An ecological reader, however, is aware that the Samaritan does not make this extravagant response of mercy alone. A variety of other elements of the Earth community become agents of mercy as they also contribute to the merciful response to the one in need. The Samaritan draws on Earth elements of oil and wine to clean the wound, and linen or flax to bandage the wound. His own animal (*ktēnos*) carries the wounded person to the inn (10:34).²⁰ Earth itself, in the form of the road, bears the Samaritan, the animal and its load to the inn, an edifice constructed from Earth elements. The Samaritan forms a relationship of mutual trust with the innkeeper. This trust that the provision of care and payment will be forthcoming enables the needs of the injured person to be met. The Samaritan uses 2 *denarii*, metal coins which are also products of Earth, to cover the care financially

19 See BAGD, 3rd ed., 938.

20 While the question of whether the animal is a willing participant can be raised here, the use of *ktēnos*, which can be translated as “pet,” suggests a close relationship between the Samaritan and the animal. See BAGD, 3rd ed., 572.

(10:35). Innkeepers in the first century had dubious reputations.²¹ For Jesus's hearers, therefore, the innkeeper in this parable would himself be considered "other." This implies that the relationship formed between the Samaritan and the innkeeper is one between two who are "other." Is it their mutual "otherness" which facilitates their mutual trust?

While the Samaritan initiates the response, the wider Earth community participates in this spiral of mercy. There is a sense in which the Earth community, including but not limited to the Samaritan, enfolds the wounded person, responds to the desperate need and facilitates the nurturing back to life. Jesus's final question to the lawyer regarding who has been a neighbour to the injured person evokes the response, "the one who showed mercy" (10:37). An ecological reader might formulate this as "the *ones* who showed mercy."²² Jesus's human hearers are invited to learn from a range of "others" in this parable and, in some instances, the "otherness" relates to being "other" than human. Reading with ecological eyes, Jesus's response to "Go and do likewise" can be understood as "an injunction to ecological communion and respect."²³ This injunction is also relevant to the human community in the present time as we grapple with the causes and implications of climate change and the destruction of habitats and species.

On the evening of 3 April 1968, Martin Luther King gave a speech which included reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this speech, he said: "And so the first question that the priest asked, the first question that the Levite asked was, 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'"²⁴ The next day, Martin Luther King was shot dead. Ironically, he was assassinated because he was considered "other" to those who wanted white supremacy.

King's words speak volumes to the current asylum-seeker policy in my country of Australia. Asylum seekers who come to Australia by boat have embarked on a dangerous journey, like the central figure in the parable, and the dangers do not cease if they arrive in Australian waters. The current government policy is that no asylum seeker who comes by boat to Australia will be resettled in Australia. Offshore detention centres, originally established in 2001, in Nauru and on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea were reopened in 2012. These centres became "open" processing centres

21 See *m. 'Abod. Zar.* 2:1, and Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 53–54.

22 Lawson, *Blessing*, 72.

23 Trainor, *Earth's Child*, 175.

24 King, "Mountaintop."

in more recent times, and while the Manus Island Centre was officially closed in late 2017, many asylum seekers still face uncertain futures and are suffering from lack of hope.²⁵ Like the priest and Levite in the parable, the Australian public can keep the situation and desperation of those in need at a distance, many not really wanting to see. Echoing the words of King, the determining question seems to be, "What will happen to our Australian way of life if we welcome these asylum seekers?" The alternative question, "What will happen to these people if we do not welcome them?," does not seem to influence our policy.

Naomi Klein, Canadian author and film-maker, uses the situation of Nauru to demonstrate the link between the degradation of Earth and the degradation of people. By the 1960s, phosphate mining by colonizing countries had ravaged the interior of the island of Nauru leaving the inhabitants to live on the coastal fringe. Now, the coastal area is vulnerable to rising sea levels due to climate change. Klein draws attention to the "ecological" and "financial bankruptcy" of the country. It is not by chance that Nauru, desperate for revenue, became one of the sites of an asylum-seeker overseas detention centre for the Australian government.²⁶

The Healing of Ten Lepers (17:11–19)

In Luke 17:10, Jesus is travelling between (*dia meson*) Samaria and Galilee. Thus, he is in a border region. On the one hand, borders form a division between different areas. On the other, they provide openings and opportunities for movement between those areas. The insights and imagery of Chela Sandoval suggest that borders can be understood as places of tension and rupture, yet also opportunities, "opening space in the order of the real for the previously unimaginable."²⁷ This two-edged dynamic is evident in relation to the current refugee crisis. Millions of displaced people have already crossed borders into countries where they hope to find refuge from

25 These off-shore detention centres were established in 2001 under the Howard government. Subsequently they were closed by the Rudd government and then re-opened in 2012 by the Gillard government. Starting in 2017, some refugees on Nauru and Manus Island have been resettled in the United States, but the situation of hundreds of others remains unresolved. An article in the *New York Times* gives insight into their suffering. They feel like they are in "endless limbo." See Cohen, "Broken Men in Paradise."

26 Klein, "Capitalism and the Climate."

27 Sandoval, *Methodology*, 76. While Sandoval uses these words in another context in relation to different models of power, her words also provide insight here.

the life-threatening situations which have caused them to flee. At the same time, some images from refugee camps at borders reveal the tensions that can erupt when large numbers of desperate people live in trying conditions, awaiting an opportunity for resettlement.

It is significant then that this story of the Healing of Ten Lepers occurs in border territory. An ecological reader is alert to the possibilities that are opened up by this particular habitat.²⁸ While Samaria was obviously the home of the Samaritans, archaeological evidence indicates that first-century Galilee itself was a Jewish area.²⁹ Although Samaritans and Jews had been enemies for centuries, it is in the border region that this deep division may become less defined and porous. The borderland is a place that opens up possibilities for the division between Samaritans and Jews to be crossed.

Annette Weissenrieder specifies the location between Samaria and Galilee in which Jesus is travelling (17:11) as the Jezreel Valley. She argues that this particular border region is significant to the story for two reasons. First, she highlights texts of Josephus which presume the coexistence of Jews and Samaritans within the Jezreel Valley.³⁰ Thus the scenario of Jesus encountering a group of lepers, including both Jew(s) and Samaritan(s), in this region is not unthinkable.³¹ This geographical location, however, is not only significant because of this mix of inhabitants. Weissenrieder claims a second reason for significance by drawing on the understanding that environmental factors are influential to the well-being of the human body: "In ancient medicine, it was held that environmental factors such as air and wind were very important to the balance of bodily fluids. It was assumed that the body more or less mirrored its environment."³² Weissenrieder identifies the climatic conditions of the Jezreel Valley as being conducive to a high incidence of skin infections. The valley was prone to an east wind which brought heat waves (cf. Hos 13:15), resulting in skin dryness. Moreover, the valley was also subject to the south wind which ancient medicine associated with producing skin disease.³³

28 "Habitat within ecological thinking is the dynamic context and contextualizing of interrelationship/s between the material, temporal, spatial and social." Wainwright, *Habitat, Human, and Holy*, 21.

29 See the discussion in Freyne, *Jesus Movement*, 17–20.

30 Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 191–92. See Josephus, *J.W.* 2.466, 477–80.

31 As I argue below, the dynamic of the narrative suggests that the group of lepers is a group of Jews and one Samaritan.

32 Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 141. Weissenrieder draws on examples from various authors in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* to support this statement.

33 *Ibid.*, 194–95, again drawing on the Hippocratic texts.

The region between Samaria and Galilee, therefore, is not just a backdrop for this narrative but plays a vital role in the story. It is the border place where Samaritans and Jews may have coexisted, where the barrier between the two was porous. It is also a location whose climate commonly caused skin complaints. For the ecological reader, the latter highlights the interconnectedness of all the Earth community. Like the ancient medics, we are aware that environmental factors and the welfare of Earth itself affect the welfare of all the Earth community.

Ten lepers (*leproi andres*) approach Jesus in this border region (Luke 17:12). In the LXX, the term *lepra* translates the Hebrew *šāra'aṭ*, and is used to refer to a range of skin complaints. The implications for dealing with the disease are detailed in Lev 13–14. Not least of these implications is the social isolation, which is the fate of one who has *lepra* and must live outside the camp (Lev 13:46; Num 5:2–3). The implications, however, are multifaceted. As Weissenrieder notes, there are medical, social and ritualistic implications of *lepra*, each of which can be the source of “otherness.”³⁴ Once again, this evokes Australia's current treatment of refugees. Australia's policy of offshore processing centres has a multifaceted effect on those who find themselves in these centres. They suffer from isolation, loss of hope and health issues, both physical and mental. If “the body more or less mirror[s] its environment” as Weissenrieder suggests above,³⁵ what effect will isolated processing centres have on the bodies of the residents? Furthermore, these asylum seekers are sometimes demonized. This is particularly the case when asylum seekers are stereotyped as a threat and/or a potential source of terrorism, promoting fear in the Australian public.

The lepers keep their distance from Jesus (Luke 17:12), in keeping with their exclusion from the community. Ironically, they approach Jesus as he is entering a village (*kōmē*), a location of community, so there is a sense in which the lepers are also at another sort of boundary, the boundary of their exclusion limits. The lepers cry out, in words usually translated as “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (17:13).³⁶ The word *eleēson*, however, is a verb, a cognate of the noun, *eleos*. To highlight the verbal form of *eleēson* in this text, the plea may be more literally translated as “mercy us” where mercy is understood as a verb.³⁷ The same form of the word is used elsewhere in

34 Ibid., 138.

35 Ibid., 141, as above.

36 See the NRSV translation, for instance.

37 Pope Francis coined the Spanish word *misericordiendo* (mercy-ing) to speak of mercy as a verb in an interview by Antonio Spadaro S.J. See Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God.”

Luke's Gospel in the requests of the rich man (16:24) and the blind man (18:39) who each cry out "mercy me."³⁸ The plea of the lepers, "mercy us," can be understood as "show mercy to us" – but perhaps there is also a sense in which it can be understood as "make us merciful." The cry of the ten lepers, therefore, is for Jesus to show mercy to them but also may incorporate a request for them to recognize and respond to mercy themselves. Such an interpretation highlights the interconnectedness of giving and receiving mercy.

Like the three travellers in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus sees the one or ones in need. The participle *idōn* is used here as in the parable (17:14; cf. 10:31–33). While the verb *splanchnizomai* does not appear in this pericope of the lepers, Jesus's seeing leads him to respond, as it does in the case of the Samaritan in the parable. Seeing the lepers, Jesus says to them "Go and show yourselves to the priests" and as they go they are cleansed (17:14). Thus Jesus's seeing triggers the healing process. "Jesus' seeing makes a transformation possible."³⁹ The participle *idōn* appears again in 17:15 when one of the lepers sees that he has been healed and returns. There is no explicit mention at this point that the other nine lepers see that they have been healed. In this story, explicit seeing is reserved to Jesus and the leper who returns. Jesus's "act of seeing corresponds to the reciprocal act of seeing on the part of the 'leper,' who sees and confirms the healing of his illness."⁴⁰ While ten lepers cry out, "mercy us" (17:13), and ten lepers receive mercy (17:14), only one recognizes and acknowledges that mercy.

The leper who turns back praises God in a loud voice (*phōnēs megalēs*; 17:15).⁴¹ This leper recognizes his healing as God's action, just as the bent-over woman did when she was healed in a synagogue (13:13). Upon being healed, that woman stood up straight, no longer bent over. In contrast, the leper prostrates himself at Jesus's feet and thanks him (17:16). It is only at this point of the story that the reader learns that the leper is a Samaritan and this knowledge creates another dimension to the leper's response. Samaritans and Jews were divided about whether to worship God in the temple at Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim. By worshipping God's presence and action in Jesus, the Samaritan is able to traverse this boundary.⁴²

38 For a discussion of the verb "to mercy," see Lawson, "Leaving Space for Mercy."

39 Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 184.

40 Ibid., 223.

41 For a discussion of the other instances of the use of these same words (*phōnēs megalēs*) in the Gospel of Luke (4:33; 8:28; 19:37; 23:23, 46), see Reid, *Choosing the Better Part?*, 72.

42 Hamm, "What the Samaritan Leper Sees," 284; Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 621; and Elizabeth V. Dowling, "To the Ends of the Earth," 200–1. In a similar way in John's Gospel, the Samaritan

Jesus draws attention to the lack of response on the part of the other nine lepers. Though they are also healed, none of them returns to Jesus nor gives praise to God for the healing (17:17–18). Jesus labels the Samaritan leper who did return an *allogenēs*, a foreigner,⁴³ or stranger (17:18). This term implies that this leper is considered “other” by the Lukan Jesus. An obvious reason for him being “other” is that he is a Samaritan as opposed to Jesus being a Jew. The questions Jesus asks in 17:17–18 are not addressed to the leper since Jesus refers to him in the third person, so there is a wider audience to whom Jesus speaks. In the previous pericope, Jesus speaks to his disciples (17:1) and apostles (17:5), and these would surely form at least a part of the group with Jesus for this healing as he is on his way to Jerusalem (17:11). It would make sense for the dynamic of the narrative that the Samaritan is “other” to the audience as well, since Jesus declares to them that the Samaritan is an *allogenēs*.

The Samaritan, however, is also presumed “other” to the nine lepers who did not return. If these nine lepers were all Samaritans, or even a mixture of Jews and Samaritans, Jesus’s use of the term *allogenēs* would not distinguish him from all the rest. Weissenrieder interprets the term *allogenēs* as “one who is different.” She understands the Samaritan as different from the others because he comes to faith.⁴⁴ Hence, she attaches the concept of “other” to the Samaritan for faith reasons rather than ethnic ones. The sense of “otherness” is multifaceted, however, and is not limited to levels of faith responses. While *allogenēs* is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, the word famously appears in the temple inscription prohibiting “others” from moving from the Court of Gentiles into the section for Jews only.⁴⁵ The use of the term *allogenēs* in 17:18, therefore, implies that the Samaritan is considered a foreigner and is distinguished from the Jews.⁴⁶

Jesus’s final words to the Samaritan highlight his faith: “Your faith has healed/saved (*sesōken*) you” (17:19).⁴⁷ Earlier in the Lukan Gospel, Jesus said the same words to the woman who washed and poured ointment on his feet (7:50) and to the woman cured of haemorrhaging (8:48). In the chapter

woman moves from a discussion about the correct place of worship of God to faith in Jesus (John 4:19–30).

43 See BAGD, 3rd ed., 46.

44 Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness*, 203–9.

45 See Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 23.

46 For further evidence that Jews considered Samaritans to be “foreigners,” see Kartveit, *Origin*, 360.

47 *Sōzō* can be translated with both meanings. See BAGD, 3rd ed., 982.

following the story of the healing of the lepers, Jesus will also speak the same words to a blind man (18:42). The Samaritan is linked with these other minor characters in being a model of faith. Within Luke's Gospel, models of faith are not all Jewish.

Learning from "Others"

In both Lukan pericopes that have been explored in this study – the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37) and the story of the Healing of Ten Lepers (17:11–19) – Samaritans are not only significant characters but held up by the Lukan Jesus as models for his audiences to follow. This is explicitly depicted in the parable with Jesus enjoining the lawyer to "Go and do likewise" (10:37). In the healing story, Jesus contrasts the lack of acknowledgement and appreciation from the nine with the praise of God and thanks by the one Samaritan (17:17–18), implicitly calling his audience to see the Samaritan's response as the action to be emulated. It is important to note, however, that neither pericope is solely conveying positive examples to follow. Each also conveys a challenge to hearers/readers to recognize that they can learn from those that they consider "other."

Bringing these insights into dialogue with our global context, we as part of the contemporary Earth community are invited to be open to learning from "others." Moreover, an ecological reader is aware that at least some of these "others" may be other-than-human. As Job 12:7 asserts,

But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.⁴⁸

This verse communicates an ecological perspective on the Earth community, embracing other-than-human instruments of ecological wisdom. An ecological reading critiques anthropocentrism and recognizes the interconnectedness of all the Earth community. An ecological reader understands

48 Elizabeth Johnson draws on this quote for the title of her book: *Ask the Beasts*. Johnson issues the invitation of "stepping outside the usual theological conversation with its presumption of human superiority in order to place a different 'other' at the center of attention" (Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, xv).

that humans have much to learn from Earth and from its creatures.⁴⁹ The lawyer and wider audience who hear the parable of the Good Samaritan are invited to emulate the Samaritan's outpouring of mercy (10:37), but they are also invited to celebrate the gifts of mercy provided by the innkeeper, the animal and Earth itself. Jesus's hearers are challenged to recognize and accept gifts of mercy from unexpected sources. Within the story of the healing of the lepers (17:11–19), the "other" is a person from a despised community, an enemy who is also leprous, and therefore doubly categorized as "other." The model of faith response comes from an unexpected source. Openness to the gifts and example from "others" has the potential to transform the asylum-seeker policy in Australia and elsewhere.

For first-century audiences, the challenge of these two Lukan pericopes is not merely to *tolerate* "others." It is to see beyond stereotypes and recognize that some of these "others" may actually be models to emulate. I have argued elsewhere that Luke considers Samaritans as occupying a middle-ground between Jews and Gentiles. For Jews, Samaritans were "other" but not "other" to the same extent as Gentiles since they shared a common faith base.⁵⁰ In Acts 1:8, the risen Jesus commissions the disciples: "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." For Luke, the mission to the Samaritans is a necessary step in the Christian message reaching to the ends of the Earth, to the Gentiles. The favourable Lukan portrayal of Samaritans, in the two pericopes under investigation in this article, serves to open up the possibility of a successful Samaritan mission in Acts.

Conclusion

Two "Samaritan stories" in the Gospel of Luke (10:25–37, 17:11–19) portray Samaritan characters very positively. Luke depicts these Samaritans as models of faith and of merciful response, thus inviting his audience to recognize and acknowledge the giftedness of these "others" and to follow their example. Samaritans and Jews were mutually despised enemies and "others." Luke's portrayal, therefore, challenges his audience to see "others" with new eyes, no longer through a stereotypical lens.

49 Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, Indigenous Australian artist and educator, uses the term *dadirri* to refer to the quality which reflects this understanding. She describes *dadirri* as deep listening and awareness that connects us to each other and to the entire Earth community. It is "the sound of deep calling to deep." See Ungunmerr Baumann, "Dadirri."

50 See my discussion in Dowling, "To the Ends of the Earth," 197–201.

It is not only the Samaritan label, however, that makes characters in these stories "other." Within the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Earth community of both human and other-than-human elements combines for a response in mercy to the one in need. A host of "others" are sources of mercy. In the healing of the ten lepers, leprosy is a source of "otherness" for the ten who cry out, as is the label of Samaritan for the one who returns to Jesus. It is worth noting that those in need in these two stories are human members of the Earth community. In our world today, the distressed includes Earth itself and other-than-human elements of the Earth community. Reading these two stories in light of the contemporary global context, present-day readers are invited to think differently of "others." These "others" may include the asylum seekers who are seeking refuge at our borders or the Earth community ravaged by climate change and crying out "mercy me!"

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Epilogue

Sites of Toleration

Amy-Jill Levine

This volume begins with mention of the Mosque–Cathedral in Córdoba, a building erected on a site that began (as far as we know) as a Roman temple, became a Visigoth church, and in 711 was converted into a bifurcated building for both Christian and Muslim worship. For a brief time, it showed the promise of toleration. Seventy-three years later, the local Muslim ruler ordered the church destroyed, and work on the great mosque, second in size only to the Kaaba, began. The *reconquista* under Ferdinand III in 1236 led to the building’s reconsecration as a church. Today the Mosque–Cathedral is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that also continues to be a functional church whose official name is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption (Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion). Muslims are allowed to visit, but not to engage in prayer.

Not too far from the cathedral is the synagogue, built originally in 1315. After Catholic Spain expelled Jews and Muslims in 1492 and persecuted via the Inquisition those who converted but still retained their own religious practices, the building was converted into the Hospital Santo Quiteria, a hospital for rabies victims. Perhaps coincidentally, the Christian tradition had a long history, since at least the time of Chrysostom, of referring to Jews as dogs. In the sixteenth century, the shoemakers guild purchased the building to create a social center and prayer space. After several reincarnations, in 1935 the building housed the first public Jewish worship service in Córdoba since the expulsion. Today, it is a tourist attraction.

Córdoba is a place of *convivencia*, war, expulsion, cultural and religious erasure, welcome, and détente. The European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS) sought places where “religious traditions could live peacefully together without conflict.” For me, Córdoba is less a site of peaceful coexistence than of the tenuousness of the minority culture: peace exists only as long as the majority, or the army, or the political establishment finds it to

be expedient. Every mass held at the Cathedral carries with it, inevitably, the lost voices of Jews and Muslims.

The famous Church of Hagia Sophia, constructed by Justinian I in 537, was the center of Eastern Orthodox worship and one of the largest churches in the world. As a consequence of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, it became a Roman Catholic church. Returned to Orthodoxy in 1261, it became a mosque in 1453 when the Ottomans conquered Constantinople. In 1935, the Turkish Republic rededicated it as a museum. As of 2020, under the leadership of Turkish president Recept Tayyip Erdoğan, the site is now, officially, the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque (*Ayasofya-i Kebir Cami-i Şerifi*), with limited visiting rights for non-Muslims. That same year, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi visited the site of a sixteenth-century mosque in Ayodhya, a mosque that Hindus razed three decades ago, and laid the cornerstone for a new Hindu temple.

When it comes to abstract ideals, such as “love your enemy as yourself,” many of us can say “amen.” When it comes to property rights, or finances, or politics, we are more apt to hear “Praise the lord and pass the ammunition.”

The editors of this volume correctly state, “For a historian, conflict is often more easily accessible than peaceful coexistence” (p. 10) and, as Ismo Dunderberg notes in his essay, historians sometimes find conflicts “in cases where evidence is spurious or non-existent” (p. 20; Rashi’s works in relation to Christianity and Christians are an excellent test case). Finding tolerance is harder, and it may well be fleeting, as the history of the Mosque–Cathedral indicates. Even texts that recommend toleration may have nothing to do with actual practice; it may sound good in the abstract, but when it comes to competition, or property rights, or majority/minority relations, it will remain an abstraction only.

Toleration should mean at least that we allow people outside of our community – people with whom we have fundamental differences in identity, culture, theology, ethnicity, and so on – to live without fear that they, and what they embody, will be erased. At the same time, toleration should not extend to passivity, for if those outsiders seek to harm us, then we need to engage in self-protection. Jesus was not eliminating an appropriate response to the loss of a limb when he stated, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also” (Matt 5:38–39). Nor, as far as we know, were Jews at any time practicing such physical mutilation: there is no evidence that ancient Israel carried out this law; Josephus and Philo advise against it; and rabbinic Judaism diverts to monetary compensation for pain, medical expenses, and loss of income due

to injury (i.e. an appropriate response). Rather, Jesus changes the subject. There is a substantial difference between losing an eye and being slapped in a back-handed manner on the cheek.

Not all tolerance is desirable; not all intolerance is bad. We should not tolerate (she said, intolerantly) traditions, or therefore their practitioners, if the practice is harmful. Problems inevitably attend this view, however. For example, should infibulation be tolerated as a traditional practice, as it remains in parts of North Africa? Or, should it be globally banned? Or, are those who speak against it expressing Western, racist, xenophobic views? Who decides?

The question of toleration becomes one of how to address conflicting truth claims. Several of the popular models (which tend to be promulgated by those with power and privilege) I find unhelpful. Most popular is the idea of universal love, with Jesus's call to love one's enemies (which Michael Labahn's essay eloquently addresses) epitomizing the process: we should love all people, even enemies, because they are fellow human beings created in the divine image and likeness. Let God take care of whatever punishment is deserved (earthly toleration awaits an intolerant eschatological response).

Personally, I have never found the idea of "love your enemy" to be a helpful starting point, although Labahn makes the best case possible, and he may be right. I would much prefer that we started with showing proactive love for those who are not our enemies but are our neighbors, and our strangers within. Before love can be shown to those who endanger "us," we might start showing proactive love to those who are of no direct threat to "us" but who are endangered by a basic lack of justice.

I am also not convinced that love is the way to tolerance. Love typically requires some form of surrender or giving up of the self for the benefit of the other. The groups without power and privilege have already given up, or have had too much taken away from them, already. More, love also risks insisting that the "other" give up alterity. The famous Golden Rule, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matt 7:12), inevitably raises the threat of imposing on the other what "we" think is good for them. The result of this benevolence ranges from the erasure of indigenous cultures by well-meaning missionaries to the attempted "conversion" of people in GLBTI+ communities by well-meaning parents and clergy. Better is Hillel's so-called "Silver Rule": "Do not do to others what you would not have them to do you." That "we" typically see gold as worth more than silver, and so find Jesus's formulation better than that of Hillel, but feel that both rules and teachers have value – is tolerant; the primary place of the majority (Christian) culture remains secure.

Finally, the concern for “love of enemy,” can lead not necessarily to peace but to intolerance. Luther attempted to show “love of enemy” when he wrote “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew” (1523). However, when the Jews refused to respond to this love by converting to Christianity, Luther penned “On the Jews and Their Lies” (1543). If the love is motivated by the anticipation of conversion, it is set up to create hate, not love. When love is not reciprocated in the way the lover wants, the love can become deformed.

Nor should the model for toleration be one of finding the lowest common denominator between the two groups, since that approach eviscerates both traditions. Nor again should we sacrifice the particulars of our own tradition on the interfaith altar. This is why Gal 3:28, the subject of Outi Lehtipuu’s essay, makes me nervous: I’d rather have all groups than none included, and then do away with slavery. It is those with power who tend to want to erase difference on their own terms. More, erasure of difference in a theological purview (we are all God’s children, we are all in God’s image and likeness, there is no Jew or Greek, etc.) too easily becomes an excuse for maintaining the status quo. Since our primary or spiritual identity is equal, our present economic, social, or political condition can be seen as ultimately unimportant. As Lehtipuu states, “This reading does not challenge the dominant social hierarchy or the conventional social roles of women” (p. 268). However, the text is open to other interpretations, and we have a hermeneutical choice.

Ironically, while Gal 3:28 has been one of a number of prompts for tracing the history of women and of slaves (with the categories sometimes overlapping) in early Christianity and indeed celebrating their presence, comparably little attention is paid to “Jews” outside of that first generation (the Pseudo-Clementines and the Ebionites don’t get as much press; in any case, they come into history as “heretical”), and in popular imagination Jesus, Paul, even the Virgin Mary, have somehow become Christians. Today, some messianic Jews are asking the churches to welcome them *as practicing Jews* in the body of Christ; the answers are not yet clear. At the same time, they wish to be recognized by synagogues as Jews (which they are, halakhically). Here is a lovely test of contemporary tolerance.

Each group will need to determine if it can share the same house with others; not all groups can. But they can learn to be good neighbors. Or, we can choose to read them as such. Portraits of Samaritans in Luke’s Gospel can move in this direction, as Elizabeth V. Dowling in her essay notes, and so provide positive role models. It is true that the parable’s Samaritan does not give up his ethnic identity or religious practices and beliefs. Yet the earliest interpreters of this parable would not have identified with the Samaritan,

and he is thus not the role model. They would have identified with the man in the ditch, and they would have been reluctant to acknowledge that the Samaritan saved them. The Samaritan healed from his leprosy by Jesus may be giving up his ethnic and religious loyalties by *not* going to *his* priests in Samaria, but by returning to Jesus. Thus, he anticipates the conversion of the Samaritans in Acts 8 and, canonically, of the Samaritan village in John 4. Being absorbed is not the same thing as being tolerated.

The various edifices of scholarship – biblical studies, rabbinics, church history, Jewish studies, theology, and so on – are learning how neighbors should interact. The view of Jesus and Paul as condemning an ossified, legalistic, venal Judaism epitomized by viperous Pharisees who morph into rabbinic Jews and then all Jews has been corrected by historical-critical and pastoral work. And yet the view remains popular in many a pulpit and classroom. Correction, and the toleration that correction creates, is less easy to accept when a primary theological claim is found to rest on a false foundation.

In turn, Jews are recovering aspects of history that showed, well before the prompts for today's Jewish-Christian dialogue – the Shoah, the founding of departments of religion apart from theological schools, the *Nostra Aetate* declaration, etc. – not just a tolerance but also a partial sympathy for Christianity. Maimonides, Yehuda HaLevi, Jacob Emden, and others all had more than tolerable things to say about Christians. But if the foundation of Jewish identity is “We are not Christians” or “We do not worship Jesus,” as it is in some comparatively secular settings, then this history is easily ignored. In some settings, Jews facing the popularity of Christian culture and the pressure of Christian evangelists reinforce the distinctions along with an attitude of intolerance in order to maintain membership in the community. Tolerance does not do well under threat, even if the people creating the threat are acting in love.

With careful mining, we find throughout the scriptures of Israel a concern, if not for tolerance (a sticky term to define) then for a less violent option. The first two human beings, despite the threat of death for consuming forbidden fruit, live for several centuries. The first death-penalty injunction, “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, but a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image, God made humankind” (Gen 9:6), is technically impossible to enforce, for the human being to be executed is also in that divine image and likeness. Although Moses and then Joshua accept the commandment to destroy the Canaanites, Rahab with her family “has lived in Israel ever since. For she hid the messenger whom Joshua sent to spy out the land” (Josh 6:25). For every Ezra or Nehemiah who seeks to

isolate the community, there is a Ruth who demonstrates the value of the outsider, the righteous gentile.

The New Testament also yields nuggets of what look like toleration. Jesus's parable of the Sheep and the Goats praises welcoming the stranger, which in Jesus's context would be a resident alien. Despite the overwhelmingly negative comments John's Gospel makes about the *Ioudaioi*, when Lazarus dies "many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother" (John 11:19). Romans 9–11 suggests the possibility of letting non-messianic Jews remain Jews since "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). Because "All Israel – by which Paul means Israel according to the flesh; Jews – will be saved" (Rom 11:26), Paul advises gentiles in his assemblies not to boast in their own faith.

Even Justin Martyr, who is often acid in his comments about Jews and Judaism, parts as friends with his interlocutor. At the end of their very long conversation, the Jew Trypho states:

I confess that I have been particularly pleased with the conference; and I think that these are of quite the same opinion as myself. For we have found more than we expected, and more than it was possible to have expected. And if we could do this more frequently, we should be much helped in the searching of the Scriptures themselves. But since [...] you are on the eve of departure, and expect daily to set sail, do not hesitate to remember us as friends when you are gone.

Justin replies,

For my part [...] if I had remained, I would have wished to do the same thing daily. But now, since I expect, with God's will and aid, to set sail, I exhort you to give all diligence in this very great struggle for your own salvation, and to be earnest in setting a higher value on the Christ of the Almighty God than on your own teachers.

The Jews wish Justin a safe voyage and Justin prays for them that they come to faith in Jesus (*Dial.* 142). No one dies. No one converts. No one is angry. In a world of *adversos Ioudaios* literature, this ending is a pleasant surprise. Justin can hope for revelation or eschatological conversion; Trypho might hope for a change in subject. And yet ... Justin controls the dialogue, Trypho loses every discussion. That "it could be worse" is not an enthusiastic recommendation for toleration in the *Dialogue*.

Justin's identity is based in belief; Trypho's identity is based not only in belief, but also in being a part of the Jewish people, connected by claims to a shared land, language, genealogy, ethnicity, etc. It may be easier for those defined as a people to allow the other to remain other. The world seems to be moving more toward (tolerated) neighbors of various tribal and ethnic identities and away from unified nations created by colonial rule. Then again, one nation may decide to destroy the other, to replace it, or to consume its resources.

Today, one can become a citizen of various nations even if one lacks genealogical connection to that nation. The same point held for much of ancient Judaism, as "Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts 6:5) demonstrates. Gentiles (i.e. pagans) can join Israel as Josephus states, "by choice in the manner of life" (*Ag. Ap.* 2.210). The general Jewish perspective was, as far as we can determine, that gentiles can join the community of Israel, but there is no reason that they must do so. Those gentiles would find much in common with the authors of the scrolls Carmen Palmer adduces in her essay to show the occasional tolerance, based in mutable ethnicity, in relation to candidates for conversion. Pharisees, with their concern for free will and their sense of expanding priestly privilege may well have agreed with this tolerant view; Sadducees, concerned more with genealogy and fate, less so.

However, if one enters a movement by belief, by baptism rather than by parentage, the "other" is necessarily a problem. For the follower of Jesus, classically speaking, the outsider is either a potential convert, an apostate, or an infidel. In general, the responses are not models of toleration: the convert is to be evangelized; the infidel is killed or exiled; the apostate is tortured, killed, and eternally damned, and the Jew, in particular, is to be made miserable but preserved as testimony to the triumph and so truth of Christianity. Events in Córdoba under the Inquisition demonstrate these various responses to the "other."

Moreover – here we return to Palmer's essay – those *gerim* who, whether actually or hypothetically, join the group responsible for writing the Dead Sea scrolls may find themselves between the two poles of tolerance and intolerance. Welcome on one side may be matched by rejection on the other, and hence the varied reactions of Jewish and Muslim communities to their members who submitted to baptism, whether under compulsion or for personal gain. The "New Christians" in Spain were "tolerated" – but it was substantially because of their very existence (they converted because of a pogrom in 1391) that the Inquisition was created. They lacked the same rights as the (non-*converso*) Catholic majority. Toleration is better than torture and death – but surely societies can do better.

There are several means of achieving toleration for Jews and Christians, even in cases where truth claims enter. The easiest move is the one Paul takes: leave decisions in the hands of the divine and date them to the eschaton. At the same time, allow people to participate in their own traditions, as long as those do not create ruptures in the community as a whole (cf. Nina Nikki's essay). Particularism, as she lucidly points out, is not necessarily a bad thing. Particularism can even have a positive valence, although today the more popular term is "multiculturalism." One can love both the neighbor and the stranger without having to collapse categories. The problem in this model is, inevitably, the idealistic but (almost?) impossible to achieve "separate but equal."

The Christian should evangelize if theologically compelled to do so, but the message should be one of "Here is what is right about my tradition," not "Here is what is wrong about yours." Christians may want to explain how they find Jesus in the pages of their Old Testament; at the same time, they might have enough love for the stranger that they can recognize that for each text they see as pointing to the Christ, the Jew has other, likely multiple, readings.

A second move is to focus more on action than on belief. From extra-canonical Judaism, the concept of the Noachide commandments shows a means to toleration. These instructions given to Noah that all people – since all peoples, all ethnicities, are in the ancient Jewish imagination descended from Noah – should obey: no murder, sexual crimes, or stealing; no idolatry and no blaspheming the God of Israel; the establishment of courts of justice, and the eschewal of eating the limb from a living animal (cf. *b. Sanh.* 56a; *t. Abod. Zar.* 8.4; *Genesis Rabbah* 34.8). Nothing here about converting to Judaism or joining the Jewish people. The model is one of toleration: you do not threaten us and you do not mock our traditions, and we will not threaten you or mock yours.

A third move for finding resources for toleration returns us to the question of place. The secular classroom, where (ideally) no religious truth claims are presupposed regardless of what students may personally believe, allows (ideally) for disparate opinions, each assessed according to the data at hand and with agreed-upon methods for that assessment. The best argument wins, or gets published. The arguments that lose remain unpublished papers, much like minority opinions in the Mishnah and Talmud, perhaps to be reassessed another day. No one is tortured, or exiled, or martyred, or humiliated, and no one is forced to agree with another. In the classroom, people of different groups can meet and, ideally again, become friends with the "other."

Yet in that academic setting, debate will continue. We cannot be sure about the identities of the gospels' authors or their target audiences (cf. Dunderberg's comments about "communities"), whether all followers of Jesus, or potential converts, or a sectarian movement. We do not know if Jews were, as John suggests, expelling Christ-followers from synagogues, whether empire-wide or locally, whether John presumes a threat in the real world or invents it to serve the needs of his narrative. Thus, we do not know if John is the victim of intolerance and his rhetoric is reactionary, or John is the intolerant one whose rhetoric is incendiary. Yet we do know the reception history of this gospel. Here ethicists, theologians, and homileticians have work to do, just as Jews have worked and continue to work on the intolerant passages of the *Tanakh* and later literature.

We are also still debating what Paul intended, although the reception history is clear. Nikki understands Gal 2:15–16 as nullifying Law observance for Jews and Gentiles. I think not. The passage from Galatians reads, "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law." (The fact that we can debate such issues in the pages of this volume without rancor proves that "toleration" works!) Torah observance does not justify – it does not establish one as moving from outside divine will into insider status. Torah observance is rather the response Jews give to the covenant. It does not make one right with God; it rather serves as a maintenance system. The Galatians have confused its purpose. By noting Torah observance does not justify, Paul is not saying "Therefore Torah is nullified" (an intolerant view) for Jews. Paul, the "apostle to the gentiles" (Rom 11:13; Gal 2:8) is rather telling the Galatians why they should not be observing those practices that mark Jews as Jews. We might make the same observation about Philippians, where the intolerance, as I read it, is not about *Jewish identity*, but about gentile followers of Jesus who are attempting to appropriate it.

The idea of Torah continuity for Jews in Paul's messianic purview provides another reading of 1 Cor 9 and of whether, as Nikki puts it, Paul "was a Jew when with Jews, and a Gentile when with Gentiles" (p. 129). I do not think that "to those outside the law I became as one outside the law" (1 Cor 9:21) indicates a change in Paul's behavior any more than I think Paul acted as though he were "weak" or that "all things to all people" (9:22) concerns practice. That shifting in behaviors would be perceived to be hypocritical. Paul is not speaking of action but of approach: he addresses different groups

on their own terms; in modern idiom, he “speaks their language” – which is one prompt to toleration, to understanding the “others” by the terms the “others” understand themselves. Then again, Nikki may be right. I hope not. Here we find another approach to questions of toleration: in the academic debate over Paul, we can choose whether to read him as tolerant of Jewish identity, or not. The good news is that we can have a conversation and, even if we settle on what Paul intended, we are not restricted to Paul’s own views. Paul also thought slavery was permissible.

Fourth is the seeking of common histories, a model fraught with both possibilities and problems, as both Anna-Liisa Rafael’s and Sami Yli-Karjanmaa’s essays demonstrate. I have often heard from my students, for example, that the Gospel of John cannot be anti-Jewish because John appreciates all things Jewish: the scriptures of Israel beginning with Genesis, the Temple, the holidays The problem is that John has intolerance for Jews who do not find Jesus to be the origin and culmination of their tradition. Finding a common past can lead to either appreciation or co-optation or, in modern terms, colonialism and then, in Cyril’s case, erasure.

As I was reading Rafael’s fascinating essay, I was reminded of a comment I heard regarding the canonization of Edith Stein: “The Church loves Jews as long as they convert to Catholicism, join a religious order, and then die.” The comment is uncharitable. We can choose how we want to understand Christian readings of the Maccabees, and of the victims of the Shoah. As I was reading Yli-Karjanmaa equally fascinating work, I was reminded of all those women whose ideas were repackaged and popularized by men (cf. Lehtipuu’s “manels [...] mansplaining [...] Festicles,” p. 252, to which I add “hepeating”). In the same way that we cannot always determine if polemic is present, so we cannot always tell who influenced whom. Today, patristic use of Philo would be labelled plagiarism (for which “we” academics should have no tolerance). In antiquity, mimesis could be indicative of high praise, or erasure, or, ironically, both. Perhaps a better connection would be to see Ambrose and Cyril as ancient versions of today’s Christian theologians for whom the work of Jews such as Buber, Heschel, Levinas, and others finds its way into their syllabi in Christian seminaries. Increasingly, Jews are reading the New Testament and early Christian writings. And today, we acknowledge this crossover. More, we find our own histories preserved by those who expressed their intolerance of us.

Galit Hasan-Rokem and Israel J. Yuval note in their essay the various, parabolic, and sometimes humorous rabbinic takes on conception in light of the Christian Incarnation. Their tacit dialogue can be read as both benevolent and intolerant: satire can be more devastating to an opponent than to say,

“what an idiot” or, to quote Jesus, “blind fools [...] snakes, you brood of vipers.” Jewish congregations tend to resist evidence of miraculous conceptions in their tradition, whether of Samson, whose father likely got angelic help, or of Melchizedek according to certain pseudepigraphical writings – or even of Isaac. Miraculous conceptions are for them both “Christian” and “Pagan” (with the terms functioning synonymously). When I mention that John’s celebration of the *Logos* looks very much like the Targumic celebration of the *memra*, they begin to take notice, since the Targumim trump the pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus. The more we know of our own sources, the more we may come to appreciate connections in the sources of others.

Sources have a pecking order also on the Christian side, at least for those outside the academy. To cite Origen, as also Dunderberg does, as a source for the possibilities of contemporary Jewish–Christian dialogue would be comparable to Jews citing the Dead Sea scrolls or Gnostic literature. In none of these cases does the text in question serve as a foundation for contemporary Jewish or Christian identity. For all his genius and his popularity in the classroom, Origen never made the list of saints. Jerome attacked him; Justinian I labeled him a heretic; at the Second Council of Constantinople (553), his teachings were rejected.

I also wonder if we find better resources in the works of Origen and Clement because they are oriented primarily by a philosophical and not legal perspective. Philosophy often offers difficult concepts to grasp, and those who work in philosophy have already, necessarily, found a common interest and common vocabulary that do not extend to people in the pew. Whether heavily intellectual discussions carried out in relatively arcane terms will impact the community majority is another matter.

A fifth move for seeking toleration turns to the psychological. Toleration means that our primary self-definition is not based on who we are not, but on who we are. This is a variation on the point that the best evangelizing comes with someone showing what is right with the gospel (and even better through actions than through proclamations) rather than attempting to show what is wrong with Judaism. The point extends to biblical exegesis and history: Jesus needs to be understood as part of his tradition rather than, in the attempt to substitute theological categories for historical ones, the “only begotten son of any Jew” who cared about health care, political oppression, economic exploitation, or women’s rights. Constructing a negative Judaism in order to make Jesus look good is bad history, bad theology, and ultimately bad psychology as well.

Paul Middleton’s study of Christians as a self-identified persecuted group reminds me of what my students call the “Oppression Olympics,”

the view that the group with the most victims wins the race for notice, and therefore all other groups should be silenced. A self-definition of “persecuted” threatens numerous dangerous results: the classification of others as the “persecuting” and so the enemy; the claim that the persecuted always has the moral high ground; the justification of persecution when political and social situations change; the substitution of perceived for actual persecution; the equation of microaggressions with genocide, and so on. In the rhetoric, the actual situation of persecution and so the impetus to stop it become lost. More, the experience of persecution does not necessarily lead to tolerance; it can lead to persecuting those who initially did the persecuting.

The flip side of understanding oneself as persecuted is to understand the “other” as the enemy, as Michael Labahn discusses. I do not think only elites benefit from the creation of enemy images: such creation can also lead to revolution by the underclass. In modern psychological terms, the enemy may be constructed based on our own projections: the enemy is everything we do not want to be seen to be or to admit to ourselves that we are. Or, the enemy may be right; the enemy’s very existence can challenge one’s truth claims, especially if one belongs to a group defined by its own act of supersessionism. The dominant responses in this situation range from annihilation (by death or conversion) to oppression often marked by ghettoization (thus manifesting the ingroup’s superiority) or benevolent conversion, as long as the love does not grow so weak that it is replaced with frustration and ultimately, annihilation – whether on earth or in the eschatological future.

Along with avoiding projection, another psychological move to promote tolerance is intellectual humility. Not even the greatest theologian knows all. Paul states in 1 Cor 13:12, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” In that dim mirror we see only a part of ourselves; in that reflection, we are unable fully to know who we are, and by extension, who God is. The same sense of incompleteness accompanies Rabbi Tarfon, perhaps the model for Justin’s Trypho, to whom the saying is attributed, “It is not your job to finish the work, but you are not free to walk away from it” (*Abot* 2.16). To begin a conversation with the recognition, “I may not be right,” is not a bad start. Then to state, “This I believe through revelation,” so I understand why you may not see it, is a good next move. To realize that, from a Christian theological perspective, the Spirit still has something to teach, and that, from a Jewish perspective, the community still has something to say – as the debates, for example, over the meaning and status of the *ger* illustrate – can move to greater tolerance.

In this increasingly intolerant world, the words of the essays in this volume show a glass half full: hints throughout Jewish and Christian history of expressions of tolerance, common ground, even respect if given a tad grudgingly. We find these moments in the Old Testament/Tanakh, the New Testament, rabbinic and patristic sources, and sporadically through the ages. We find them today among the Righteous Gentiles celebrated at Yad Vashem; we find them on the streets of our cities today, when the innocent are killed and the righteous protest. I, in my more pessimistic readings, tend to see a glass half empty. Comparing the list of righteous gentiles to the numbers of those who by commission or omission did nothing yields a minute amount. Comparing the numbers of peaceful protestors to those who stay home for fear or apathy, yields a similarly meagre tally. But as long as there is a glass of toleration – and on that I agree with my colleagues in these pages – the work that needs to be done can be done. *L'Chaim*.

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Index of Ancient Sources

Hebrew Bible / Old Testament (including the Apocrypha)

<i>Genesis</i>		26:12–13	52
1:26	203	29:9–10	56
1:27	182, 183	29:10–11	56
2:7	182, 183	30:6	188
2:15	178		
3:19	183	<i>Joshua</i>	
9:6	295	5:1	184
12	58	6:25	295
12:2	186		
12:10	59	<i>Ruth</i>	
15:2	180	4:17	216
17:9–14	50, 172		
22:4	205	<i>2 Samuel</i>	
24:43	210	15:23–16:14	277
<i>Exodus</i>		<i>2 Kingdoms</i>	
2:7	209	25:4	277
2:8	210		
6:12	188	<i>Ezra</i>	
6:30	188	1	65
15:20	209	1:4	58, 59
18:3–4	180	9:1–2	52
18:4	180	9:2	64
22:21	58, 59	<i>Esther</i>	
<i>Leviticus</i>		9:27	63
12:2	196, 200, 203, 212, 213, 217		
13–14	282	<i>Job</i>	
13:45–46	274	1:12	214
13:46	282	1:18–19	206
17:15–16	49	3	206
18:26–28	62	3:3–12	212
19:17	56	10:8–18	212
21	64	10:8–12	206
21:1–3	277	10:12	214
21:14–15	52	12:7	285
26:41	188	28:11	210
<i>Numbers</i>		29:3	212
5:2–3	282	36:3	203–04
18:20	61	38:8	218
36:2	61	38:14	211
		42:13–15	206
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		<i>Psalms</i>	
7:1–6	59	4:2	216
10:16	188	6:3	216
23:2–3	63	9:13	216
23:3–4	63	9:14	216
23:4–9	59	25:11	216
26:11–13	49	29(30):10	216
26:11	59, 61	40(41):4	216

40(41):10	216	<i>Isaiah</i>	
41:7	218	7:14	208
85(86):3	216	14:1	62
121:3	216	28:9	209
122(123):3	216	28:11	209
139	200–01, 204, 218	33:2	216
139:2	203–04		
139:5	203	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
139:16	201, 219	34:9	184
		44:9	63
<i>Proverbs</i>		47:21–23	60
30:15–16	211		
30:19	210	<i>Hosea</i>	
		13:15	281
<i>Ecclesiastes</i>			
5:10	211	<i>Tobit</i>	
		8:10	216

Other Early Jewish Literature

<i>CD (Damascus Document)</i>		<i>2 Maccabees</i>	
I–VIII	55	5:27–7:41	150
VI, 20–VII, 1	56	6–7	139
XI–XVI	55	7	159
XI, 2	52, 64		
XI, 14–15	49, 52, 55, 64	Philo	
XIII, 12	61	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia (On the Preliminary Studies)</i>	
XIII, 20	56	20	181
XIV	56	<i>Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat (That the Worse Attack the Better)</i>	
XIV, 3–6	55–57	83	182
XIV, 4–6	52	<i>Quis rerum divianorum heres sit (Who is the Heir?)</i>	
XIX–XX	55	40	180
XX, 17–19	56	54	180
		56–58	182
Josephus		58	180
<i>Against Apion (Contra Apionem)</i>		59	180
2.210	297	<i>Legum allegoriarum (Allegorical Interpretation)</i>	
<i>Jewish Antiquities (Antiquitates judaicae)</i>		1.31–38	182
7:254	92	1.31–32	183
13:257–58	53	1.61	182
18:55–9	94	1.105–8	177
<i>Jewish War (Bellum judaicum)</i>		3.95	182
2.169–74	94	3.186	178
2.454	50	3.244	181
2:466	281	3.252–53	183
2.477–80	281	3.252	184
		<i>Legatio ad Gaium (On the Embassy to Gaius)</i>	
<i>Jubilees</i>		194	174
15:25–34	48	<i>De migratione Abrahami (On the Migration of Abraham)</i>	
30	52	86–94	186
		88	186
<i>1 Maccabees</i>			
1:15	120		

90	186	<i>1QM</i> (<i>War Scroll</i>)	
92	184, 185, 189	I, 5	61
94	186, 188		
<i>De vita Mosis</i> (<i>On the Life of Moses</i>)		<i>1QS</i> (<i>Rule of the Community</i>)	
2.32	174	I, 9–10	92
2.41	174	II, 2	61
<i>De opifitio mundi</i> (<i>On the Creation of the World</i>)		II, 4–5	61
139	182	II, 25–III, 6	51
<i>De plantation</i> (<i>On Planting</i>).		III, 6–9	51
18–19	182	IV, 9–11	51
18	182	V, 13–14	51
44	182, 183	V, 18–19	51
<i>De praemiis et poenis</i> (<i>On Rewards and Punishment</i>)		VI, 21–22	56
44	178	VI, 24–26	51
<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum</i> (<i>Questions and Answers on Exodus</i>)		VIII, 16–18	51
2.2	184	<i>4QMMT</i> (<i>Miqsat Ma'asê ha-Torah^a</i>)	
<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin</i> (<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i>)		B 75–82	52
1.51	183	B 80–82	57
3.45	189		
3.46	188	<i>4Q169pNah</i> (<i>Pesher Nahum</i>)	
3.48	187, 189	Frag. 3–4	
3.52	188	I, 2	62
<i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i> (<i>On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel</i>)		II, 2	62
43	181	II, 8–10	62–63
<i>De somniis</i> (<i>On Dreams</i>)			
1.171	178	<i>4Q174</i> (<i>Florilegium</i>)	
<i>De specialibus legibus</i> (<i>On the Special Laws</i>)		I, 3–4	63–65
1.1–2	186		
1.4–11	186	<i>4Q279</i> (<i>Four Lots</i>)	
1.6	187	frag. 5, 4–6	60–61
1.8–9	184		
1.9	185	<i>4Q307</i> (<i>Text Mentioning Temple</i>)	
1.10–11	189	frag. 1, 6–7	57–59, 59–60
1.10	189	frag. 2, 2	57
1.306	188		
<i>De virtutibus</i> (<i>On the Virtues</i>)		<i>nQ19</i> (<i>Temple Scroll^a</i>)	
102	48, 50	XL, 6	52
		<i>nQApPs^a</i> (<i>Apocryphal Psalms^a</i>)	
		IV, 6	56

New Testament

<i>Q</i> (<i>The Sayings Source</i>)		6:27	73, 78–91
4:1–13	78	6:28	88
6:20–49	78	6:29–38	84
6:20–23	78, 79	6:29–36	85
6:20	79	6:29–30	96
6:22–35	87	6:29	79, 84, 85
6:22–23	80	6:30	79, 84, 85
6:22	79, 83, 85	6:31	85
6:23	79, 83	6:32	85
6:27–36	90	6:34	85
6:27–28, 35	79, 80–83	6:35	78–91, 96, 97, 98

6:36	85, 98	8:34	234
6:37-38	85, 89	8:35-38	234
6:37	84, 85, 97	9:27	234
6:38	85	10:18	97
6:41-45	85	10:47	216
6,43-49	79	12:29-31	96
6:47-49	99	13:9-13	234, 247
7:31	87	14:66-72	247
11:9-13	98		
11:29	87	<i>Luke</i>	
11:30	87	1	216
11:31	87	1:50	216
11:32	87	1:54	216
11:49-51	79, 83	1:58	216
11:50-51	87	2:21-24	172
12:4-5	98, 247	4:33	283
12:5	99	6:20-21	98
12:11	83	6:22	81
12:22-31	98	6:24-26	79
12:53	87	6:27-28	80-83
14:27	98, 234	6:27	73, 80, 81
17:33	98	6:28	81
19:12-26	87	6:29-36	80-81
20:30	89	6:29-30	81
		6:31	81
<i>Matthew</i>		6:32-34	81
1:23	208	6:32-33	81
5:1-4	98	6:33	81
5:6	98	6:35	80-83, 96, 98
5:11-12	235	6:36	98
5:38-42	81	7:13	278
5:38-39	292	7:50	284
5:39	97	8:28	283
5:40	85	8:48	284
5:43-44	81	9:51-56	273
5:44-45	80-83	9:52-53	274
5:44	73, 81	9:54	274
5:45	82, 96	9:55	274
7:12	293	10:25-37	15, 273, 275, 276-80, 285, 286
7:21	81	10:25	276
9:27	216	10:26	276
10:14-23	235	10:27	278
10:25	235	10:29	276
10:26	235	10:30-35	276
10:28	234, 235	10:30	276
10:31	235	10:31-33	277, 283
10:35-36	235	10:31-32	277
10:36	87	10:32	277
10:38	234	10:33	277, 278
13	207	10:34-35	278
13:33	207	10:34	278
15:22	216	10:36-37	274
20:30	216	10:36	276
22:37-39	96	10:37	276, 278, 279, 285, 286
25:30	87	12:4-5	234
		12:16-20	99
<i>Mark</i>		12:53	87
8:34-38	240, 243, 247	13:13	283

14:27	234	9:1	229
15	207	12:1-5	236
15:7	278	28:22	230, 236
15:10	278		
15:20	278	<i>Romans</i>	
15:23-24	278	2:28-29	172
16:24	216, 283	3:1	185
17:1	284	4:1-12	205
17:5	284	4:11	172
17:10	280	8:17	235
17:11-19	15, 273, 275, 280-85, 286	8:35-36	235
17:11	281, 284	9-11	296
17:12	282	11	130
17:13	216, 282, 283	11:13	299
17:14	283	11:26	296
17:15	283	11:29	296
17:16	283	12:2	235
17:17-19	274	13:1-7	134
17:17-18	284, 285	15:8	130
17:18	284	16	265
17:19	284	16:3-4	236
18:39	283	16:7	265
18:42	285		
19:27	87	<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
19:37	283	1:12	21
19:43	94	2:6-9	133
20:27	96	4:9-13	235
23:23	283	7	126
23:46	283	7:10-11	127
24:13-35	254	7:17-24	129
		7:21	120
<i>John</i>		7:29-30	133
1:13	172	9	129, 299
1:14	183	9:21	299
1:24	40	9:22	299
4	295	10:1-3	143
4:19-30	284	11	264
6:51-58	27	12:2	235
7:22-23	172	12:13	258
9:22	30	13:12	302
9:34	30	15:9-10	229
11:19	296	15:19	120
12:42	30	15:28	258
16:2	30	15:45	183
20:20	25		
20:24-29	26	<i>2 Corinthians</i>	
20:25-27	25	1:3-8	235
20:27	26	3:14-16	145
20:30-31	24	4:8-9	235
20:31	25	6:4-10	235
21:15-19	27	6:4-5	235
21:25	25	6:10	235
		8:2	235
<i>Acts</i>		11:21-30	235
6:5	297	11:23-29	235
7:54-8:1	236	12:10	235
7:60	236	13:9	235
8	295		

<i>Galatians</i>		2:16–18	22
1:13–14	229		
2:7–9	130	<i>Hebrews</i>	
2:8	299	6:4–6	247
2:15–16	127, 299	11	236
2:15	121	12:4	236
2:20	126	13:12–13	236
3:1–19	205		
3:24	171	<i>James</i>	
3:27	258	1:2–4	235
3:28	15, 120, 252–68, 294	5:7–11	206
4:12–15	235		
6:13	172	<i>1 Peter</i>	
		1:6–7	235
<i>Ephesians</i>		1:6	235
2:11	130	1:10–11	235
		2:13	243
<i>Philippians</i>		2:17	243
1:3–7	235	2:18–25	235
1:19–26	235	3:13	235
1:21	126	4:13–14	235
1:29–30	235	5:9	235
2:6–8	125–26		
2:17	235	<i>1 John</i>	
2:30	126, 236	1:6	28
3	130	2:4	28
3:2	130	2:18	28
3:3	184	2:19	28
3:5–6	130	2:22–24	247
3:5	120, 129, 174	2:22	28
3:6	229	4:1	28
3:8	130	4:2	28
4:3	120		
4:4–6	235	<i>2 John</i>	
4:14–15	235	10	30
<i>Colossians</i>		<i>3 John</i>	
1:11	235	9	22, 30
1:24	235	10	30
2:11	184		
3:10–11	257	<i>Revelation</i>	
3:11	258	2:6	22
3:18–19	257	2:10	235
		2:13	236
<i>1 Thessalonians</i>		2:15	22
1:6	235	2:20	22
2:14	235	6:9	235
3:1–5	235	7:9–17	235
4:11	120	11:1–14	235
4:13	236	12:10–11	235
		13:15	235
<i>1 Timothy</i>		14:1–5	235
2:1–2	243	14:13	235
		16:4–6	235
<i>2 Timothy</i>		17:6	235
1:8	235	20:4	235
2:11–13	247		

Other Early Christian Literature

Ambrose		37–38	33
<i>De fide</i>			
5.14.176	258	Cyril of Alexandria	
<i>De paradiso (Paradise)</i>		<i>De adoratione</i>	
4.25	178	68.145.55–148.2	182
		68.280.22–23	180
Athenagoros		<i>Commentarii in Matthaeum</i>	
<i>Supplicatio pro Christianis</i>		11.6 (in catenis)	178
11.1	91	<i>Commentarius in xii prophetas minores</i>	
		1.1.7–13	178
Augustine		2.28.22	178
<i>De civitate Dei (The City of God)</i>		2.110.6–9	173
18.36	160	2.142.12	178
<i>Expositio in epistulum ad Galatas</i>		2.455.19	173
28	267	<i>Epistulae</i>	
<i>Epistulae (Letters)</i>		5.3	180
40.4.6	159	<i>Epistula paschalis</i>	
<i>De octo quaestionibus ex Veteri Testamento</i>		1.2	180
(<i>Eight Questions from the Old Testament</i>)		4.4.22–23	171
cap. 8	218	4.5.47–48	174
<i>Sermones</i>		6.7.8–9	186
In solemnitate martyrum Machabaeorum		6.7.17–19	186
(On the Solemnity of the Maccabean		6.7.20–21	187
Martyrs) Mart. Mach.		6.7.42–44	187
300.1–2	152	6.8.1–2	187
300.1	155, 158, 159	6.8.5–19	188
300.2	157	6.8.23–27	188
300.3	144, 157	6.8.29–34	189
300.4	155	6.9.21–22	188
300.5	143, 145, 159	<i>Expositio in Psalmos</i>	
300.6	161–62	69.841.19	177
		69.881.24	177
Clement of Alexandria		69.1017.42	178
<i>Paedagogus (Christ the Educator)</i>		69.1032.18	178
1.4	266–67	<i>Glaphyra in Pentateuchum</i>	
2.10.95.2	184	69.116.35	181
<i>Protrepticus (Exhortation to the Greeks)</i>		69.117.6–8	180
3.44.4	179	69.484.55–485.2	184–85
<i>Stromata (Miscellanies)</i>		69.485.1	184
1.5.31.1	181	<i>In Isaiam prophetam</i>	
1.23.153.4	179	70.9.23–12.4	178
3.2.5	259	70.960.48–54	172
3.2.6	260	<i>In Joannem</i>	
3.2.7	260	1.133.12–19	183
3.2.8	260	1.135.25	172
3.13.92	261	1.138.24–139.7	183
3.13.93	261	1.182.24–183.2	183
3.59.3	41	1.182.25–31	182
4.1.1	263	1.463.10–13	171
4.8.58–59	263–64	1.629.30–630.10	172
4.8.59	264	1.631.24	184
4.19.118–23	264	1.641.26–642.4	185–86
5.4.19.4	184	1.642.28–29	185
		1.642.28	184
Council of Laodicea		1.643.10	185
<i>Canones</i>		1.643.15	184
29	33	1.643.21	185

1.643.24–26	189	7.10.9.9–10	182
1.643.24–25	185	7.13.7	175
1.644.5	185	7.17.4	175
2.309.5	178	7.20.9	175
2.485.17–22	182	11.14.10	175
2.500.27	177	11.15.7	175
2.550.2	184	11.23.12	175
3.135.15–20	182		
<i>Contra Julianum</i>		<i>Gospel of Philip (NHC II, 3)</i>	
1.30.11–22	171	55/§ 17	22
6.30	173, 179	56/§ 21	22
7.19	179	57/§ 23	22
10.21	179	67/§ 69	22
76.1057.45–48	189	73/§ 90	22
<i>In Lucam</i>			
72.500.13–22	172	<i>Gospel of Thomas (NHC II, 2)</i>	
72.828.28	177	22	261–62
<i>De sancta trinitate dialogi i–vii</i>		37	261
524.33	178	97	214
		114	263
<i>Didache</i>			
1:3	91	Gregory Nazianzen	
11:1–2	30	<i>In Praise of the Maccabees (Mach. Laud.)</i>	
		15.1	142, 152, 154
Didymus		15.2	142, 154, 156
<i>Fragmenta in Psalmos [e commentario altero]</i>		15.3	155
31.8–10	187	15.9	155
		15.11	155
Epiphanius		15.12	151
<i>Panarion. Adversus haereses (Refutation of all Heresis)</i>		Irenaeus	
1.1.9	258	<i>Adversus haereses (Against Heresies)</i>	
49.2.1–2.5	266	24	243
Eusebius of Caesarea		Isidore of Pelusium	
<i>Commentarius in Psalmos (Commentary on the Psalms).</i>		<i>Epistulae</i>	
23.217.40–46	177	2.143	176, 177
23.929.1–10	177	2.270	176
<i>Historia ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical History)</i>		3.19	176
2.4.2	175	3.81	176
2.17	175	1647.4	189
2.25.1–8	232	Jerome	
3.17	232	<i>Epistulae</i>	
3.17.1	232	71.3	262
3.32.1–33.4	232	75.2	262
4.12.1–13.7	232	<i>De nominibus hebraicis (Liber nominum)</i>	
4.14.10–17.14	232	23.819A	181
6.1.1–5.7	232	23.821D	181
6.28	232	23.831E	181
6.39.1–42.6	232	<i>De perpetua uirginitate beatae Mariae (Perpetual Virginity)</i>	
7.1	232		
7.10.1–12.1	232	4	208
8.17.1–2	232	<i>Praefatio in libros Salomonis (Preface to the Latin translation of the Wisdom of Solomon)</i>	
8 App. 3	232	PL 28.1308A	177
<i>Praeparatio evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)</i>		<i>Contra Rufinum (Apology against Rufinus)</i>	
1.9.20	175, 179	1.29	262

<i>De viris illustribus</i>		Origen	
11	175	<i>Commentarii in evangelium Joannis</i>	40
		6.51–2	
John Chrysostom		<i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i>	
<i>Adversus Judeos</i> (<i>Discourses against Judaizing Christians</i>)		15.3	175
1.6.2	208	<i>Contra Celsum</i> (<i>Against Celsus</i>)	
<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>		4.51	175
53.104.7	182	<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>	
<i>Homiliae in epistulam ad Philippenses</i>		1.47–71	197
62.257.8	184	<i>De Principiis</i> (<i>Peri archōn</i>) (<i>First Principles</i>)	
<i>Homiliae in epistulam ad Romanos</i>		4.34 (35)	201
30.3	265	Pseudo-Origen	
31.2	265	<i>Fragmenta in Psalmos 1–150</i>	
<i>Homiliae in Psalmos 101–7</i> (spurious)		Comment on Ps 22:4 LXX 177	
55.641.29	182	<i>Passion of Perpetua</i>	
<i>De Maccabeis</i>		6.3–4	239
1.1	147	20.2	241
<i>On Eleazar and the Seven Boys</i> (<i>Eleaz. puer.</i>)			
4	143	<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i>	
5	143, 155, 156, 159	5.3–4	39
6	144		
7	144	Socrates	
16	144	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>	
John Malalas		7.13	171
<i>Chronographia</i>			
8.23–24	146	Tertullian	
		<i>Apologeticus</i> (<i>Apology</i>)	
Justin		2.4–5	232
<i>Apologia i</i> (<i>First Apology</i>)		29–33	243
4	232	40	232
15.9	91	<i>De fuga in persecutione</i> (<i>Flight in Persecution</i>)	
17	243	10	258
<i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i> (<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>)		<i>De idolatria</i> (<i>Idolatry</i>)	
142	296	14–15	33
		15.1	33
<i>Martyrdom of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice</i>		<i>Adversus Marcionem</i> (<i>Against Marcion</i>)	
21	243	3.12	258
		<i>De monogamia</i> (<i>Monogamy</i>)	
<i>Martyrdom of Fructuosus</i>		7	258
3.1	241	<i>Ad nationes</i> (<i>To the Heathen</i>)	
		2.11	213
<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>		<i>De pudicitia</i> (<i>Modesty</i>)	
8.2	239	6	258
8.8–9	239	<i>De resurrectione carnis</i> (<i>The Resurrection of the Flesh</i>)	
9.2–3	233	60–61	259
9.3	233	<i>Ad Scapulam</i> (<i>To Scapula</i>)	
10.2	243	5.1	240
12.1	242	Theophilus	
12.2	242	<i>Ad Autolycum</i>	
<i>Martyrs of Lyons</i>		3.14	91
1.4–6	233	Valentinus	
1.33–34	241	frag. 3	40
1.35	241		

Greco-Roman Literature

Plato		Strabo	
<i>Timaeus</i>		<i>Geographica (Geography)</i>	
27d–28a	171	16.2.40	276
Pliny the Younger		Suetonius	
<i>Epistulae</i>		<i>Nero</i>	
10.96	244–45, 246	16.2	233
Plutarch		Tacitus	
<i>Moralia</i>		<i>Annales</i>	
218a	89	15.44	229, 233

Mishna, Talmud, Targumic Texts and Related Jewish Literature

<i>Avot de-Rabbi Nathan (Avot of Rabbi Nathan)</i>		Mishnah	
A, ch. 1, p. 2 (Schechter edition)	206	<i>m. Abod</i>	
		2:16	302
Babylonian Talmud		<i>m. Bikkurim</i>	
<i>b. Berakot</i>		1:4	52
15b	210	<i>m. Karetot</i>	
<i>b. Nedarim</i>		1:3	217
20b	206	<i>m. Nazir</i>	
<i>b. Šabbat</i>		7:1	277
129a	213	<i>m. Niddah</i>	
<i>b. Sanhedrin</i>		2:5	212
56a	298	3:3–4	217
92a	210	<i>m. Šeqalim</i>	
<i>b. Sotah</i>		5:6	210
12b	209	<i>m. Yadayim</i>	
<i>b. Yebamot</i>		3:5	206
47a–b	49	<i>m. Yebamot</i>	
		6:5	50
<i>Ecclesiastes Rabbah</i>		8:2	50
5:10 (Vilna edition)	211	11:2	50
<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>		<i>Megillat Ta'anith</i>	
8:1	203, 208	(Scholion in the Oxford MS) 17	210
17:7	208		
34:8	298	Palestinian Talmud	
		<i>y. Šeqal. 5:4 (48c)</i>	210
<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>		<i>Pesikta Rabbati</i>	
13	199	§ 43, pp. 180a–b (Ish Shalom's edition)	211
14:1	196, 201, 208		
14:2	197, 204–208, 212, 214	Tosefta	
14:3	197, 214–217	<i>t. Abod. Zarah</i>	
14:4	218	8:4	298
14:5	196, 197, 218	<i>t. Šeqalim</i>	
14:6	218	2:16 (Lieberman)	210
14:7	218		
14:8	201, 218–19		
14:9	196		